Al-Balqa Journal for Research and Studies البلقاء للبحوث والدراسات

Volume 25 | Issue 2 Article 2

2022

Some Remarks on the Translation of the Term Ilm Al-Kalām into English

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Recommended Citation

Haj-Yasīn, Ayman Hammoudeh (2022) "Some Remarks on the Translation of the Term Ilm Al-Kalām into English," *Al-Balqa Journal for Research and Studies البلقاء للبحوث والدراسات*: Vol. 25: Iss. 2, Article 2.
Available at: https://digitalcommons.aaru.edu.jo/albalqa/vol25/iss2/2

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AJRS
/https://albalqajournal.ammanu.edu.jo
المجلد (25) العدد (2) 2022

تاريخ الاستلام: 10/1/2022
تاريخ القبول: 15/5/2022
تاريخ النشر: 12/12/2022
10.35875/1105-025-002-002

مجلة البلقاء
للبحوث والدراسات

ملاحظات حول ترجمة مصطلح علم الكلام إلى الإنجليزية

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الملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحقيق هدفين، الأول توضيح معنى مصطلح "علم الكلام" وإبراز نواته السيمانتية والدلالات الثانوية التي ارتبطت به، استنادا إلى الدراسات الحديثة، والثاني دