



La-Net

ISS 106

Basis of Islamic Thought and Civilisation



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Course code: ISS 106

Course title: Basis of Islamic Thought and Civilisation

Course credit load: 2 Units

List of Series:

- **Series 1: Foundations of Islamic Thought**
- Series 2: Philosophy and Civilisation in Islam
- Series 3: Contributions of Philosophy to Islamic Civilisation
- Series 4: Philosophies in Other Civilisations
- Series 5: Contemporary Parallels of Civilisations

Series 1: Foundations of Islamic Thought

Parts and Sub-Parts

1.1 Meaning and Scope of Islamic Thought

- **1.1.1** Meaning of Islamic Thought
- **1.1.2** Sources and Foundations of Islamic Thought
- **1.1.3** Characteristics of Islamic Thought

1.2 The Qur'ān and Sunnah as Foundations

- **1.2.1** The Qur'ān and the Formation of Islamic Thought
- **1.2.2** The Sunnah and Prophetic Guidance
- **1.2.3** Reason, Reflection and Knowledge

1.3 Development of Islamic Thought

- **1.3.1** Early Muslim Intellectual Development



- 1.3.2 Scholars and the Preservation of Knowledge
- 1.3.3 Diversity within Islamic Intellectual Traditions

1.4 Islamic Thought and Human Civilisation

- 1.4.1 Knowledge and Intellectual Responsibility
- 1.4.2 Ethics, Society and Human Conduct
- 1.4.3 Islamic Thought and Civilisational Development

Introduction

Islamic thought refers to the intellectual reflection, interpretation and discussion that have developed around the teachings, values and worldview of Islam. It is rooted in revelation while also involving human efforts to understand, explain and apply Islamic teachings to different circumstances.

This Series introduces the foundations from which Islamic thought develops. It examines the meaning and scope of Islamic thought, the central place of the Qur'ān and Sunnah, the role of reason and reflection, and the development of intellectual traditions among Muslims.

The study of Islamic thought is important for understanding the history and civilisation of Islam. It also helps the student appreciate how scholars and other categories of people contributed to the preservation, interpretation and development of knowledge. The Series therefore provides a foundation for later discussions of philosophy, civilisation and their contemporary parallels.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- SLO 1.1 explain the meaning, scope and major foundations of Islamic thought,
- SLO 1.2 describe the roles of the Qur'ān, Sunnah, reason and reflection in the development of Islamic thought,



- SLO 1.3 discuss major features of the historical development of Islamic thought and the role of scholars in preserving knowledge,
- SLO 1.4 relate Islamic thought to knowledge, ethics and the development of human civilisation.

1.1 Meaning and Scope of Islamic Thought

1.1.1 Meaning of Islamic Thought

Islamic thought may be understood as the intellectual engagement of Muslims with the teachings, worldview and values of Islam. It includes reflection on questions concerning God, humanity, knowledge, morality, society and the purpose of life. Islamic thought is therefore broader than a single academic discipline; it encompasses different forms of intellectual inquiry developed within the Islamic tradition.

Fill in the blank: Islamic thought involves intellectual engagement with Islamic teachings, values and _____.

1.1.2 Sources and Foundations of Islamic Thought

The foundation of Islamic thought is the revelation conveyed through the Qur'ān and the guidance of the Prophet Muhammad preserved in the Sunnah. Muslim scholars have also employed reason, reflection and systematic inquiry in understanding revealed guidance and responding to new questions. These intellectual activities operate within the broader framework established by Islam.

Fill in the blank: The Qur'ān and _____ are central foundations of Islamic thought.

1.1.3 Characteristics of Islamic Thought

Islamic thought is characterised by its relationship with revelation, its concern with knowledge and its attention to ethical responsibility. It seeks to connect intellectual understanding with human conduct. Although different scholars and intellectual traditions have approached

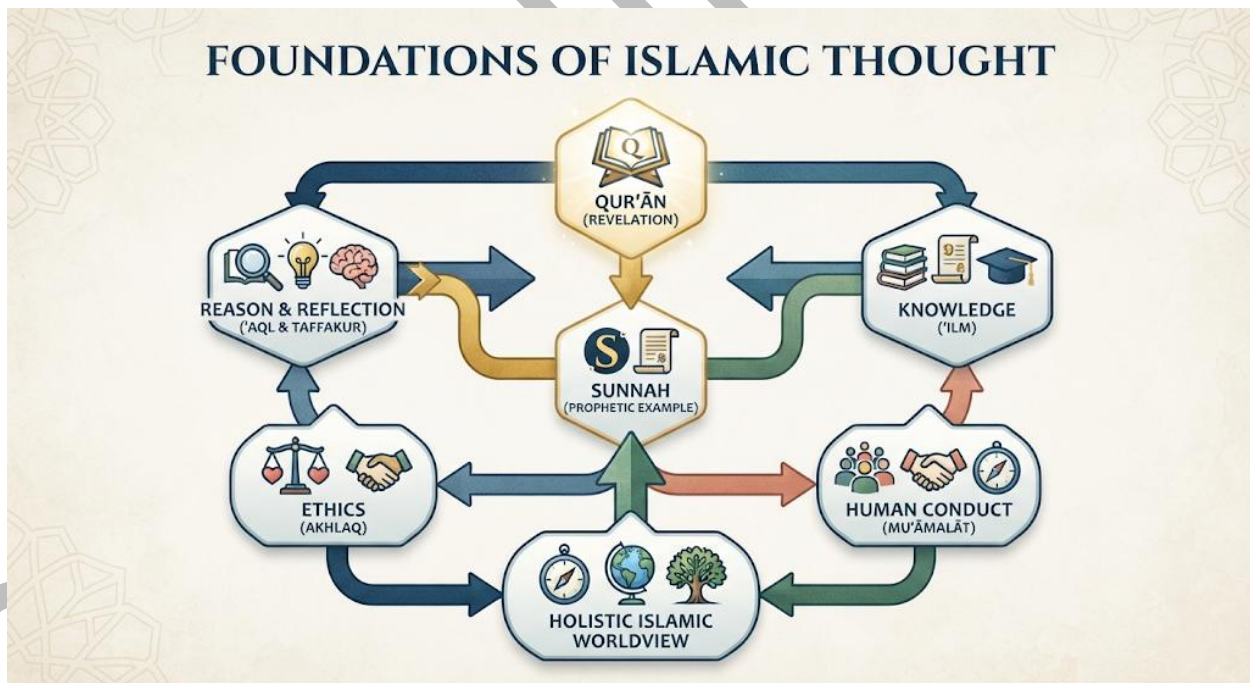


questions differently, the Islamic intellectual tradition has maintained a strong interest in knowledge, moral responsibility and the relationship between human beings and the Creator.

Fill in the blank: Islamic thought connects intellectual understanding with ethical _____.

Pilot questions 1.1

1. Define Islamic thought in your own words.
2. Identify three areas of human inquiry that Islamic thought addresses.
3. What are the two central revealed foundations of Islamic thought?
4. Why is Islamic thought broader than a single academic discipline?
5. How are knowledge and ethical responsibility connected in Islamic thought?



1.2 The Qur'ān and Sunnah as Foundations

1.2.1 The Qur'ān and the Formation of Islamic Thought

The Qur'ān provides the central revealed framework for Islamic belief, values and guidance. Its teachings address belief in Allah, human responsibility, morality, social relations and the pursuit of knowledge. Muslim intellectual activity has therefore continually engaged with Qur'ānic teachings in order to understand their meanings and implications for human life.

Fill in the blank: The Qur'ān provides the central revealed framework for Islamic belief, values and _____.

1.2.2 The Sunnah and Prophetic Guidance

The Sunnah refers to the teachings, practices and approved guidance associated with the Prophet Muhammad. It explains and exemplifies aspects of Qur'ānic guidance and provides a model for Muslim conduct. The Sunnah has consequently played an important role in the development of Islamic legal, ethical and intellectual traditions.

Fill in the blank: The Sunnah provides an important model for Muslim belief and _____.

1.2.3 Reason, Reflection and Knowledge

Islamic intellectual development has included the use of reason and reflection. Muslims have historically reflected on revelation, nature, human society and knowledge. Reason does not replace revelation; rather, intellectual inquiry is undertaken within the religious and ethical framework of Islam. This encouraged the development of learning and scholarly investigation in different fields.

Fill in the blank: Reason and reflection are used to deepen understanding of revelation and the _____.

Pilot questions 1.2



1. How does the Qur'ān shape Islamic thought?
2. What is meant by the Sunnah?
3. Why is the Sunnah important to Islamic intellectual development?
4. Does reason replace revelation in Islamic thought?
5. Name three areas on which Muslims have historically reflected.

1.3 Development of Islamic Thought

1.3.1 Early Muslim Intellectual Development

As Islam expanded beyond its original Arabian setting, Muslims encountered new peoples, languages, cultures and intellectual questions. These encounters contributed to the development of systematic scholarship. Muslim scholars engaged with questions of belief, law, language, ethics, history and other fields while seeking to preserve and understand the Islamic tradition.

Fill in the blank: The expansion of Islam brought Muslims into contact with new peoples, languages, cultures and intellectual _____.

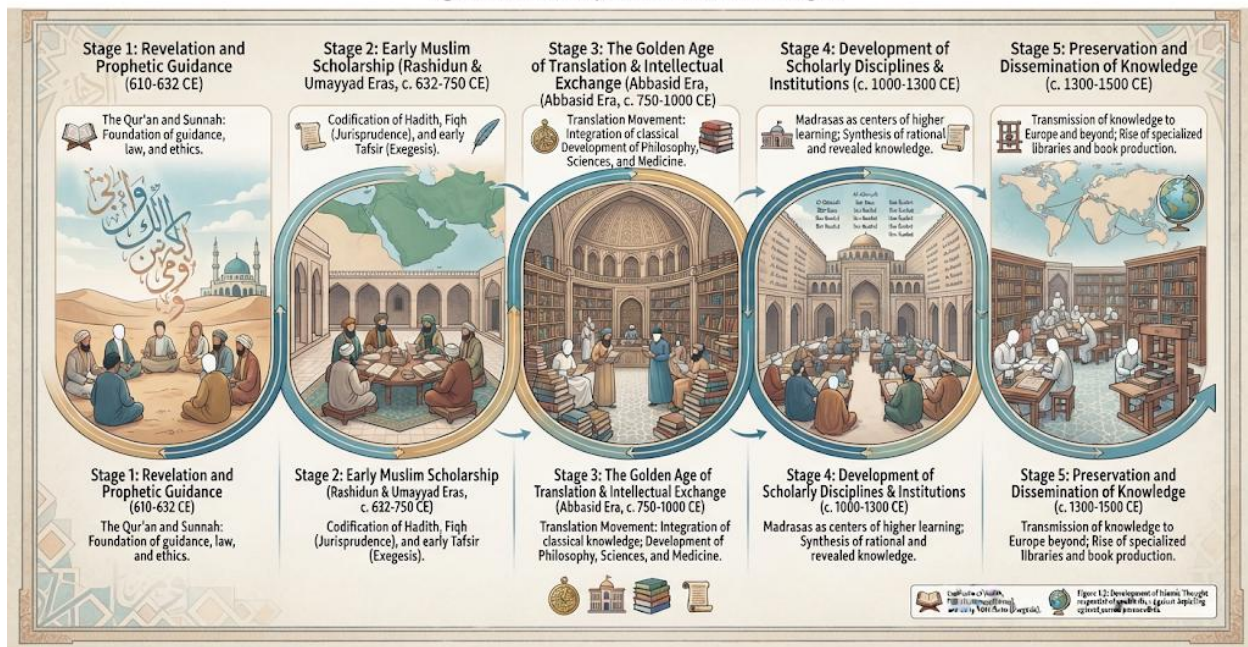
1.3.2 Scholars and the Preservation of Knowledge

Scholars played an important role in collecting, transmitting, interpreting and organising knowledge. Their activities included teaching, writing, compiling texts, travelling in search of knowledge and developing methods for evaluating information. Through these activities, knowledge was preserved and passed between generations.

Fill in the blank: Scholars helped preserve knowledge through teaching, writing, transmission and _____.



Figure 1.2: Development of Islamic Thought



1.3.3 Diversity within Islamic Intellectual Traditions

Islamic intellectual history contains different approaches and schools of thought. Differences developed in areas such as jurisprudence, theology, philosophy, language and interpretation. Studying this diversity helps students appreciate the breadth of Islamic intellectual history without assuming that every historical position was identical.

Fill in the blank: Islamic intellectual history contains different approaches and schools of _____.

Pilot questions 1.3

1. What factors contributed to the development of Muslim intellectual scholarship?
2. State four activities through which scholars preserved knowledge.
3. Why is the study of intellectual diversity important?
4. Name three areas in which different Islamic intellectual traditions developed.



5. Does the existence of intellectual diversity mean that all historical positions were identical?

1.4 Islamic Thought and Human Civilisation

1.4.1 Knowledge and Intellectual Responsibility

Islamic thought places significant value on knowledge and encourages responsible use of what is known. Intellectual activity should not be separated from moral responsibility. The pursuit of knowledge is expected to contribute to beneficial human conduct rather than simply serve intellectual curiosity.

Fill in the blank: Islamic thought connects the pursuit of knowledge with moral _____.

1.4.2 Ethics, Society and Human Conduct

Islamic thought considers human conduct within an ethical framework. Concepts such as justice, honesty, responsibility, compassion and accountability influence discussions of social life. These principles can guide relationships among individuals and contribute to the organisation of communities.

Fill in the blank: Justice, honesty and accountability are examples of ethical _____ in Islamic thought.

1.4.3 Islamic Thought and Civilisational Development

Islamic thought contributed to a culture in which learning, scholarship and intellectual exchange could flourish. The study of this development is relevant to understanding Islamic civilisation and the contributions of different categories of people to its growth. The relationship between thought and civilisation will be examined in greater detail in later series.

Fill in the blank: Islamic thought contributed to the development of Islamic _____.



Pilot questions 1.4

1. Why should knowledge be connected with moral responsibility?
2. Name four ethical values relevant to Islamic thought.
3. How can ethical principles influence community life?
4. Why is intellectual history relevant to the study of Islamic civilisation?
5. What relationship exists between Islamic thought and civilisational development?



Series Summary

This Series introduced the foundations of Islamic thought. You examined Islamic thought as the intellectual engagement of Muslims with Islamic teachings, values and worldview. You also considered its relationship with questions of belief, knowledge, morality, society and human purpose.

The Qur'ān and Sunnah were examined as central foundations, alongside the role of reason, reflection and scholarly inquiry. The Series also considered how Muslim intellectual development expanded as Muslims encountered different peoples, languages, cultures and intellectual questions.

Finally, you considered the role of scholars in preserving and transmitting knowledge and the relationship between Islamic thought, ethical responsibility and civilisation. These foundations prepare you for the subsequent study of philosophy and civilisation in Islam.

Glossary of Terms

Islamic Thought: Intellectual reflection and discussion by Muslims concerning Islamic teachings, worldview, values and human questions.

Qur'ān: The revealed scripture of Islam and the central textual foundation of Islamic belief and guidance.

Sunnah: The teachings, practices and approved guidance associated with the Prophet Muhammad.

Revelation: Divine communication of guidance from Allah to His prophets and messengers.

Intellectual Tradition: A continuing body of ideas, methods, discussions and scholarship developed within a particular intellectual community.

Civilisation: A complex form of organised human society expressed through institutions, knowledge, culture, values and material development.



Ethics: Principles concerning right conduct, values and moral responsibility.

Scholarship: Systematic study, preservation, interpretation and transmission of knowledge.



Concept Check Questions 1

Objective Questions

1. What is meant by Islamic thought? (Linked to SLO 1.1)
2. Which two sources are central foundations of Islamic thought? (Linked to SLO 1.2)
3. What is the Sunnah? (Linked to SLO 1.2)
4. Why did Muslim intellectual activity expand as Islam spread? (Linked to SLO 1.3)
5. How is Islamic thought related to civilisation? (Linked to SLO 1.4)

Short-Answer Questions

6. Explain the meaning and scope of Islamic thought. (Linked to SLO 1.1)
7. Discuss the role of the Qur'ān and Sunnah in forming Islamic thought. (Linked to SLO 1.2)
8. Explain the role of reason and reflection in Islamic intellectual development. (Linked to SLO 1.2)
9. Discuss two ways scholars contributed to the preservation of Islamic knowledge. (Linked to SLO 1.3)

Long-Answer Questions

10. Discuss the foundations of Islamic thought, explaining the relationship between revelation, reason, knowledge and ethical responsibility. (Linked to SLO 1.1 and SLO 1.2)
11. Examine the development of Islamic thought and evaluate the role of scholars and intellectual inquiry in the development of Islamic civilisation. (Linked to SLO 1.3 and SLO 1.4)



Answers to Concept Check Questions 1

Objective Questions

1. Islamic thought is the intellectual engagement of Muslims with Islamic teachings, worldview and values.
2. The Qur'ān and Sunnah.
3. The teachings, practices and approved guidance associated with the Prophet Muhammad.
4. Muslims encountered new peoples, languages, cultures and intellectual questions, encouraging further scholarship and inquiry.
5. Islamic thought influenced knowledge, ethics and intellectual activity that contributed to the development of Islamic civilisation.

Short-Answer Questions

6. Islamic thought is the intellectual reflection and discussion of Muslims concerning Islamic teachings and their implications for human life. It covers questions of belief, knowledge, morality, society and human purpose.
7. The Qur'ān provides the central revealed framework of Islamic belief and guidance, while the Sunnah explains and exemplifies aspects of that guidance and provides a model for Muslim conduct.
8. Reason and reflection help Muslims understand revelation, examine questions and develop knowledge. They operate within the broader religious and ethical framework of Islam rather than replacing revelation.
9. Scholars preserved knowledge by teaching, writing, compiling and transmitting texts, travelling in search of knowledge and developing methods for evaluating information.

Long-Answer Questions



10. Basic response: The Qur'ān and Sunnah are central foundations of Islamic thought, while reason and reflection support understanding and intellectual inquiry. Value-added response: Islamic thought connects intellectual activity with ethical responsibility, so knowledge is expected to contribute to beneficial human conduct.

11. Basic response: Muslim intellectual development expanded through encounters with new peoples and intellectual questions. Scholars preserved and transmitted knowledge through teaching, writing and systematic scholarship. Value-added response: This intellectual activity contributed to a culture of learning that forms an important part of the history of Islamic civilisation.

Answers to Pilot Questions 1

Here's your content with the numbering fixed and organized clearly under each part:

Part 1.1 – Meaning and Scope of Islamic Thought

1. Islamic thought is the intellectual engagement of Muslims with Islamic teachings, values, and worldview.
2. Belief, morality, knowledge, society, and human purpose are examples.
3. The **Qur'ān** and **Sunnah** are its foundations.
4. It includes multiple areas of intellectual inquiry rather than one discipline alone.
5. Islamic thought expects knowledge to be connected with responsible and ethical conduct.

Part 1.2 – The Qur'ān and Sunnah as Foundations

1. The Qur'ān provides the central revealed framework for Islamic belief, values, and guidance.
2. The **Sunnah** refers to the teachings, practices, and approved guidance associated with the Prophet Muhammad.
3. The Sunnah explains and exemplifies Qur'ānic guidance and provides a model for conduct.



4. Reason does not replace revelation; it supports reflection and understanding within its framework.
5. Revelation, nature, human society, and knowledge are examples of sources for reflection.

Part 1.3 – Development of Islamic Thought

1. Expansion of Islam, contact with new cultures and languages, and new intellectual questions contributed to scholarship.
2. Teaching, writing, compiling, transmitting texts, and travelling in search of knowledge were key scholarly activities.
3. Diversity shows the breadth and complexity of Islamic intellectual history.
4. Jurisprudence, theology, philosophy, language, and interpretation are examples of disciplines.
5. Different traditions contained different approaches and positions.

Part 1.4 – Islamic Thought and Human Civilisation

1. Knowledge should contribute to beneficial conduct and be used responsibly.
2. Justice, honesty, responsibility, and compassion are central ethical values.
3. These values guide relationships, promote fairness, and support responsible community organisation.
4. Islamic thought explains how knowledge, scholarship, and intellectual exchange contributed to civilisation.
5. It shaped intellectual, ethical, and educational activity that contributed to civilisational development.



References and Attributions 1

Primary Foundations:

The course content supplied for ISS 106 identifies the foundations of Islamic thought as the starting point of the course and connects them with later study of philosophy and civilisation.

Illustrations:

Figure 1.1: Foundations of Islamic Thought

AI-generated suggestion: “Create a clean academic educational diagram showing the foundations of Islamic thought: Qur’ān, Sunnah, reason and reflection, knowledge, ethics and human conduct. Use neutral symbols, clear labels and an uncluttered university-course style.”

Attribution: Prompt designed for AI illustration tools such as Microsoft Designer or DALL·E.

Figure 1.2: Development of Islamic Thought

AI-generated suggestion: “Create a historical educational timeline showing the development of Islamic thought from revelation and Prophetic guidance through early Muslim scholarship, preservation of knowledge and intellectual exchange. Use neutral academic imagery and do not depict sacred personalities.”

Attribution: Prompt designed for AI illustration tools such as Microsoft Designer or DALL·E.

Secondary Sources:

The Qur’ān and Sunnah are treated as the central Islamic foundations relevant to the subject. Detailed historical and intellectual claims should be studied through recognised academic and Islamic scholarship.

General Attribution:



This Series is constructed directly from the supplied ISS 106 course description, learning outcomes and course contents. The sequence expands only the first prescribed area—“The foundations of Islamic thoughts”—while preparing students for the later series on philosophy and civilisation.



Series 2: Philosophy and Civilisation in Islam

Parts and Sub-Parts

2.1 Philosophy in the Islamic Intellectual Tradition

- 2.1.1 Meaning and Scope of Philosophy
- 2.1.2 Philosophy and Islamic Thought
- 2.1.3 Questions of Knowledge, Reality and Ethics

2.2 Islam and the Development of Civilisation

- 2.2.1 Meaning and Features of Civilisation
- 2.2.2 Foundations of Islamic Civilisation
- 2.2.3 Knowledge, Institutions and Social Organisation

2.3 Intellectual and Cultural Life in Islamic Civilisation

- 2.3.1 Scholarship and Centres of Learning
- 2.3.2 Science, Medicine and the Humanities
- 2.3.3 Literature, Arts and Cultural Exchange

2.4 Philosophy, Thought and Civilisational Development

- 2.4.1 Intellectual Inquiry and Social Development
- 2.4.2 Ethics, Knowledge and Civilisational Values
- 2.4.3 Historical Significance of Islamic Civilisation



Introduction

Philosophy and civilisation are important dimensions of the intellectual history of Islam.

Philosophy involves systematic reflection on questions concerning knowledge, reality, existence, human beings and values, while civilisation refers to the wider organisation and achievements of human societies. In Islamic history, these areas interacted with religious thought, scholarship, institutions and cultural exchange.

This Series introduces the meaning and scope of philosophy and considers its relationship with Islamic thought. It then examines the development of Islamic civilisation through knowledge, institutions, social organisation and intellectual activity. Attention is also given to the work of scholars and the development of learning in fields such as science, medicine, literature and the humanities.

The purpose is not to treat philosophy and civilisation as isolated subjects. Rather, the Series examines how intellectual inquiry, ethical values, institutions and the pursuit of knowledge interacted in the historical development of Islamic civilisation. Detailed consideration of philosophy's specific contributions will follow in Series 3.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- SLO 2.1 explain the meaning and scope of philosophy and its relationship with Islamic thought,
- SLO 2.2 describe major features and foundations of Islamic civilisation,
- SLO 2.3 discuss the role of scholarship, institutions and cultural activity in Islamic civilisation,
- SLO 2.4 analyse the relationship between intellectual inquiry, ethical values and civilisational development.



2.1 Philosophy in the Islamic Intellectual Tradition

2.1.1 Meaning and Scope of Philosophy

Philosophy may be understood as disciplined and systematic reflection on fundamental questions about reality, knowledge, existence, human beings and values. Philosophical inquiry asks questions that require reasoned argument and careful examination of assumptions. Its scope can therefore include metaphysics, epistemology, ethics and other areas of inquiry.

Fill in the blank: Philosophy involves systematic reflection on reality, knowledge, existence and _____.

2.1.2 Philosophy and Islamic Thought

Muslim intellectuals encountered philosophical ideas from earlier cultures and engaged with them in different ways. Some scholars employed philosophical reasoning in addressing questions of knowledge, existence and ethics, while others criticised particular philosophical positions. The relationship between philosophy and Islam was therefore complex and included engagement, adaptation, criticism and debate.

Fill in the blank: Muslim engagement with philosophy included adaptation, criticism and intellectual _____.

2.1.3 Questions of Knowledge, Reality and Ethics

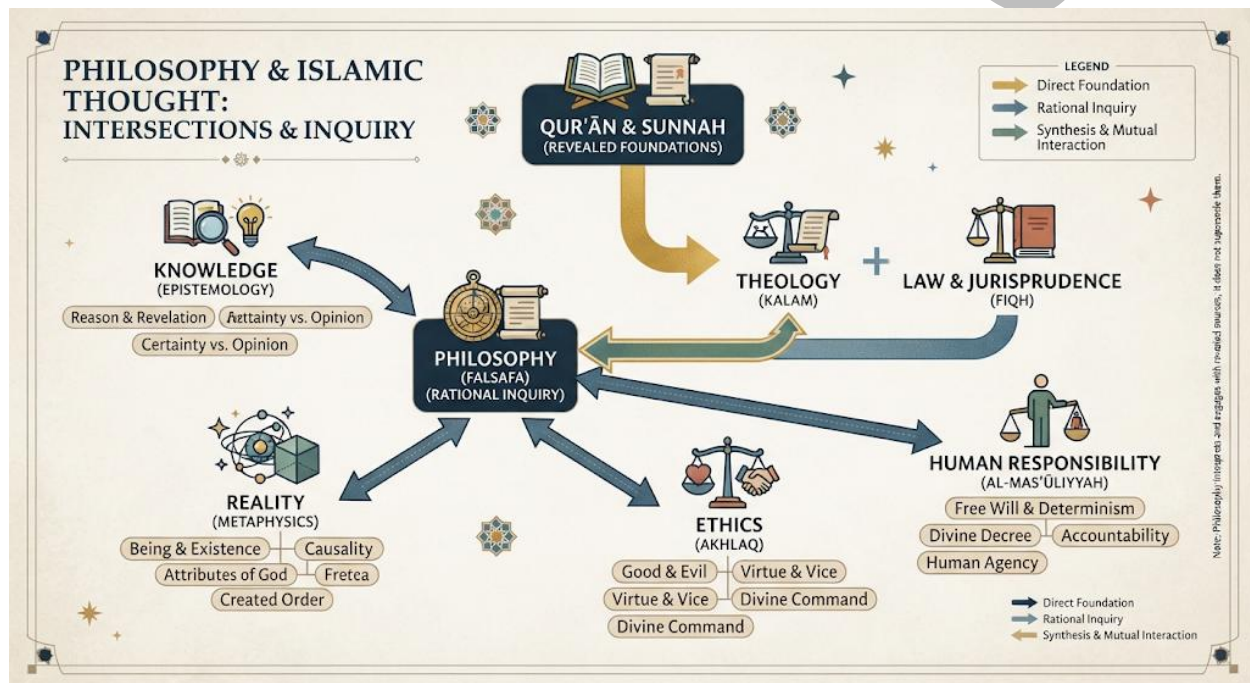
Philosophical questions in the Islamic intellectual tradition included questions about the nature of knowledge, the relationship between reason and revelation, the nature of existence and the basis of ethical conduct. These questions contributed to wider intellectual discussions among Muslim scholars and helped develop different approaches to understanding the world and human responsibility.

Fill in the blank: Questions concerning knowledge, existence and moral conduct are examples of philosophical _____.



Pilot questions 2.1

1. Define philosophy as a field of inquiry.
2. Name four areas that philosophical inquiry may address.
3. Why was the relationship between philosophy and Islamic thought complex?
4. How did Muslim scholars respond to philosophical ideas?
5. Give three examples of philosophical questions relevant to Islamic intellectual history.



2.2 Islam and the Development of Civilisation

2.2.1 Meaning and Features of Civilisation

Civilisation refers to complex forms of organised human society characterised by institutions, knowledge systems, economic activity, culture, social organisation and material development. Civilisation is not measured only by physical achievements; values, learning, institutions and patterns of social life are also important.



Fill in the blank: Civilisation involves organised society, institutions, knowledge, culture and material _____.

2.2.2 Foundations of Islamic Civilisation

Islamic civilisation developed within a religious and ethical framework shaped by Islamic teachings. The pursuit of knowledge, social responsibility, justice, charitable activity and community organisation formed important dimensions of Muslim social life. As Muslim societies expanded, they also interacted with existing cultures and incorporated useful knowledge and practices.

Fill in the blank: Islamic civilisation developed within a religious and _____ framework.

2.2.3 Knowledge, Institutions and Social Organisation

The development of Islamic civilisation involved institutions and social structures that supported learning and public life. Mosques, schools, libraries, hospitals, markets and administrative institutions served different functions. These institutions helped organise social life and created environments in which learning and professional activities could develop.

Fill in the blank: Mosques, schools, libraries and hospitals were among the institutions that supported Islamic _____.

Pilot questions 2.2

1. What is meant by civilisation?
2. Why should civilisation not be measured only by material achievements?
3. Identify three values associated with the development of Islamic civilisation.
4. How did interaction with other cultures affect Muslim societies?
5. Name four institutions that supported learning or social life in Islamic civilisation.



2.3 Intellectual and Cultural Life in Islamic Civilisation

2.3.1 Scholarship and Centres of Learning

Muslim scholars contributed to the preservation, transmission and development of knowledge. Centres of learning provided spaces for teaching, discussion, writing and study. Libraries and scholarly networks also helped texts and ideas move between regions, creating opportunities for intellectual exchange.

Fill in the blank: Centres of learning supported teaching, discussion, writing and intellectual _____.

2.3.2 Science, Medicine and the Humanities

Islamic civilisation witnessed scholarly activity in fields including medicine, mathematics, astronomy, geography, language, history and literature. Scholars often built on earlier knowledge while developing their own observations, classifications, commentaries and methods. These activities formed part of the wider intellectual life of Muslim societies.

Fill in the blank: Medicine, mathematics, astronomy and geography were among the fields of scholarly _____.

2.3.3 Literature, Arts and Cultural Exchange

Literature, calligraphy, architecture and other forms of cultural expression developed across Muslim societies. Contact among different regions encouraged the exchange of languages, artistic forms, technologies and ideas. Islamic civilisation therefore included diverse cultural expressions while maintaining important shared intellectual and religious features.

Fill in the blank: Cultural exchange encouraged the movement of languages, artistic forms, technologies and _____.



Pilot questions 2.3

1. How did centres of learning contribute to Islamic civilisation?
2. Name five fields in which Muslim scholars were active.
3. How did scholars engage with earlier knowledge?
4. Identify three forms of cultural expression in Islamic civilisation.
5. How did cultural exchange influence Muslim societies?

2.4 Philosophy, Thought and Civilisational Development

2.4.1 Intellectual Inquiry and Social Development

Intellectual inquiry can contribute to social development by encouraging investigation, debate, problem-solving and the organisation of knowledge. In Islamic civilisation, scholarly activity interacted with institutions, professional practice and public needs. Intellectual work could therefore have practical effects in education, medicine, administration and other areas.

Fill in the blank: Intellectual inquiry can contribute to social development through investigation, debate and _____.

2.4.2 Ethics, Knowledge and Civilisational Values

Knowledge and intellectual achievement were understood within broader questions of ethical responsibility. Justice, honesty, social responsibility and concern for human welfare provided values through which knowledge and social institutions could be evaluated. Civilisational development therefore involved both intellectual and moral considerations.

Fill in the blank: Islamic civilisational values connected knowledge with ethical _____.



Figure 2.2: Institutions of Islamic Civilisation

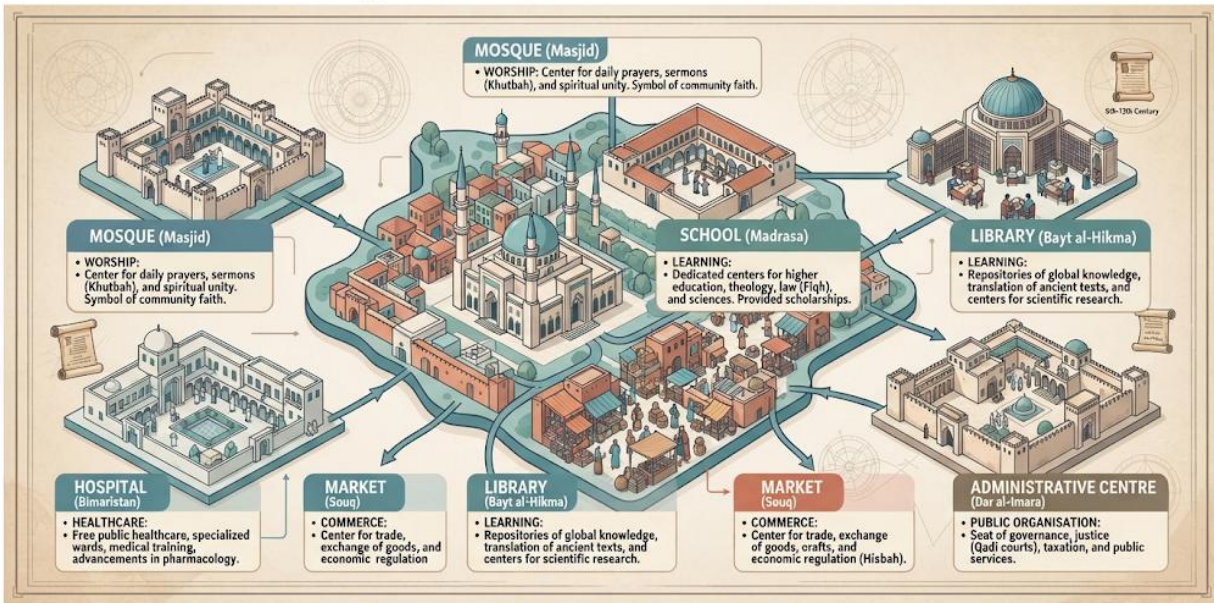


Figure 2.2: Institutions of

2.4.3 Historical Significance of Islamic Civilisation

The historical significance of Islamic civilisation lies in the breadth of its intellectual, cultural and institutional development and its interactions with other societies. Studying this history helps students appreciate the contributions of different categories of people and understand how knowledge moved across regions and periods. The specific contribution of philosophy will be examined in the next Series.

Fill in the blank: Islamic civilisation was characterised by intellectual, cultural and institutional _____.

Pilot questions 2.4

1. How can intellectual inquiry contribute to social development?
2. Why should knowledge be considered alongside ethical responsibility?
3. Name three values that can guide civilisational development.
4. Why is interaction with other societies important in studying Islamic civilisation?



5. What is the focus of the next Series in this course?



Series Summary

This Series examined philosophy and civilisation in the Islamic context. Philosophy was introduced as systematic reflection on fundamental questions concerning knowledge, reality, existence, human beings and values. The Series also explained that Muslim engagement with philosophy historically included different approaches, including adaptation, criticism and debate.

The Series then explored Islamic civilisation as a complex form of organised human society involving institutions, knowledge, culture, social organisation and material development. The role of institutions such as mosques, schools, libraries, hospitals and markets was considered alongside the importance of scholarship and centres of learning.

Finally, the Series examined intellectual and cultural activity in fields such as medicine, mathematics, astronomy, geography, language, history and literature, as well as cultural exchange. It concluded by relating intellectual inquiry and ethical values to civilisational development, preparing students for the study of the specific contributions of philosophy to Islamic civilisation in Series 3.

Glossary of Terms

Philosophy: Disciplined and systematic reflection on fundamental questions concerning knowledge, reality, existence, human beings and values.

Civilisation: A complex form of organised human society expressed through institutions, knowledge, culture, social organisation and material development.

Metaphysics: The branch of philosophical inquiry concerned with fundamental questions about reality and existence.

Epistemology: The study of knowledge, including questions about its nature, sources and justification.

Ethics: The study and evaluation of principles concerning right conduct and moral responsibility.



Scholarship: Systematic study, preservation, interpretation and transmission of knowledge.

Intellectual Exchange: The movement and discussion of ideas, knowledge and methods among people, institutions or societies.

Institution: An organised social structure or establishment serving a particular function in society.



Concept Check Questions 2

Objective Questions

1. What does philosophy involve? (Linked to SLO 2.1)
2. Name two areas of philosophical inquiry. (Linked to SLO 2.1)
3. What is meant by civilisation? (Linked to SLO 2.2)
4. Name two institutions that supported learning in Islamic civilisation. (Linked to SLO 2.3)
5. Why is ethical responsibility relevant to civilisational development? (Linked to SLO 2.4)

Short-Answer Questions

6. Explain the relationship between philosophy and Islamic thought. (Linked to SLO 2.1)
7. Discuss the major features of Islamic civilisation. (Linked to SLO 2.2)
8. Explain the role of institutions and centres of learning in Islamic civilisation. (Linked to SLO 2.3)
9. Discuss how intellectual inquiry and ethical values can contribute to civilisational development. (Linked to SLO 2.4)

Long-Answer Questions

10. Discuss the relationship between philosophy and Islamic thought, paying attention to the different ways Muslim intellectuals engaged with philosophical ideas. (Linked to SLO 2.1)
11. Examine the development of Islamic civilisation and evaluate the roles of knowledge, institutions, cultural exchange and ethical values in its historical development. (Linked to SLO 2.2, SLO 2.3 and SLO 2.4)



Answers to Concept Check Questions 2

Objective Questions

1. Systematic and reasoned reflection on fundamental questions.
2. Metaphysics and epistemology; ethics is another example.
3. Complex organised human society involving institutions, knowledge, culture, social organisation and material development.
4. Schools and libraries; mosques and hospitals are also examples.
5. Because knowledge and institutions affect human life and should be directed by responsible values.

Short-Answer Questions

6. Muslim intellectuals encountered philosophical ideas and engaged with them in different ways, including adaptation, criticism and debate. Philosophical reasoning was used by some scholars in addressing questions of knowledge, existence and ethics, while others criticised particular positions.
7. Islamic civilisation involved organised social life, institutions, knowledge systems, economic activity, culture, social organisation and material development within a religious and ethical framework.
8. Institutions such as mosques, schools, libraries and hospitals supported teaching, study, professional activity, public life and the transmission of knowledge.
9. Intellectual inquiry encourages investigation, debate, problem-solving and knowledge organisation, while ethical values help direct knowledge and institutions towards responsible and beneficial social purposes.

Long-Answer Questions



10. Basic response: Muslim intellectuals engaged with philosophical ideas in different ways, including adaptation, criticism and debate. Value-added response: The interaction was not uniform; different scholars assessed philosophical positions according to their understanding of reason, revelation, knowledge and ethics.

11. Basic response: Islamic civilisation developed through knowledge, institutions, cultural activity and social organisation. Value-added response: Centres of learning, scholarly networks and institutions supported intellectual development, while cultural exchange moved ideas and technologies across regions. Ethical values such as justice and responsibility provided an important framework for evaluating social and intellectual activity.

Answers to Pilot Questions 2

Part 2.1

1. 1. Philosophy is disciplined and systematic reflection on fundamental questions about knowledge, reality, existence, human beings and values.
2. 2. Metaphysics, epistemology, ethics and logic are examples.
3. 3. Because Muslims encountered philosophical ideas and scholars responded to them in different ways.
4. 4. Responses included engagement, adaptation, criticism and debate.
5. 5. Questions about knowledge, reality, existence and ethical conduct.

Part 2.2

1. 1. Civilisation is a complex form of organised human society involving institutions, knowledge, culture, social organisation and material development.



2. 2. Values, knowledge, institutions and social organisation are also important dimensions of civilisation.

3. 3. Knowledge, justice, social responsibility and charitable activity are examples.

4. 4. Muslim societies interacted with existing cultures and incorporated useful knowledge and practices.

5. 5. Mosques, schools, libraries and hospitals; markets and administrative institutions are also examples.

Part 2.3

1. 1. They provided spaces for teaching, discussion, writing and study and supported the transmission of knowledge.

2. 2. Medicine, mathematics, astronomy, geography and history; language and literature are also examples.

3. 3. They preserved earlier knowledge while adding observations, classifications, commentaries and methods.

4. 4. Literature, calligraphy and architecture are examples.

5. 5. It encouraged the exchange of languages, artistic forms, technologies and ideas.

Part 2.4

1. 1. Through investigation, debate, problem-solving and the organisation of knowledge.

2. 2. Because intellectual achievements and institutions affect human life and should be used responsibly.

3. 3. Justice, honesty and social responsibility.

4. 4. It helps explain how knowledge, ideas and practices moved between societies.



5. 5. Series 3: Contributions of Philosophy to Islamic Civilisation.



References and Attributions 2

Course Basis:

The supplied ISS 106 course content identifies “Philosophy and civilisation in Islam” as the second prescribed area. This Series develops that area while leaving the detailed treatment of philosophy's contributions to Islamic civilisation for Series 3.

Illustrations:

Figure 2.1: Philosophy and Islamic Thought

AI-generated suggestion: “Create a clean academic concept map showing philosophy interacting with Islamic thought through questions of knowledge, reality, ethics and human responsibility. Include Qur’ān and Sunnah as the religious foundations without suggesting philosophy replaces revelation. Use neutral academic imagery and no depiction of sacred personalities.”

Attribution: Prompt designed for AI illustration tools such as Microsoft Designer or DALL·E.

Figure 2.2: Institutions of Islamic Civilisation

AI-generated suggestion: “Create an educational historical infographic showing major institutions that supported Islamic civilisation: mosque, school, library, hospital, market and administrative centre. Emphasise their roles in worship, learning, healthcare, commerce and public organisation. Use neutral architecture and academic presentation.”

Attribution: Prompt designed for AI illustration tools such as Microsoft Designer or DALL·E.

Secondary Sources:

The Qur’ān and Sunnah provide the Islamic foundations relevant to the course. Historical and philosophical interpretations should be studied through recognised academic scholarship and Islamic intellectual sources.

General Attribution:



This Series is constructed from the supplied ISS 106 course contents and learning outcomes. It focuses specifically on “Philosophy and civilisation in Islam” and prepares the student for Series 3 on the contributions of philosophy to Islamic civilisation.



SERIES 3: CONTRIBUTIONS OF PHILOSOPHY TO ISLAMIC CIVILISATION

Course Code: ISS 106

Course Title: Basis of Islamic Thought and Civilisation

Credit Load: 2 Units (C; LH 30)

Series: 3 of 5

Series Title: Contributions of Philosophy to Islamic Civilisation

SERIES LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of this Series, the student should be able to:

1. **define and explain** the meaning of philosophy within the development of Islamic civilisation;
2. **identify and explain** major contributions of Muslim philosophers to intellectual life;
3. **analyse** the relationship between philosophical reasoning, Islamic theology, science, medicine, education and political thought;
4. **evaluate** how philosophical ideas contributed to the preservation, development and transmission of knowledge in Islamic civilisation; and
5. **assess** the contributions of major categories of scholars to the intellectual development of Islamic civilisation.



INTRODUCTION

Philosophy played an important role in the intellectual development of Islamic civilisation. As Muslim societies expanded and came into contact with different intellectual traditions, Muslim scholars encountered works and ideas originating from Greek, Persian, Indian and other intellectual environments. These materials stimulated new discussions about knowledge, reason, existence, ethics, society and the relationship between human understanding and revealed religion.

The contribution of philosophy to Islamic civilisation was not limited to abstract speculation. Philosophical methods influenced disciplines such as **logic, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, education, political thought and ethics**. Muslim scholars translated, studied, criticised, developed and transmitted earlier knowledge while also producing original intellectual works.

The history of philosophy in Islamic civilisation was, however, characterised by debate. Muslim philosophers, theologians, jurists and other scholars did not always agree about the proper place or limits of philosophical reasoning. These disagreements themselves contributed to the richness of Islamic intellectual history.

This Series therefore examines philosophy as part of a broader intellectual civilisation. It considers the contributions of philosophical reasoning, major Muslim philosophers and the relationship between philosophy and other fields of knowledge.

PART ONE: PHILOSOPHY AND THE INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT OF ISLAMIC CIVILISATION

3.1.1 Meaning of Philosophy in the Islamic Intellectual Tradition

The term **philosophy** is commonly associated with the systematic investigation of questions concerning knowledge, reality, existence, morality and reasoning.



In the Islamic intellectual tradition, the Greek philosophical heritage became particularly significant through the translation and study of philosophical works. The Arabic term **falsafa** was used for the philosophical tradition associated especially with the study and development of Greek philosophical ideas.

Muslim scholars did not simply reproduce the works they encountered. They interpreted them, criticised aspects of them and attempted to relate philosophical reasoning to the intellectual questions confronting Muslim societies.

Philosophical inquiry therefore became one component of a much wider intellectual environment that included:

- Qur'anic studies;
- Hadith studies;
- Islamic jurisprudence;
- theology (*kalam*);
- mathematics;
- medicine;
- astronomy;
- language and grammar; and
- history.

Check Your Understanding

Question: What is meant by *falsafa* in the context of Islamic intellectual history?

3.1.2 The Translation and Transmission of Knowledge

The development of philosophy in Islamic civilisation was closely associated with the translation and transmission of knowledge.



During the Abbasid period, particularly in Baghdad, scholars and translators worked with texts from earlier intellectual traditions. Works associated with Greek philosophy and science were translated into Arabic, creating access to ideas that could then be studied by Muslim scholars.

Translation was not merely the mechanical transfer of words from one language to another. Translators and scholars had to interpret technical concepts and make them meaningful within an Arabic intellectual environment.

The translated materials subsequently became resources for further scholarship.

Thus, a broad process developed:

Translation → Study → Criticism → Development → Transmission

This process helped Islamic civilisation become an important centre for the preservation and advancement of knowledge.

Check Your Understanding

Question: Why was translation important to the development of philosophy in Islamic civilisation?

3.1.3 Philosophy as a Method of Intellectual Inquiry

Philosophy contributed methods of reasoning that encouraged scholars to examine questions systematically.

Among the important areas were:

- logic and argumentation;
- classification of knowledge;
- analysis of causes;
- questions concerning existence and reality;



- ethical reasoning; and
- political and social thought.

The use of reason did not mean that every Muslim scholar accepted all philosophical conclusions. Instead, philosophical reasoning became part of intellectual debates about what human beings could know and how knowledge should be established.

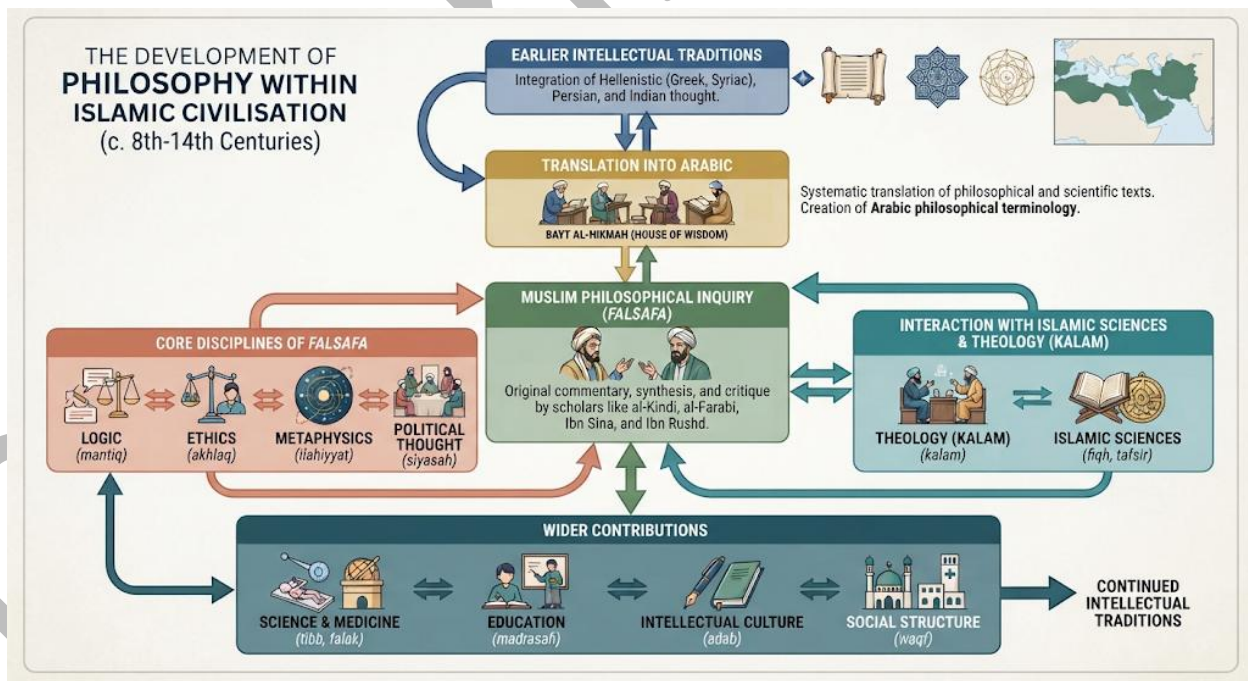
This produced interaction between philosophy, theology and other Islamic sciences.

In-Text Question

A student argues that philosophy contributed nothing to Islamic civilisation because some Muslim scholars criticised philosophers.

Question: What is wrong with this argument?

ILLUSTRATION 1 — FIGURE 3.1



PILOT QUESTIONS — PART ONE

1. Define philosophy in the context of Islamic intellectual history.
2. What is *falsafa*?
3. Explain two reasons translation was important to Islamic intellectual development.
4. Identify three areas of knowledge that interacted with philosophy.
5. Explain why philosophical reasoning could contribute to Islamic civilisation even when some scholars criticised particular philosophical ideas.

PART TWO: MAJOR PHILOSOPHERS AND THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS

3.2.1 Al-Kindi and the Early Development of Islamic Philosophy

Al-Kindi is commonly regarded as one of the earliest major philosophers writing in Arabic. His intellectual activities reflected the effort to engage philosophical knowledge within an Islamic intellectual environment.

He worked across several areas of knowledge and contributed to discussions concerning:

- philosophy;
- logic;
- mathematics;
- medicine;
- music;
- astronomy; and
- the nature of knowledge.



His importance lies partly in his role in helping establish philosophical inquiry as a serious intellectual activity within the Arabic-speaking scholarly world.

Al-Kindi's work illustrates the multidisciplinary character of scholarship in Islamic civilisation. Philosophy was not necessarily separated from scientific and mathematical investigation.

Check Your Understanding

Question: What does Al-Kindi's multidisciplinary scholarship reveal about intellectual life in Islamic civilisation?

3.2.2 Al-Farabi and the Classification of Knowledge

Al-Farabi made important contributions to logic, political philosophy, ethics and the classification of knowledge.

One of his significant intellectual concerns was the organisation of different branches of knowledge and their relationships with one another.

His political philosophy also examined the organisation of society and the qualities required for a properly ordered community.

The study of Al-Farabi demonstrates that philosophy contributed not only to questions about the physical universe but also to questions concerning:

- human conduct;
- education;
- leadership;
- society;
- political organisation; and
- the pursuit of knowledge.



In-Text Question

Why would the classification of knowledge be important to a civilisation that was developing many different branches of scholarship?

3.2.3 Ibn Sina and the Integration of Philosophy and Medicine

Ibn Sina (Avicenna) was a major intellectual figure whose works demonstrate the connection between philosophy and scientific and medical scholarship.

His writings addressed philosophical questions while also contributing significantly to medicine. His medical work, particularly *The Canon of Medicine*, became influential in later intellectual traditions.

Ibn Sina's scholarship illustrates an important feature of Islamic civilisation: scholars could work across disciplinary boundaries.

His philosophical interests included questions concerning:

- existence;
- knowledge;
- causation;
- the human soul; and
- the structure of reality.

His medical scholarship demonstrates how theoretical reasoning could operate alongside empirical and practical investigation.



3.2.4 Al-Ghazali and the Critique of Philosophical Claims

The relationship between philosophy and Islamic thought cannot be understood without considering **Al-Ghazali**.

Al-Ghazali engaged deeply with philosophical arguments and criticised particular positions held by Muslim philosophers. His work demonstrates that intellectual contribution does not always mean agreement.

His critique encouraged further examination of philosophical claims and their relationship to Islamic theology.

This is important for understanding Islamic civilisation because intellectual development often occurs through **debate, criticism and response**.

Al-Ghazali's engagement with philosophy therefore represents an intellectual contribution even though he rejected certain philosophical conclusions.

Higher-Order Question

If criticism can stimulate further intellectual development, can a scholar who rejects a philosophical position still contribute to the development of philosophy?

Explain your answer.

3.2.5 Ibn Rushd and the Defence of Philosophical Reasoning

Ibn Rushd (Averroes) was a major philosopher, jurist and commentator who defended the legitimacy of philosophical reasoning.

He argued for the importance of rational inquiry and maintained that properly conducted philosophical investigation could be compatible with religious understanding.



His commentaries on Aristotle became especially influential and contributed to the transmission and interpretation of Aristotelian philosophy.

His work demonstrates that the relationship between reason and revelation remained an important subject of intellectual discussion.

In-Text Question

What major intellectual issue can be identified from the debate between Al-Ghazali and Ibn Rushd?

PILOT QUESTIONS — PART TWO

1. Identify two areas in which Al-Kindi contributed to intellectual development.
2. What was significant about Al-Farabi's classification of knowledge?
3. Explain the relationship between philosophy and medicine in the work of Ibn Sina.
4. Why is Al-Ghazali important to the history of philosophical debate in Islamic civilisation?
5. What was Ibn Rushd's position concerning philosophical reasoning?
6. Compare the intellectual approaches of Al-Ghazali and Ibn Rushd.
7. Explain why disagreement among scholars can contribute to intellectual development.

PART THREE: PHILOSOPHY AND OTHER FIELDS OF ISLAMIC CIVILISATION

3.3.1 Philosophy and Logic

Logic provided scholars with methods for constructing and evaluating arguments.



The study of logic helped intellectuals distinguish between:

- valid and invalid reasoning;
- evidence and assertion;
- definitions and assumptions;
- sound arguments and faulty arguments.

Logical reasoning became relevant to philosophical discussions and also influenced theological and other scholarly debates.

The development of logical methods therefore strengthened the analytical character of Islamic intellectual life.

Check Your Understanding

Question: How can logical reasoning improve the quality of intellectual discussion?

3.3.2 Philosophy, Science and Medicine

Philosophical inquiry and scientific investigation were interconnected in several areas of Islamic civilisation.

Questions about nature, causation, matter, motion and the structure of the universe encouraged scholars to investigate the natural world.

This intellectual environment supported developments in fields such as:

- astronomy;
- mathematics;
- medicine;
- optics; and
- natural philosophy.



It is important, however, not to claim that every scientific development was directly caused by philosophy. Rather, philosophy formed part of the broader intellectual environment within which scientific questions could be studied.

In-Text Question

Why is it more accurate to describe philosophy as part of the intellectual environment of Islamic science rather than claiming that philosophy alone produced scientific advancement?

3.3.3 Philosophy and Education

Philosophical ideas also contributed to thinking about education and the organisation of knowledge.

Questions concerning the purpose of education, the nature of knowledge and the development of human intellectual capacities became important areas of discussion.

The classification of knowledge helped scholars organise disciplines and identify relationships between different forms of learning.

Education therefore became more than the memorisation of information. It could also involve:

- reasoning;
- analysis;
- debate;
- classification;
- interpretation; and
- intellectual discipline.



3.3.4 Philosophy and Political Thought

Philosophical reasoning also influenced discussions about political organisation and leadership.

Muslim philosophers considered questions such as:

- What makes a good society?
- What qualities should a ruler possess?
- What is justice?
- What is the relationship between knowledge and leadership?
- What is the purpose of political organisation?

Al-Farabi's political philosophy is particularly relevant here because he examined the relationship between the virtuous individual and the well-ordered society.

Such discussions contributed to the development of political thought within Islamic civilisation.

Higher-Order Question

A civilisation may possess political institutions without possessing political philosophy.

Explain the difference between political practice and political thought.

PILOT QUESTIONS — PART THREE

1. What contribution did logic make to Islamic intellectual life?
2. Identify three scientific disciplines that developed within the broader intellectual environment of Islamic civilisation.
3. Explain two ways philosophy contributed to educational thought.
4. What political questions did Muslim philosophers investigate?
5. Distinguish between philosophy's contribution to science and the claim that philosophy alone caused scientific advancement.



6. Explain how classification of knowledge could support educational development.

PART FOUR: THE WIDER CIVILISATIONAL CONTRIBUTION OF PHILOSOPHY

3.4.1 Preservation and Development of Earlier Knowledge

One of the important contributions of Islamic civilisation was the preservation, translation, criticism and development of earlier intellectual works.

Philosophical texts from earlier traditions were translated and studied. Muslim scholars then engaged with those works from within their own intellectual environment.

The process can therefore be understood as:

**Preservation → Translation → Interpretation → Criticism → Development →
Transmission**

The significance of this process lies in the fact that knowledge was not simply stored. It was studied and transformed.

3.4.2 Transmission of Knowledge Beyond the Islamic World

The intellectual achievements of Islamic civilisation later became part of wider networks of knowledge transmission.

Philosophical, medical, mathematical and scientific works written or developed in Arabic were translated into other languages and became available to scholars in other regions.



The works associated with figures such as Ibn Sina and Ibn Rushd became particularly important in subsequent intellectual traditions.

This demonstrates that Islamic civilisation functioned as an important bridge in the movement of knowledge across different intellectual worlds.

In-Text Question

What is the difference between **preserving knowledge** and **transmitting knowledge**?

3.4.3 Philosophy and the Development of Intellectual Culture

The contribution of philosophy should not be measured only by the number of philosophical books produced.

Its wider significance can be seen in the intellectual habits it encouraged:

- systematic reasoning;
- critical examination;
- classification;
- debate;
- argumentation;
- interdisciplinary inquiry; and
- engagement with earlier knowledge.

These intellectual habits contributed to a culture in which scholars could question, defend, criticise and develop ideas.

3.4.4 Categories of Contributors to Islamic Civilisation

The development of Islamic civilisation cannot be attributed to philosophers alone.



Different categories of people contributed to its intellectual and cultural development, including:

Category	Examples of Contributions
Philosophers	Reasoning, metaphysics, ethics, political thought
Theologians	Rational examination of religious doctrines
Jurists	Development and interpretation of Islamic law
Scientists	Investigation of the natural world
Physicians	Medical knowledge and practice
Translators	Transmission of Greek, Persian and other intellectual materials
Teachers and scholars	Education and preservation of knowledge
Rulers and patrons	Support for scholarship and intellectual institutions
Scribes and librarians	Copying, preserving and organising texts

This demonstrates the multidisciplinary character of Islamic civilisation.

Higher-Order Question

If philosophers were only one category among many contributors, why is philosophy still important when studying Islamic civilisation?

3.4.5 Assessing the Contribution of Philosophy

The contribution of philosophy to Islamic civilisation should be evaluated carefully.



It would be inaccurate to claim that philosophy was responsible for every intellectual achievement in Islamic civilisation. At the same time, it would also be inaccurate to dismiss philosophy because philosophical ideas were sometimes criticised.

A balanced assessment recognises that philosophy:

1. introduced and developed systematic forms of reasoning;
2. encouraged engagement with earlier intellectual traditions;
3. contributed to discussions of knowledge and education;
4. influenced debates concerning ethics and political organisation;
5. interacted with scientific and medical scholarship;
6. generated debates with theology and other Islamic sciences; and
7. contributed to the transmission of knowledge beyond the Islamic world.

ILLUSTRATION 2 — PLATE 3.2



SERIES SUMMARY

This Series examined the **contributions of philosophy to Islamic civilisation**.

You first studied the meaning of philosophy and *falsafa* within the Islamic intellectual tradition. You learned that philosophical thought developed partly through the translation, study and criticism of earlier intellectual traditions.

You then examined the contributions of major Muslim philosophers, including **Al-Kindi, Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, Al-Ghazali and Ibn Rushd**. Their works demonstrate the diversity of philosophical activity in Islamic civilisation and the importance of intellectual debate.

The Series also examined the relationship between philosophy and **logic, science, medicine, education and political thought**. Philosophy provided methods of reasoning and encouraged systematic investigation, although its contribution should be understood as part of a wider intellectual environment rather than as the sole cause of scientific or cultural development.

Finally, you examined the broader civilisational contribution of philosophy through the **preservation, development and transmission of knowledge**. You also learned that philosophers were only one category of contributors. The development of Islamic civilisation involved theologians, jurists, scientists, physicians, translators, teachers, rulers, patrons and other scholars.

The central lesson is therefore that philosophy contributed significantly to Islamic civilisation through **reasoning, intellectual debate, knowledge classification, interdisciplinary inquiry and the development and transmission of knowledge**.



GLOSSARY

Falsafa: The philosophical tradition in Islamic intellectual history, particularly associated with the engagement with Greek philosophical thought.

Philosophy: Systematic inquiry into questions concerning knowledge, reality, existence, reasoning, morality and related subjects.

Logic: The systematic study of valid reasoning and argument.

Metaphysics: The branch of philosophy concerned with questions about existence, reality and the fundamental nature of things.

Ethics: The study of moral principles, conduct and questions concerning right and wrong.

Political Philosophy: Philosophical examination of society, government, leadership, justice and political organisation.

Intellectual Tradition: A continuing body of ideas, methods and debates transmitted and developed across generations.

Translation Movement: The historical process through which works from earlier intellectual traditions were translated, particularly into Arabic, and subsequently studied and developed.

Civilisation: A complex social and cultural system involving institutions, knowledge, values, technology, political organisation and cultural production.

Transmission of Knowledge: The movement of knowledge, ideas and texts from one person, community, region or generation to another.



CONCEPT CHECKS

Objective / Analytical Questions

1. What is meant by *falsafa* in Islamic intellectual history?

[SLO 3.1]

2. Identify three major Muslim philosophers discussed in this Series.

[SLO 3.2]

3. What role did translation play in the development of philosophy in Islamic civilisation?

[SLO 3.1, SLO 3.4]

4. Identify three fields that interacted with philosophical thought in Islamic civilisation.

[SLO 3.3]

5. Why should Al-Ghazali's criticism of philosophy not be interpreted as proof that philosophy had no intellectual significance?

[SLO 3.2, SLO 3.4]

Short-Answer / Higher-Order Questions

6. Explain how the translation and study of earlier intellectual works contributed to the development of Islamic philosophy.

[SLO 3.1, SLO 3.4]

7. Compare the intellectual contributions of Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina.

[SLO 3.2]

8. Explain two ways philosophy interacted with science and medicine in Islamic civilisation.

[SLO 3.3]



9. How did philosophical reasoning contribute to discussions about political organisation and leadership?

[SLO 3.3]

10. Explain why the development of Islamic civilisation should not be attributed to philosophers alone.

[SLO 3.5]

Long-Answer / Evaluation Questions

11. *“The contribution of philosophy to Islamic civilisation was greater than the production of philosophical books.”* Discuss this statement with reference to reasoning, education, science, political thought and knowledge transmission.

[SLO 3.3, SLO 3.4]

12. Evaluate the contributions of Al-Kindi, Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, Al-Ghazali and Ibn Rushd to Islamic intellectual civilisation.

[SLO 3.2, SLO 3.4]

13. “Intellectual disagreement is itself a form of intellectual development.” Discuss this statement with reference to the debates between philosophy and Islamic theology.

[SLO 3.2, SLO 3.4]

14. Assess the extent to which philosophy contributed to the preservation, development and transmission of knowledge in Islamic civilisation.

[SLO 3.4]



ANSWERS TO CONCEPT CHECKS

Objective / Analytical Questions

1. *Falsafa* refers to the philosophical tradition within Islamic intellectual history, especially the engagement with and development of Greek philosophical ideas in the Islamic scholarly environment.
2. Any three of the following: **Al-Kindi, Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, Al-Ghazali and Ibn Rushd.**
3. Translation made earlier intellectual works available to Arabic-speaking scholars. These works could then be studied, interpreted, criticised, developed and transmitted to other intellectual communities.
4. Any three: logic, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, science, education, theology or political thought.
5. Al-Ghazali's criticism contributed to intellectual debate by forcing philosophical claims to be examined critically. His work demonstrates that disagreement can itself stimulate further intellectual inquiry.

Short-Answer / Higher-Order Questions

6. Translation provided access to earlier intellectual traditions. Muslim scholars studied the translated works, interpreted difficult concepts, criticised some ideas and developed others. The process therefore transformed inherited knowledge into a resource for new intellectual work.
7. Al-Farabi contributed significantly to logic, classification of knowledge, ethics and political philosophy. Ibn Sina contributed to philosophy while also making major contributions to medicine and related intellectual disciplines. Both demonstrate the multidisciplinary character of Islamic scholarship.



8. Philosophy encouraged systematic reasoning about nature and causation, while the wider intellectual environment supported investigation in medicine, astronomy, mathematics and other sciences. Philosophical reasoning and scientific investigation could therefore interact without philosophy being regarded as the sole cause of scientific progress.

9. Philosophers examined questions concerning justice, leadership, the purpose of society, the qualities of rulers and the relationship between knowledge and political organisation. Al-Farabi's political thought is particularly important in this regard.

10. Islamic civilisation developed through the contributions of many groups, including philosophers, theologians, jurists, physicians, scientists, translators, teachers, rulers and patrons. Philosophy was one important component of a much larger intellectual and institutional system.

Long-Answer / Evaluation Questions

11. A strong answer should explain that philosophy contributed not merely through philosophical texts but through methods of reasoning, classification of knowledge, education, political thought, intellectual debate and interaction with scientific and medical inquiry. It should also recognise the contributions of other scholarly disciplines.

12. A strong answer should identify the distinctive contribution of each thinker. Al-Kindi helped establish philosophical inquiry in Arabic intellectual culture; Al-Farabi developed logic, political philosophy and knowledge classification; Ibn Sina integrated philosophy with medicine and other sciences; Al-Ghazali critically examined philosophical claims; and Ibn Rushd defended philosophical reasoning and produced influential Aristotelian commentaries.

13. A strong answer should explain that disagreements between philosophers and theologians generated questions about reason, revelation, knowledge and the limits of philosophical inquiry. The debates encouraged scholars to clarify, defend and criticise intellectual positions.

14. A strong answer should examine translation, preservation, interpretation, criticism and transmission of knowledge. It should also distinguish between preserving existing knowledge



and producing new knowledge, while recognising that philosophy operated alongside theology, science, medicine, mathematics and other fields.

ANSWERS TO PILOT QUESTIONS

Part One

1. Philosophy is systematic inquiry into questions concerning knowledge, reality, existence, reasoning and morality.
2. *Falsafa* refers to the philosophical tradition within Islamic intellectual history, especially its engagement with Greek philosophical thought.
3. Translation provided access to earlier knowledge and created materials that Muslim scholars could interpret, criticise and develop.
4. Logic, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, theology, education and political thought are examples.
5. Criticism of philosophical ideas was itself part of intellectual debate. Philosophical reasoning therefore remained significant even where particular conclusions were rejected.

Part Two

1. Al-Kindi contributed to philosophy, logic, mathematics, medicine, astronomy and other fields.
2. Al-Farabi organised branches of knowledge and examined their relationships, while also developing political and ethical thought.
3. Ibn Sina combined philosophical inquiry with medical scholarship, demonstrating the multidisciplinary character of Islamic intellectual life.
4. Al-Ghazali critically examined philosophical claims and contributed to the debate concerning reason, philosophy and Islamic theology.
5. Ibn Rushd defended the legitimacy of properly conducted philosophical reasoning and produced important commentaries on Aristotle.



6. Al-Ghazali critically challenged certain philosophical positions, while Ibn Rushd strongly defended philosophical reasoning and its compatibility with religious understanding.
7. Disagreement forces scholars to provide evidence, clarify arguments, defend positions and respond to criticisms, thereby stimulating intellectual development.

Part Three

1. Logic provided methods for constructing, analysing and evaluating arguments.
2. Astronomy, mathematics, medicine, optics and natural philosophy are examples.
3. Philosophy contributed to thinking about the purpose of education, the nature of knowledge and the organisation and classification of disciplines.
4. Political philosophers examined justice, leadership, the organisation of society and the relationship between knowledge and political authority.
5. Philosophy formed part of the broader intellectual environment supporting scientific inquiry; it should not be treated as the sole cause of every scientific development.
6. Classification helped scholars organise disciplines, understand relationships among branches of knowledge and structure educational inquiry.

Part Four

1. Preservation involves keeping knowledge available, while transmission involves carrying or communicating that knowledge to other people, regions or generations.
2. Philosophers were one among several groups responsible for the development of Islamic civilisation. Their contribution must therefore be understood alongside those of theologians, jurists, scientists, physicians, translators, teachers and patrons.
3. Philosophy encouraged systematic reasoning, intellectual debate, knowledge classification, interdisciplinary inquiry and engagement with earlier traditions.
4. It contributed to preserving, interpreting, developing and transmitting philosophical, scientific, medical and other intellectual materials.
5. The broader contribution of philosophy includes reasoning, education, scientific and medical inquiry, political thought, intellectual debate and knowledge transmission.



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Illustration Attribution

Figure 3.1 — The Intellectual Contribution of Philosophy to Islamic Civilisation

AI-generated educational illustration prompt provided in this Series.

Plate 3.2 — A Centre of Intellectual Activity in Islamic Civilisation

AI-generated educational illustration prompt provided in this Series.



SERIES 4: PHILOSOPHIES IN OTHER CIVILISATIONS

PARTS AND SUB-PARTS

4.1 Philosophy in the Greek Civilisation

- 4.1.1 The Meaning and Scope of Greek Philosophy
- 4.1.2 Socrates, Plato and Aristotle
- 4.1.3 Major Themes in Greek Philosophical Thought

4.2 Philosophy in Indian Civilisation

- 4.2.1 Foundations of Indian Philosophical Thought
- 4.2.2 Major Indian Philosophical Traditions
- 4.2.3 Knowledge, Ethics and Human Existence

4.3 Philosophy in Chinese Civilisation

- 4.3.1 Foundations of Chinese Philosophical Thought
- 4.3.2 Confucianism and Social Ethics
- 4.3.3 Daoism and the Relationship with Nature

4.4 African Philosophical Thought and Comparative Perspectives

- 4.4.1 African Approaches to Knowledge and Existence
- 4.4.2 Community, Morality and Human Relations
- 4.4.3 Comparing Philosophical Traditions



INTRODUCTION

Human societies have always asked fundamental questions about **knowledge, existence, morality, society, leadership and the nature of reality**. These questions did not originate in one civilisation. Different civilisations developed their own intellectual traditions in response to the problems and experiences of their societies.

In the previous Series, you examined how philosophy contributed to Islamic civilisation. This Series broadens your perspective by examining philosophical traditions that developed in **Greek, Indian, Chinese and African civilisations**. The purpose is not to rank one civilisation above another, but to help you recognise the variety of ways human beings have approached philosophical questions.

The study of other civilisations is also important for understanding Islamic intellectual history. Muslim scholars encountered and engaged with intellectual traditions beyond the Arabian Peninsula, particularly through processes of translation, scholarship and cultural contact. Studying these traditions therefore gives you a wider basis for understanding the intellectual environment in which Islamic civilisation developed.

You will begin with **Greek philosophy**, examining figures such as Socrates, Plato and Aristotle and their approaches to knowledge, ethics, reality and politics. You will then examine **Indian philosophical traditions**, focusing on their concern with knowledge, existence, ethics and human liberation. The third Part examines **Chinese philosophy**, particularly Confucian and Daoist thought. Finally, you will examine **African philosophical thought** and compare the major traditions studied.

SERIES LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of this Series, you should be able to:



1. **describe** major characteristics of philosophical thought in Greek, Indian, Chinese and African civilisations;
2. **identify** major philosophers or philosophical traditions associated with these civilisations;
3. **compare** their approaches to knowledge, morality, society, human existence and reality;
4. **analyse** similarities and differences among selected philosophical traditions; and
5. **evaluate** the relevance of studying different civilisational philosophies to the understanding of world intellectual history.

PART ONE: PHILOSOPHY IN THE GREEK CIVILISATION

4.1.1 The Meaning and Scope of Greek Philosophy

Greek philosophy occupies an important place in the history of philosophy because Greek thinkers developed systematic approaches to questions about **nature, knowledge, morality, politics and existence**.

Earlier Greek intellectual traditions included attempts to explain natural phenomena without relying exclusively on mythological explanations. Philosophers asked questions such as:

- What is the basic substance of the universe?
- How did the world come into existence?
- What does it mean to know something?
- What makes an action morally good?
- What is justice?
- What makes a society well ordered?

These questions demonstrate that philosophy was concerned with both the **natural world** and **human life**.



Greek philosophy should not, however, be treated as the only source of philosophical thought in the ancient world. Rather, it represents one major philosophical tradition among several traditions that developed in different civilisations.

In-Text Question

Complete the statement:

Greek philosophers investigated questions concerning nature, knowledge, morality, politics and _____.

4.1.2 Socrates, Plato and Aristotle

Three of the most influential figures in classical Greek philosophy are **Socrates, Plato and Aristotle**.

Socrates

Socrates is associated particularly with ethical inquiry and the examination of human beliefs.

His approach involved questioning assumptions and encouraging people to examine whether their beliefs were logically defensible.

The Socratic approach therefore placed importance on:

- questioning;
- dialogue;
- examination of beliefs; and
- the search for rational justification.



Plato

Plato, a student of Socrates, developed philosophical discussions concerning knowledge, reality, ethics and political organisation.

In his philosophical writings, Plato explored questions about the nature of justice, the organisation of society and the distinction between changing appearances and more fundamental realities.

His philosophical thought therefore extended beyond individual morality into questions concerning **education, leadership and the ideal society**.

Aristotle

Aristotle, a student of Plato, made contributions across a very wide range of subjects, including:

- logic;
- ethics;
- politics;
- biology;
- metaphysics;
- rhetoric; and
- natural philosophy.

His work illustrates the broad scope of ancient philosophical inquiry. Aristotle's approach to knowledge involved systematic classification, observation and analysis.

In-Text Question

Which of the three Greek thinkers discussed above is particularly associated with the development of formal logical analysis and extensive classification of knowledge?



4.1.3 Major Themes in Greek Philosophical Thought

Greek philosophical thought addressed several major themes.

Knowledge

Greek philosophers questioned how human beings acquire reliable knowledge and how knowledge differs from opinion.

Ethics

Philosophers examined what constitutes a good life and what makes human conduct virtuous.

Politics

Questions of justice, government, citizenship and leadership were central to political philosophy.

Reality

Philosophers investigated the nature of existence and the relationship between appearance and reality.

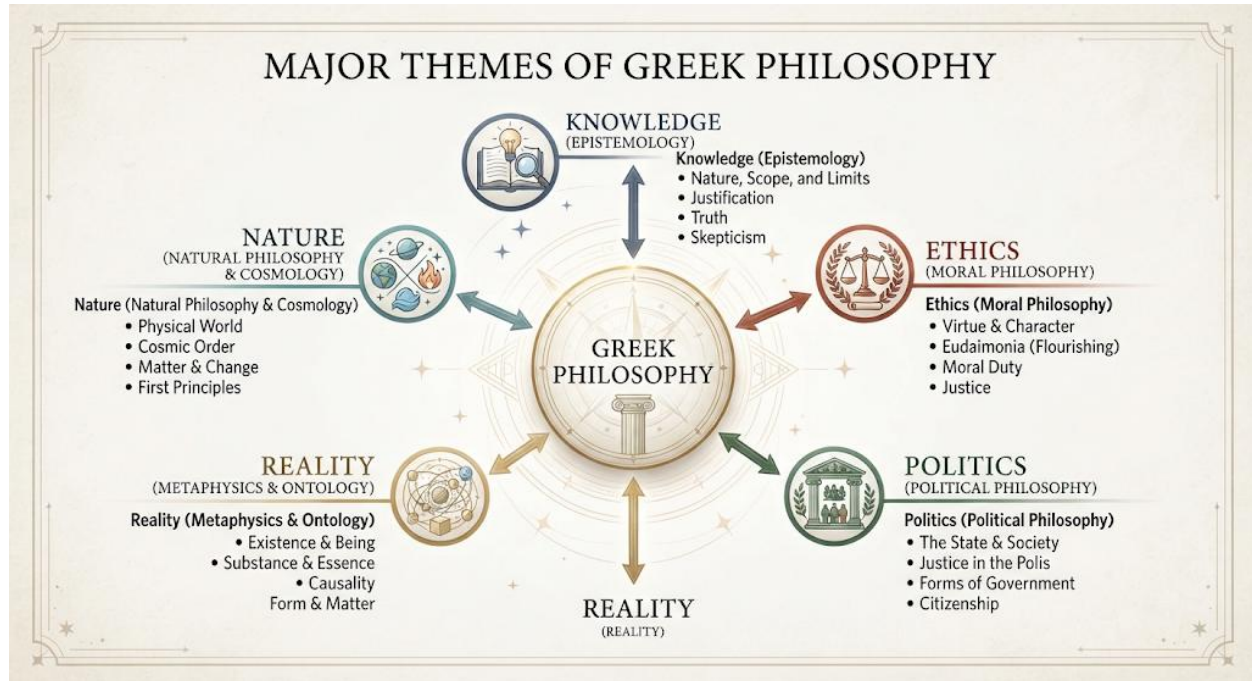
Nature

Some early philosophers attempted to explain the natural world through rational investigation of its principles and causes.

These themes later influenced other intellectual traditions, including the philosophical traditions encountered by Muslim scholars.



ILLUSTRATION 1 — FIGURE 4.1



PILOT QUESTIONS — PART ONE

1. Greek philosophy investigated questions concerning:
 - A. Only mythology
 - B. Nature, knowledge, ethics, politics and reality
 - C. Only warfare
 - D. Only agriculture
2. Who is particularly associated with questioning assumptions through dialogue?
 - A. Socrates
 - B. Confucius
 - C. Laozi
 - D. Aristotle
3. Plato's philosophical interests included questions about:
 - A. Justice and political organisation
 - B. Only astronomy
 - C. Only agriculture
 - D. Trade alone



4. Which Greek philosopher made major contributions to logic, ethics, politics and natural philosophy?
- A. Socrates
 - B. Aristotle
 - C. Confucius
 - D. Plato
5. Mention two major themes investigated by Greek philosophers.

PART TWO: PHILOSOPHY IN INDIAN CIVILISATION

4.2.1 Foundations of Indian Philosophical Thought

Indian philosophical thought developed through diverse intellectual and religious traditions.

Indian philosophy is therefore not a single system. It contains several traditions that approached questions concerning:

- reality;
- knowledge;
- consciousness;
- morality;
- human suffering;
- the self; and
- liberation.

Some traditions developed in close relationship with religious and spiritual ideas, while philosophical reasoning was also used to examine questions about knowledge and existence.



A major feature of Indian philosophical thought is the close attention given to the relationship between **human existence, knowledge, ethical conduct and liberation**.

In-Text Question

Why would it be inaccurate to describe Indian philosophy as one single philosophical system?

4.2.2 Major Indian Philosophical Traditions

Indian philosophical traditions are diverse. Among the major traditions are the philosophical schools associated with **Hindu thought, Buddhist thought** and **Jain thought**, alongside several distinct schools within broader Indian philosophical development.

Hindu Philosophical Traditions

The Hindu philosophical tradition contains multiple schools with different approaches to reality, knowledge and the self.

Some traditions examine the relationship between the individual self and ultimate reality, while others emphasise methods of knowledge, logic or disciplined practice.

Buddhist Philosophy

Buddhist philosophical thought gives substantial attention to the nature of suffering, impermanence, human attachment and the possibility of liberation.

It also investigates questions concerning consciousness, causation and ethical conduct.

Jain Philosophy

Jain philosophical thought places considerable emphasis on ethical discipline and the nature of knowledge.



An important feature is the recognition that human knowledge may be limited and that reality can be approached from different perspectives.

Check Your Understanding

Identify **two areas of concern** shared by at least some Indian philosophical traditions.

4.2.3 Knowledge, Ethics and Human Existence

Indian philosophical traditions often connect philosophical reflection with practical questions about human life.

Knowledge is not necessarily treated as an abstract possession. It may be connected to the transformation of the individual and the pursuit of a better mode of existence.

Ethics therefore becomes important because human conduct affects both individual and social life.

Questions may include:

- What is the nature of the self?
- Why do human beings experience suffering?
- What constitutes right conduct?
- What is the relationship between knowledge and liberation?
- How should a person live?

This demonstrates that philosophy can serve both a **theoretical** and a **practical** purpose.

Higher-Order In-Text Question

If a philosophical system connects knowledge with how a person should live, is philosophy functioning only as theoretical speculation?



Explain your answer.

PILOT QUESTIONS — PART TWO

1. Why should Indian philosophy be described as diverse?
2. Mention three areas examined by Indian philosophical traditions.
3. What philosophical issue is strongly associated with Buddhist thought?
4. What is one important ethical emphasis in Jain philosophical thought?
5. Explain the relationship between knowledge and human conduct in Indian philosophical traditions.
6. Why can philosophy have both theoretical and practical dimensions?

PART THREE: PHILOSOPHY IN CHINESE CIVILISATION

4.3.1 Foundations of Chinese Philosophical Thought

Chinese philosophical thought developed in response to questions concerning **social order, morality, government, human relationships and harmony with nature.**

Two traditions are particularly important for introductory study:

- **Confucianism**
- **Daoism**

These traditions are not identical. They offer different approaches to questions concerning society, morality, human behaviour and the proper way of life.



Chinese philosophy therefore provides an important example of how philosophical thought can develop around practical questions of social and personal conduct.

In-Text Question

Name the two major Chinese philosophical traditions examined in this Part.

4.3.2 Confucianism and Social Ethics

Confucius focused substantially on human relationships, moral conduct, education and social order.

Confucian thought places importance on the cultivation of morally responsible individuals who can contribute to an orderly society.

Important concepts associated with Confucian thought include:

- moral cultivation;
- respect within relationships;
- education;
- social responsibility;
- proper conduct; and
- responsible leadership.

The family and wider social relationships are significant because society is understood partly through the responsibilities individuals have towards one another.

Confucian political thought therefore connects personal morality with public leadership.

A society cannot easily achieve good government if those responsible for governing lack moral discipline.



In-Text Question

According to the general Confucian approach discussed here, why is personal moral development important to good government?

4.3.3 Daoism and the Relationship with Nature

Daoism, associated traditionally with figures such as **Laozi**, presents a different emphasis.

Daoist thought is associated with the **Dao**, often understood as the Way or underlying order of reality.

Daoist philosophy places importance on living in harmony with the natural order rather than attempting to impose excessive control.

A commonly discussed principle is **wu wei**, often translated as “non-forcing” or “effortless action.” The concept does not simply mean doing nothing. It can refer to acting appropriately and without unnecessary force against the natural course of things.

Daoist thought therefore raises questions about:

- human desires;
- simplicity;
- natural processes;
- harmony;
- appropriate action; and
- the relationship between human beings and nature.

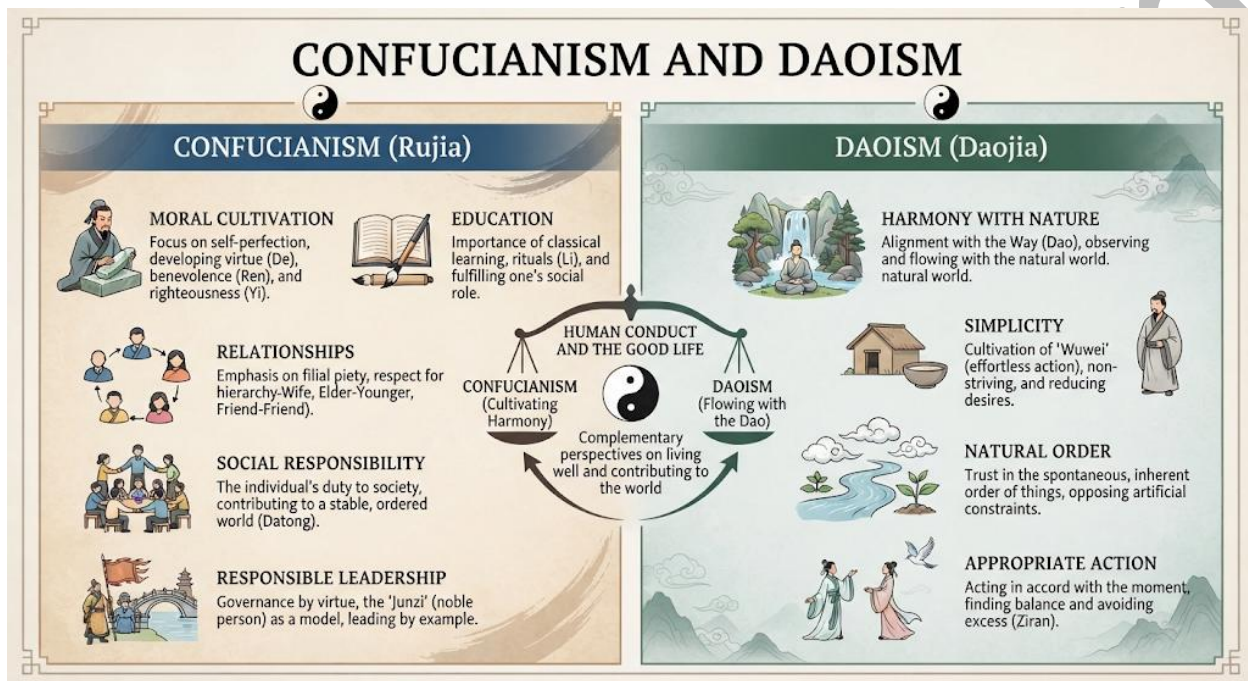
Higher-Order In-Text Question

Confucianism places strong emphasis on social responsibility, while Daoism gives greater emphasis to harmony with the natural order.



Does this mean the two traditions have nothing in common? Explain.

ILLUSTRATION 2 — PLATE 4.2



PILOT QUESTIONS — PART THREE

1. Identify two major Chinese philosophical traditions discussed in this Part.
2. What is a major concern of Confucian philosophy?
3. Explain why education is important in Confucian thought.
4. What does the Dao represent in Daoist thought?
5. Explain the general meaning of *wu wei*.
6. Identify one major difference between Confucian and Daoist philosophical emphasis.
7. Explain one possible similarity between Confucianism and Daoism.



PART FOUR: AFRICAN PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHT AND COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES

4.4.1 African Approaches to Knowledge and Existence

African philosophical thought encompasses diverse intellectual traditions across the continent.

It is important to avoid treating Africa as though it possesses one single philosophical system.

Different African societies developed different approaches to questions concerning:

- human existence;
- community;
- morality;
- knowledge;
- leadership;
- religion; and
- relationships between human beings and the wider world.

African philosophical thought can be studied through oral traditions, proverbs, ethical systems, religious ideas, political concepts and the works of modern African philosophers.

The existence of oral traditions does not mean that philosophical reflection is absent. Philosophy can be expressed through **reasoned reflection, concepts, arguments and critical examination**, whether these are transmitted orally or in written form.

In-Text Question

Why should African philosophy not be treated as one uniform philosophical system?



4.4.2 Community, Morality and Human Relations

A recurring theme in many African philosophical discussions is the importance of **community and human relationships**.

Proverbs and oral traditions can communicate ideas about:

- responsibility;
- wisdom;
- justice;
- cooperation;
- leadership;
- respect for elders; and
- the consequences of individual actions for the community.

However, you should avoid assuming that every African society holds exactly the same values or expresses them in the same way.

African philosophical thought can therefore provide important perspectives on the relationship between the **individual and the community**.

In-Text Question

How can proverbs and oral traditions serve as sources for philosophical reflection?

4.4.3 Comparing Philosophical Traditions

The purpose of comparative philosophy is not simply to make a list of similarities.

A proper comparison asks:

1. What question is each tradition attempting to answer?
2. What assumptions does it make?



3. What method does it use?
4. What answer does it provide?
5. What practical consequences follow from that answer?

Consider the following broad comparison:

Tradition	Major Areas of Emphasis
Greek	Reason, knowledge, ethics, politics, reality and nature
Indian	Knowledge, existence, self, ethics, suffering and liberation
Chinese	Social order, moral cultivation, relationships, harmony and nature
African	Community, morality, human relations, knowledge, leadership and existence

This table provides a starting point rather than an exhaustive description of any civilisation.

Higher-Order In-Text Question

Suppose two civilisations both discuss morality but reach different conclusions about what constitutes a good life.

Does this mean one civilisation is philosophical and the other is not? Explain your reasoning.

4.4.4 Similarities and Differences among Civilisational Philosophies

Several broad similarities can be identified across the traditions studied in this Series.

Concern with Human Conduct

Greek, Indian, Chinese and African philosophical traditions all contain discussions concerning how human beings should live.



Concern with Knowledge

Different traditions ask questions about how human beings know what they claim to know.

Concern with Society

Philosophical traditions have considered questions concerning relationships, leadership and social organisation.

Concern with Reality

Different civilisations have developed explanations concerning the nature of existence and the human place within reality.

However, the **answers and methods differ**.

For example:

- Greek traditions often emphasised systematic rational argument;
- Indian traditions developed multiple approaches to knowledge, existence and liberation;
- Chinese traditions gave substantial attention to moral conduct, social order and harmony;
- African traditions contain diverse approaches to community, morality, existence and human relationships.

The comparison should therefore recognise both **shared philosophical questions** and **different intellectual answers**.

4.4.5 Relevance to the Study of Islamic Civilisation

Understanding other philosophical traditions helps you appreciate Islamic intellectual history from a broader perspective.



Islamic civilisation did not develop in complete isolation from other intellectual worlds. Muslim scholars encountered, translated, discussed and responded to ideas from earlier and neighbouring civilisations.

The study of other civilisations therefore helps you understand:

- intellectual exchange;
- translation;
- criticism;
- adaptation;
- transmission of knowledge; and
- the development of new intellectual positions.

This does not mean that Islamic thought was simply copied from other civilisations. Rather, engagement with other traditions formed part of the wider intellectual environment within which Muslim scholars developed their own arguments.

Higher-Order Question

Why is it important to distinguish **intellectual influence** from **simple copying** when studying the relationship between civilisations?

PILOT QUESTIONS — PART FOUR

1. Why should African philosophy not be treated as one uniform system?
2. Mention four areas that can be examined within African philosophical thought.
3. How can oral traditions provide material for philosophical reflection?
4. Identify one major concern shared by Greek and African philosophical traditions.
5. Identify one broad area in which Indian and Chinese philosophical traditions can be compared.



6. Why should similarities between philosophical traditions not lead us to assume that they are identical?
7. Explain why the study of other civilisations is relevant to understanding Islamic intellectual history.
8. Distinguish between intellectual influence and simple copying.



SERIES SUMMARY

This Series has examined **philosophies in other civilisations**, in accordance with the ISS 106 course content.

You began with **Greek philosophy**, where you examined questions concerning knowledge, ethics, politics, reality and nature. You studied the contributions of **Socrates, Plato and Aristotle** and saw how philosophical inquiry addressed both individual conduct and the organisation of society.

You then examined **Indian philosophical thought**. You learned that Indian philosophy consists of diverse traditions rather than one single system. The traditions discussed in the Series raise questions concerning knowledge, existence, the self, ethics, suffering and liberation.

The third Part examined **Chinese philosophy**, particularly Confucianism and Daoism. Confucian thought places strong emphasis on moral cultivation, education, relationships and social responsibility, while Daoist thought emphasises harmony with the natural order, simplicity and appropriate action.

Finally, you examined **African philosophical thought** and developed a comparative framework for studying different civilisations. You learned that African philosophy is diverse and can be studied through oral traditions, proverbs, ethical systems, religious ideas and written philosophical works.

The central lesson of this Series is that **philosophical questions are found across civilisations, but different societies have developed different approaches and answers**. Studying these differences enables you to understand world intellectual history more critically and provides a broader context for understanding the development of Islamic thought.



GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Civilisation: A complex social and cultural system characterised by institutions, knowledge, values, political organisation and cultural development.

Philosophy: Systematic and critical inquiry into questions concerning knowledge, existence, reality, morality and related subjects.

Ethics: The philosophical study of morality, conduct and questions concerning right and wrong.

Metaphysics: The branch of philosophy concerned with existence, reality and the fundamental nature of things.

Logic: The systematic study of reasoning and the principles used to distinguish valid from invalid arguments.

Confucianism: A Chinese philosophical tradition associated with Confucius and strongly concerned with moral cultivation, relationships, education and social order.

Daoism: A Chinese philosophical tradition associated traditionally with Laozi and concerned with the Dao, harmony with nature and appropriate action.

Dao: Commonly translated as “the Way”; a central concept in Daoist thought concerning the underlying way or order of reality.

Wu wei: A Daoist concept commonly interpreted as non-forcing or action that does not unnecessarily oppose the natural course of things.

Socratic Method: A method of inquiry involving systematic questioning and dialogue to examine assumptions and beliefs.

Liberation: In several Indian philosophical traditions, a state associated with freedom from forms of suffering, ignorance or bondage.



Oral Tradition: Knowledge, values, ideas and cultural materials transmitted primarily through speech and communal practice.

Comparative Philosophy: The systematic study and comparison of philosophical ideas and traditions from different intellectual contexts.

Intellectual Influence: The process by which ideas, methods or concepts from one intellectual tradition affect or stimulate thought in another.



CONCEPT CHECKS

Objective and Analytical Questions

1. Identify three major Greek philosophers discussed in this Series.

[SLO 4.2]

2. Which of the following is most strongly associated with Confucian philosophy?

A. Moral cultivation and social responsibility

B. Rejection of education

C. Complete withdrawal from society

D. Scientific experimentation alone

[SLO 4.1]

3. What is a major concern found in several Indian philosophical traditions?

[SLO 4.1]

4. What is *wu wei* generally associated with?

[SLO 4.1]

5. Why should African philosophy not be described as one uniform philosophical system?

[SLO 4.1, SLO 4.3]

Short-Answer / Higher-Order Questions

6. Compare the philosophical concerns of Greek and Indian traditions.

[SLO 4.3]

7. Explain two differences between Confucianism and Daoism.

[SLO 4.3]



8. Explain how African oral traditions can contribute to philosophical reflection.

[SLO 4.1, SLO 4.3]

9. Identify two philosophical questions that appear across different civilisations and explain how different traditions may answer them differently.

[SLO 4.3, SLO 4.4]

10. Explain why the study of other civilisations is relevant to the study of Islamic intellectual history.

[SLO 4.5]

Long-Answer / Evaluation Questions

11. Compare the approaches to human conduct found in Greek, Indian, Chinese and African philosophical traditions.

[SLO 4.3, SLO 4.4]

12. “Different civilisations may ask similar philosophical questions while providing different answers.” Discuss this statement with examples from at least three traditions studied in this Series.

[SLO 4.3, SLO 4.4]

13. Evaluate the importance of studying other civilisations when examining the development of Islamic thought and civilisation.

[SLO 4.5]

14. “Comparative philosophy should identify both similarities and differences rather than declaring one tradition superior.” Discuss.

[SLO 4.4, SLO 4.5]



ANSWERS TO CONCEPT CHECKS

Objective and Analytical Questions

1. Socrates, Plato and Aristotle.
2. **A. Moral cultivation and social responsibility.**
3. Indian philosophical traditions address questions concerning knowledge, existence, the self, morality, suffering and liberation.
4. *Wu wei* is associated with Daoist ideas of non-forcing or acting without unnecessary resistance to the natural course of things.
5. Because African societies have diverse histories, cultures, languages, religious traditions and intellectual systems. African philosophical thought therefore contains multiple approaches rather than one universally identical system.

Short-Answer / Higher-Order Questions

6. Both Greek and Indian traditions investigate questions concerning knowledge, existence, morality and human life. However, their specific traditions and methods differ. Greek philosophy includes strong traditions of rational argument concerning nature, ethics and politics, while Indian philosophical traditions contain diverse approaches to the self, suffering, knowledge and liberation.
7. Confucianism strongly emphasises moral cultivation, education, relationships and social responsibility. Daoism places greater emphasis on harmony with the natural order, simplicity and appropriate or non-forcing action. Their emphases differ, although both address questions concerning how human beings should live.



8. Oral traditions can preserve concepts concerning morality, wisdom, responsibility, leadership and human relationships. Proverbs, stories and other forms of oral expression can therefore provide material through which philosophical ideas are communicated and examined.

9. Questions such as “What is a good life?” and “What is knowledge?” appear across different traditions. However, the answers differ. For example, Greek philosophers developed rational approaches to ethics and knowledge, Indian traditions connected knowledge with questions of existence and liberation, while Chinese traditions often connected good conduct with social harmony or harmony with nature.

10. Islamic civilisation developed through interaction with wider intellectual worlds. Muslim scholars encountered, translated, studied, criticised and developed ideas from other traditions. Understanding these traditions therefore helps students appreciate the broader intellectual environment of Islamic civilisation.

Long-Answer / Evaluation Questions

11. A strong answer should compare how each tradition approaches human conduct. Greek philosophy may be discussed through virtue, ethics and rational inquiry; Indian traditions through ethical conduct, suffering, knowledge and liberation; Confucianism through moral cultivation and social responsibility; Daoism through harmony and appropriate action; and African traditions through community, morality and human relationships. The answer should avoid treating any civilisation as intellectually uniform.

12. A strong answer should identify common questions such as knowledge, morality, existence and the good life, and then demonstrate that different traditions developed different answers. Examples should be drawn from at least three of the civilisations studied.

13. A strong answer should explain that studying other civilisations provides context for understanding intellectual exchange, translation, criticism, adaptation and transmission of



knowledge. It should also emphasise that intellectual influence does not automatically mean that Islamic thought was simply copied from other civilisations.

14. A strong answer should explain that comparative philosophy seeks analytical understanding rather than simple ranking. It should identify genuine similarities while also examining differences in assumptions, methods, concepts and conclusions.

ANSWERS TO PILOT QUESTIONS

Part One

1. **B. Nature, knowledge, ethics, politics and reality.**
2. **A. Socrates.**
3. **A. Justice and political organisation.**
4. **B. Aristotle.**
5. Any two: knowledge, ethics, politics, reality or nature.

Part Two

1. Indian philosophy contains multiple traditions and schools with different views concerning knowledge, existence, ethics and liberation.
2. Knowledge, existence, ethics, the self, suffering and liberation.
3. Suffering, impermanence, attachment, consciousness and liberation are important areas.
4. Jain thought strongly emphasises ethical discipline and the complexity or limitations of human knowledge.
5. Knowledge can be connected to the transformation of the individual and to questions concerning how one should live.
6. Philosophy can investigate abstract questions about reality and knowledge while also addressing practical questions concerning conduct and human life.



Part Three

1. Confucianism and Daoism.
2. Moral cultivation, social responsibility, education, relationships and social order.
3. Education contributes to the development of morally responsible individuals capable of contributing positively to society.
4. The Dao is commonly understood as “the Way” and refers to a central concept concerning the underlying order or way of reality.
5. It generally refers to non-forcing or acting without unnecessary resistance to the natural course of things.
6. Confucianism emphasises moral cultivation and social relationships, while Daoism places greater emphasis on harmony with the natural order.
7. Both address questions concerning appropriate human conduct and the good life, although they approach these questions differently.

Part Four

1. African societies have diverse histories, cultures, languages and intellectual traditions.
2. Community, morality, knowledge, leadership, human existence, religion and human relationships.
3. Proverbs and oral traditions can communicate ideas concerning wisdom, morality, responsibility, justice and human relationships.
4. Both can address questions concerning morality, human relationships, knowledge and social organisation.
5. Both contain diverse traditions concerned with knowledge, existence, ethics and human conduct, although their concepts and conclusions differ.
6. Similar questions do not necessarily produce identical answers. Philosophical traditions are shaped by their particular intellectual, cultural and historical contexts.
7. Other civilisations formed part of the wider intellectual environment with which Islamic civilisation interacted through scholarship, translation, debate and transmission of knowledge.



8. Intellectual influence means that ideas or methods stimulate or affect another intellectual tradition; simple copying implies reproducing ideas without substantial interpretation, criticism or development.



PARTS AND SUB-PARTS

5.1 Understanding Civilisations in the Contemporary World

- 5.1.1 Meaning and Characteristics of Civilisation
- 5.1.2 Continuity and Change in Civilisations
- 5.1.3 Civilisations and Contemporary Society

5.2 Contemporary Parallels in Knowledge and Intellectual Development

- 5.2.1 Knowledge and Education
- 5.2.2 Science, Technology and Innovation
- 5.2.3 Intellectual Exchange among Civilisations

5.3 Contemporary Parallels in Social, Political and Economic Life

- 5.3.1 Governance and Social Organisation
- 5.3.2 Ethics, Human Relations and Social Responsibility
- 5.3.3 Economic Organisation and Development

5.4 Civilisational Interaction in the Contemporary World

- 5.4.1 Globalisation and Cultural Interaction
- 5.4.2 Dialogue, Conflict and Cooperation
- 5.4.3 Contemporary Relevance of Civilisational Heritage

SERIES LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of this Series, the student should be able to:

1. **explain** the meaning and major characteristics of civilisation in a contemporary context;
2. **identify** areas in which contemporary societies demonstrate parallels with earlier civilisations;
3. **compare** selected institutions, intellectual practices and social values across civilisations;
4. **analyse** the effects of interaction, exchange and globalisation on contemporary civilisations; and
5. **evaluate** the continuing relevance of civilisational heritage to contemporary society.



INTRODUCTION

A civilisation is not simply a collection of buildings, monuments or historical achievements. It includes the **knowledge, institutions, values, technologies, social organisation, economic systems and cultural practices** through which societies organise human life.

Civilisations change over time. Some institutions disappear, while others survive in modified forms. Knowledge may be preserved and transmitted from one generation to another, while new discoveries and technologies transform how people live.

The contemporary world therefore contains important **parallels with earlier civilisations**. Modern universities, libraries, scientific institutions, systems of governance, commercial networks and centres of cultural exchange may perform functions that earlier institutions also performed, although their structures and technologies are different.

The study of contemporary parallels does not mean claiming that modern societies are identical to earlier civilisations. Rather, it involves examining **continuities, changes, similarities and differences**.

For students of Islamic thought and civilisation, this comparison is particularly important. It provides an opportunity to examine how historical intellectual and institutional achievements remain relevant to contemporary questions concerning knowledge, education, ethics, governance, social responsibility, technological development and intercultural relations.

PART ONE: UNDERSTANDING CIVILISATIONS IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

5.1.1 Meaning and Characteristics of Civilisation

Civilisation can be understood as a complex pattern of social and cultural development involving organised institutions, knowledge systems, values, technologies and forms of social organisation.

A civilisation may therefore be examined through several dimensions:

- **intellectual** — knowledge, education and scholarship;
- **political** — governance and administration;
- **economic** — production, trade and distribution;
- **social** — relationships and institutions;
- **technological** — tools, techniques and innovation;



- **cultural** — language, art, literature and customs; and
- **ethical or philosophical** — ideas concerning human conduct and the good society.

No single feature is sufficient by itself to define a civilisation.

In-Text Question

Why would it be inadequate to define civilisation only in terms of monuments and physical structures?

5.1.2 Continuity and Change in Civilisations

Civilisations are neither completely static nor completely disconnected from their past.

Some elements may demonstrate **continuity**, while others undergo significant **change**.

For example, societies have long needed institutions for:

- education;
- administration;
- communication;
- economic exchange;
- preservation of knowledge; and
- social regulation.

However, the way these functions are performed changes over time.

A traditional manuscript library and a modern digital library both preserve and provide access to knowledge, but the technologies and organisational systems involved are very different.

This distinction between **function and form** is important when comparing civilisations.

Function may remain similar while form changes.

Check Your Understanding

Give one example of an institution whose **function** has remained important while its **form or technology** has changed.



5.1.3 Civilisations and Contemporary Society

Contemporary societies are shaped by both historical inheritance and new developments.

Modern institutions often emerge through the interaction of:

Historical knowledge → adaptation → innovation → contemporary institutions

This means that the contemporary world should not be understood as completely separated from earlier civilisations.

Historical civilisations contributed ideas, institutions, technologies and cultural practices that were preserved, modified or transmitted in different forms.

At the same time, contemporary societies develop new solutions to problems created by population growth, technological change, global communication and changing social conditions.

Higher-Order In-Text Question

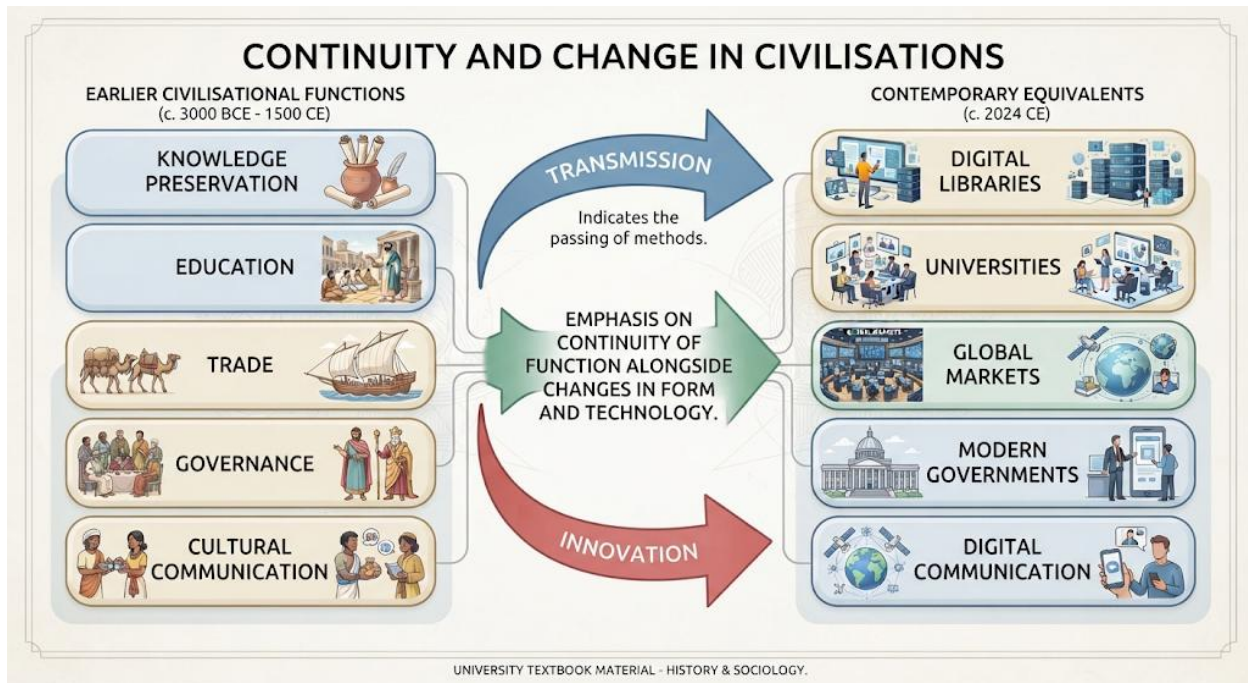
If a modern institution performs a function similar to an institution in an earlier civilisation but uses completely different technology, should it be regarded as a continuation, a parallel, or something entirely new?

Give reasons for your answer.

ILLUSTRATION 1 — FIGURE 5.1

Continuity and Change in Civilisations





PILOT QUESTIONS — PART ONE

1. Define civilisation in a contemporary context.
2. Identify four dimensions through which civilisation can be studied.
3. Explain the difference between continuity and change.
4. Why is the distinction between function and form useful when comparing civilisations?
5. Give two examples of functions that both earlier and contemporary societies require.
6. Explain why contemporary society should not be understood as completely disconnected from earlier civilisations.

PART TWO: CONTEMPORARY PARALLELS IN KNOWLEDGE AND INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT

5.2.1 Knowledge and Education

Education has been central to the development of civilisations.

Earlier civilisations established systems for teaching, preserving and transmitting knowledge. Contemporary societies continue to perform these functions through:

- schools;
- universities;



- libraries;
- research institutes;
- museums; and
- digital learning platforms.

The major difference lies partly in the scale and technology of knowledge production and distribution.

Contemporary students can access information from many parts of the world almost instantly. Earlier scholars depended more heavily on manuscripts, teachers, libraries and direct scholarly networks.

Despite these differences, the fundamental purpose of organised education remains significant:

to preserve knowledge, develop understanding and prepare individuals to contribute to society.

In-Text Question

What basic educational function is shared by a medieval centre of learning and a modern university?

5.2.2 Science, Technology and Innovation

Scientific and technological development is a major feature of contemporary civilisation.

Modern societies rely heavily on:

- information technology;
- medicine;
- engineering;
- transportation;
- communication systems;
- digital technologies; and
- scientific research.

However, scientific and technological development has a historical dimension. Knowledge develops through accumulated investigation, criticism, experimentation and transmission.

The relationship between earlier and contemporary civilisations can therefore be studied through the movement of knowledge across time and geographical boundaries.

The important lesson is that scientific knowledge is not produced in isolation. Scholars build upon earlier knowledge, modify existing explanations and develop new methods.



Higher-Order In-Text Question

Why is the statement “**modern technology appeared without any historical intellectual foundation**” inadequate?

5.2.3 Intellectual Exchange among Civilisations

Contemporary intellectual development occurs within an increasingly interconnected world.

Students, researchers and institutions exchange ideas across national and cultural boundaries through:

- academic conferences;
- publications;
- universities;
- international research;
- digital communication; and
- collaborative projects.

This represents a contemporary form of **intellectual exchange**.

Earlier civilisations also participated in intellectual exchange, although the speed and technology of communication were different.

The history of Islamic civilisation provides an important example of intellectual interaction, particularly through translation, scholarship and engagement with knowledge from different intellectual traditions.

The contemporary world has expanded the scale of such interaction.

Check Your Understanding

Mention three modern channels through which intellectual exchange occurs.

PILOT QUESTIONS — PART TWO

1. Identify four institutions involved in contemporary education and knowledge preservation.
2. Explain one similarity between earlier centres of learning and modern universities.
3. Identify four areas in which contemporary societies rely on science and technology.
4. Why does scientific development have a historical dimension?



5. Explain the importance of intellectual exchange among civilisations.
6. Mention three contemporary channels of intellectual exchange.
7. Explain why contemporary intellectual development cannot be understood as completely isolated from earlier knowledge.

PART THREE: CONTEMPORARY PARALLELS IN SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC LIFE

5.3.1 Governance and Social Organisation

Every organised society must develop mechanisms for making decisions, maintaining order and managing collective affairs.

Earlier civilisations developed different forms of:

- political leadership;
- administration;
- law;
- taxation;
- public institutions; and
- social organisation.

Contemporary societies also possess systems of governance and administration, although their structures vary widely.

Modern governments may include:

- legislatures;
- executive institutions;
- courts;
- local governments;
- regulatory bodies; and
- public agencies.

The comparison should not assume that ancient and modern institutions are identical. Rather, the useful question is:

What social function does each institution perform, and how has that function changed over time?



In-Text Question

Why should students compare the **functions** of political institutions rather than simply compare their names?

5.3.2 Ethics, Human Relations and Social Responsibility

Civilisations have always confronted questions about how people should treat one another.

Contemporary society continues to debate issues concerning:

- justice;
- responsibility;
- honesty;
- human dignity;
- social cooperation;
- leadership; and
- obligations to others.

These questions have parallels in philosophical and religious traditions from earlier civilisations.

Islamic thought, for example, places importance on ethical conduct and responsibility. Other civilisational traditions have also developed ideas concerning justice, social obligations, community and responsible conduct.

The existence of contemporary ethical debates demonstrates that philosophical questions about human behaviour remain relevant.

In-Text Question

Why do questions about justice and responsible human conduct remain relevant even when societies become technologically advanced?

5.3.3 Economic Organisation and Development

Economic activity is another area in which contemporary societies have parallels with earlier civilisations.

Earlier societies participated in:

- agriculture;



- craft production;
- trade;
- markets;
- taxation; and
- long-distance commercial exchange.

Contemporary economies continue to involve production, exchange and distribution, but operate through much more complex systems.

Modern economic life includes:

- financial institutions;
- multinational corporations;
- international trade;
- digital commerce;
- industrial production; and
- global supply chains.

The underlying need to organise economic activity remains, while the scale and mechanisms have changed.

Higher-Order In-Text Question

How can the study of earlier commercial networks help a student understand contemporary global trade without assuming that the two systems are identical?

PILOT QUESTIONS — PART THREE

1. Identify three functions performed by political institutions.
2. Give four examples of modern political institutions.
3. Explain why ethical questions remain important in contemporary civilisation.
4. Identify three economic activities common to earlier societies.
5. Mention four features of contemporary economic organisation.
6. Explain one similarity and one difference between earlier trade and contemporary global commerce.
7. Why should comparisons between historical and contemporary institutions avoid assuming that they are identical?



PART FOUR: CIVILISATIONAL INTERACTION IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

5.4.1 Globalisation and Cultural Interaction

The contemporary world is characterised by extensive interaction among societies.

Globalisation refers broadly to increasing connections among societies through communication, trade, migration, technology, media and other forms of interaction.

These connections allow:

- ideas to circulate rapidly;
- cultural products to cross borders;
- businesses to operate internationally;
- students to study abroad;
- researchers to collaborate; and
- communities to communicate across great distances.

Globalisation can therefore increase interaction among civilisations.

However, interaction does not necessarily eliminate cultural differences. Societies may adopt certain external influences while maintaining distinctive cultural identities.

In-Text Question

Does increased global interaction necessarily mean that all cultures will become identical?

Explain.

5.4.2 Dialogue, Conflict and Cooperation

Civilisational interaction can produce different outcomes.

It may encourage:

Dialogue

Different communities exchange ideas and seek mutual understanding.



Cooperation

Societies work together to address shared problems such as education, health, scientific research, environmental concerns and economic development.

Competition

Groups may compete for economic, political or technological advantage.

Conflict

Differences in interests, values, political objectives or interpretations can produce tensions.

The study of civilisations should therefore not assume that interaction is automatically positive or negative. The outcome depends on the circumstances and the way societies manage their relationships.

In-Text Question

Identify two positive and two potentially negative outcomes of interaction among civilisations.

5.4.3 Contemporary Relevance of Civilisational Heritage

Civilisational heritage remains relevant because societies continue to draw upon their historical experiences when thinking about contemporary issues.

Heritage can provide:

- intellectual resources;
- ethical perspectives;
- cultural identity;
- historical awareness;
- educational material; and
- examples of institutional development.

For students of Islamic thought and civilisation, studying the intellectual heritage of Islam can help develop a deeper understanding of how earlier Muslim societies approached knowledge, education, social organisation and relations with other communities.

However, historical heritage should not be treated as a complete solution to every contemporary problem.

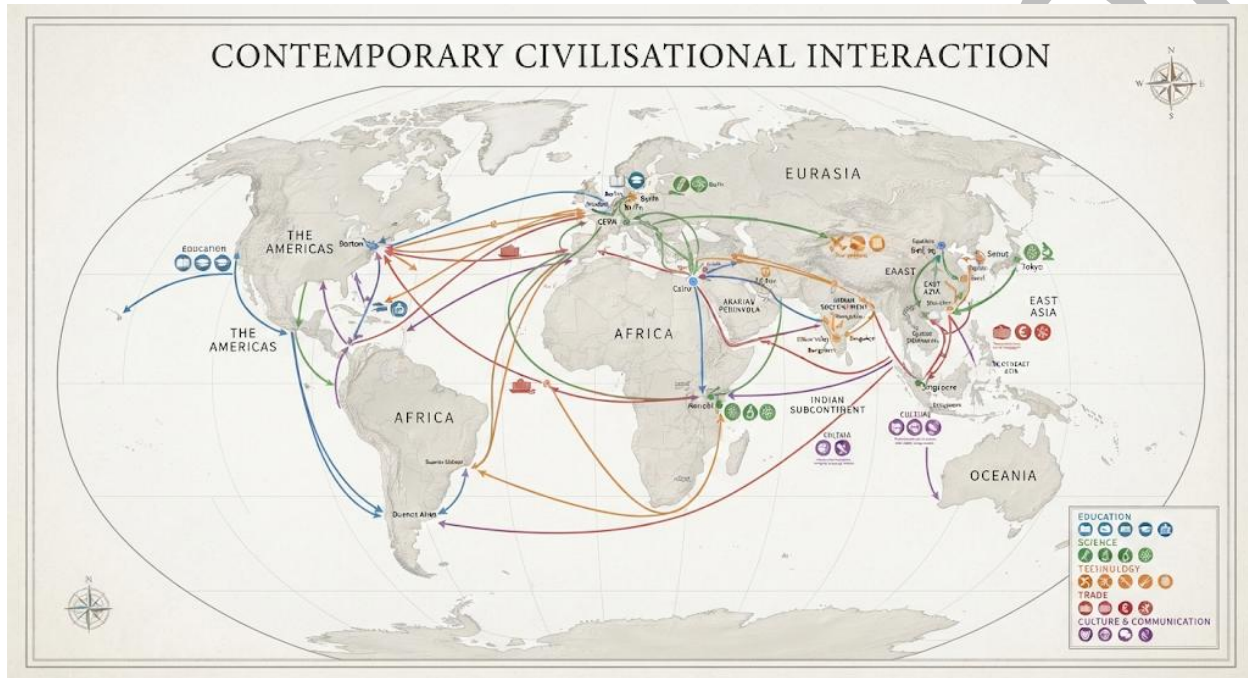
A responsible approach involves:



Understanding the past → identifying relevant principles → examining present circumstances → adapting appropriately

Historical knowledge can inform contemporary thinking without eliminating the need for independent analysis.

ILLUSTRATION 2 — PLATE 5.2



5.4.4 Applying Civilisational Knowledge to Contemporary Problems

The study of civilisation becomes meaningful when it develops the student's ability to think critically about contemporary society.

Consider issues such as:

- How should education respond to technological change?
- How should societies balance cultural identity with global interaction?
- How should technology be governed ethically?
- How can different communities cooperate despite cultural differences?
- How can historical knowledge contribute to contemporary development?

These questions demonstrate why the study of civilisation is not merely an exercise in memorising historical facts.

The student should be able to move from:



Historical knowledge

to

Critical comparison

to

Contemporary application.

Higher-Order In-Text Question

A student says:

“History is only about the past and therefore has nothing to do with contemporary development.”

Using the material in this Series, explain why this statement is inadequate.

PILOT QUESTIONS — PART FOUR

1. Define globalisation in a contemporary civilisational context.
2. Mention three ways globalisation increases interaction among societies.
3. Identify two positive outcomes of civilisational interaction.
4. Identify two potentially negative outcomes of civilisational interaction.
5. Explain why increased global interaction does not necessarily eliminate cultural differences.
6. What is the value of civilisational heritage in contemporary society?
7. Why should historical heritage not be treated as a complete solution to every modern problem?
8. Explain the relationship between historical knowledge, critical comparison and contemporary application.



SERIES SUMMARY

This Series examined the **contemporary parallels of civilisations**, completing the fifth and final thematic area of ISS 106.

You began by examining the meaning and characteristics of civilisation. You learned that civilisation includes intellectual, political, economic, social, technological, cultural and ethical dimensions. You also learned to distinguish between **continuity and change** and between the **function** of an institution and its historical form.

You then examined contemporary parallels in **knowledge and intellectual development**. Education, libraries, universities and research institutions continue functions that earlier societies also considered important: preserving, developing and transmitting knowledge. Modern science and technology operate within a long history of accumulated intellectual development.

The third Part examined parallels in **social, political and economic life**. Contemporary societies, like earlier societies, must organise governance, social relationships and economic activity. However, modern institutions are not identical to historical institutions; they operate at different scales and through different technologies.

Finally, you examined **civilisational interaction in the contemporary world**. Globalisation has increased communication, trade, education, research and cultural interaction among societies. Such interaction can produce dialogue and cooperation, but it can also produce competition and conflict.

The central lesson of this Series is that **civilisations change without becoming completely disconnected from their intellectual and institutional pasts**. Contemporary society contains both continuities and transformations. The responsible study of civilisation therefore requires students to understand historical heritage, compare it critically with contemporary realities and determine where historical knowledge remains relevant.

GLOSSARY

Civilisation: A complex social and cultural system involving institutions, knowledge, values, technologies, political organisation and cultural practices.

Continuity: The persistence of an idea, institution, practice or function across different periods.

Change: The transformation of institutions, practices, ideas or systems over time.

Globalisation: Increasing connections among societies through communication, trade, migration, technology, media and other forms of interaction.



Intellectual Exchange: The movement and discussion of ideas, knowledge and scholarly practices between individuals, communities or civilisations.

Civilisational Heritage: The accumulated intellectual, cultural, institutional and material achievements inherited from earlier generations.

Institution: An organised structure or established system designed to perform particular social functions.

Adaptation: The modification of an idea, institution or practice so that it can function under new circumstances.

Innovation: The development or application of new ideas, methods, technologies or practices.

Governance: The processes and institutions through which collective affairs are managed and decisions are made.

Social Responsibility: The recognition that individuals and institutions have obligations towards other members of society.

Global Economy: An interconnected economic system involving production, trade, finance and exchange across national boundaries.

Cultural Interaction: Contact and exchange between people or societies with different cultural traditions.

Civilisational Dialogue: Communication and intellectual engagement between different civilisational or cultural traditions aimed at understanding and exchange.

CONCEPT CHECKS

Objective and Analytical Questions

1. Which of the following is **not** normally a dimension through which civilisation can be examined?

- A. Intellectual
- B. Political
- C. Economic
- D. Biological inheritance

[SLO 5.1]



2. What is meant by continuity in the study of civilisations?

[SLO 5.1]

3. Explain the difference between the **function** of an institution and its **form**.

[SLO 5.3]

4. Identify three contemporary institutions involved in knowledge development and preservation.

[SLO 5.2]

5. What is globalisation?

[SLO 5.4]

Short-Answer / Higher-Order Questions

6. Explain two ways contemporary education parallels education in earlier civilisations.

[SLO 5.2, SLO 5.3]

7. Why is modern scientific and technological development connected to the history of knowledge?

[SLO 5.2]

8. Compare one function of historical political institutions with a corresponding function in contemporary governance.

[SLO 5.3]

9. Explain two ways globalisation has changed interaction among civilisations.

[SLO 5.4]

10. Why can civilisational heritage be relevant to contemporary society without providing a complete solution to every contemporary problem?

[SLO 5.5]

Long-Answer / Evaluation Questions

11. “Contemporary civilisations are both continuations of the past and products of change.”

Discuss this statement with appropriate examples.

[SLO 5.1, SLO 5.5]

12. Compare the functions of knowledge institutions in earlier civilisations with those of contemporary universities, libraries and research institutions.

[SLO 5.2, SLO 5.3]



13. Evaluate the positive and negative consequences of increased interaction among civilisations in the contemporary world.

[SLO 5.4]

14. “Historical civilisational heritage should inform contemporary development but should not replace critical thinking.” Discuss.

[SLO 5.5]

ANSWERS TO CONCEPT CHECKS

Objective and Analytical Questions

1. D. Biological inheritance.

2. Continuity refers to the persistence of an idea, institution, practice or function across different historical periods.

3. The **function** is the purpose or role an institution performs, while its **form** refers to the particular structure or method through which that function is performed.

4. Universities, libraries, research institutes, schools, museums and digital learning platforms are acceptable examples.

5. Globalisation refers broadly to increasing connections among societies through communication, trade, migration, technology, media and other forms of interaction.

Short-Answer / Higher-Order Questions

6. Both earlier and contemporary societies establish institutions for teaching, preserving knowledge and developing intellectual abilities. The major differences concern scale, technology and methods of communication.

7. Modern science and technology develop through accumulated knowledge, investigation, criticism, experimentation and transmission. Contemporary discoveries therefore form part of a continuing history of intellectual development rather than appearing without historical foundations.

8. Earlier political institutions performed functions such as administration, decision-making and maintenance of social order. Contemporary governments continue these functions through institutions such as legislatures, executive bodies, courts and regulatory agencies, although their structures differ.



9. Globalisation has increased the speed and scale of communication and expanded opportunities for international education, trade, research and cultural exchange. It has also increased the frequency with which societies encounter different ideas and cultural practices.

10. Heritage can provide historical knowledge, intellectual resources, ethical perspectives and examples of institutional development. However, contemporary problems occur under different circumstances and require critical analysis and appropriate adaptation rather than simple reproduction of historical practices.

Long-Answer / Evaluation Questions

11. A strong answer should explain both continuity and change. It should demonstrate that functions such as education, governance, economic exchange and knowledge preservation existed in earlier societies but have been transformed by modern institutions and technologies.

12. A strong answer should compare the preservation, organisation and transmission of knowledge in earlier centres of learning with contemporary universities, libraries and research institutions. The answer should recognise both functional similarities and technological differences.

13. A strong answer should discuss dialogue, cooperation, educational exchange, scientific collaboration and economic opportunities as positive outcomes, while considering competition, cultural tension, inequality or conflict as possible negative outcomes. The student should avoid presenting global interaction as automatically positive or negative.

14. A strong answer should explain that historical heritage can provide valuable knowledge and perspectives but cannot automatically resolve contemporary problems. Critical analysis is necessary to determine which historical principles remain relevant and how they may appropriately be adapted to present circumstances.

ANSWERS TO PILOT QUESTIONS

Part One

1. Civilisation is a complex pattern of social and cultural development involving institutions, knowledge, values, technologies and forms of social organisation.
2. Intellectual, political, economic, social, technological, cultural and ethical/philosophical dimensions.
3. Continuity refers to elements that persist across time, while change refers to their transformation or replacement.



4. It allows students to recognise that an institution can perform a similar social function even when its structure and technology have changed.
5. Education, governance, economic exchange, knowledge preservation and communication.
6. Contemporary societies inherit, adapt and transform knowledge, institutions and practices developed in earlier periods.

Part Two

1. Schools, universities, libraries, research institutes, museums and digital learning platforms.
2. Both provide organised environments for teaching, learning, knowledge preservation and intellectual development.
3. Medicine, engineering, information technology, transportation, communication and scientific research.
4. Modern science builds upon accumulated knowledge, investigation, criticism, experimentation and transmission.
5. Intellectual exchange allows ideas and knowledge to move between societies and contributes to further intellectual development.
6. Academic conferences, universities, publications, digital communication, international research and collaborative projects.
7. Contemporary intellectual development builds upon accumulated knowledge and continues processes of preservation, criticism, modification and innovation.

Part Three

1. Decision-making, administration, maintenance of order, law-making and management of collective affairs.
2. Legislatures, executive institutions, courts, local governments, regulatory bodies and public agencies.
3. Technological advancement does not remove the need to determine how people should behave or how societies should organise justice and responsibility.
4. Agriculture, craft production, trade, markets and taxation.
5. Financial institutions, multinational corporations, international trade, digital commerce, industrial production and global supply chains.
6. Both involve production and exchange, but contemporary commerce operates on a much larger and more technologically complex scale.
7. Historical institutions and modern institutions may perform similar functions while operating under different political, social and technological conditions.

Part Four

1. Globalisation is increasing interconnectedness among societies through communication, trade, migration, technology, media and other forms of interaction.



2. Digital communication, international trade, migration, international education, research collaboration and global media.
3. Dialogue, cooperation, scientific collaboration, educational exchange and economic opportunities.
4. Competition, cultural tension and conflict can occur.
5. Societies can participate in global interaction while retaining distinctive languages, values, traditions and cultural identities.
6. Heritage provides intellectual resources, cultural identity, historical awareness, ethical perspectives and examples of institutional development.
7. Contemporary circumstances differ from historical circumstances, so modern problems require analysis and appropriate adaptation.
8. Historical knowledge provides the foundation; critical comparison identifies similarities and differences; contemporary application determines how useful historical knowledge may be under present conditions.



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Illustration Attributions

Figure 5.1 — Continuity and Change in Civilisations

AI-generated educational illustration prompt provided in this Series.

Plate 5.2 — Contemporary Civilisational Interaction

AI-generated educational illustration prompt provided in this Series.

FINAL COURSE CONNECTION

ISS 106 has now progressed through the five interconnected areas:

Series

Focus

Series 1 Foundations of Islamic Thought

Series 2 Philosophy and Civilisation in Islam

Series 3 Contributions of Philosophy to Islamic Civilisation

Series 4 Philosophies in Other Civilisations

Series 5 Contemporary Parallels of Civilisations

The progression moves from **Islamic thought** → **Islamic civilisation** → **philosophical contributions** → **other civilisations** → **contemporary relevance**.



This sequence enables the student to move beyond memorising historical information toward **comparison, analysis and evaluation of civilisational ideas in the contemporary world.**

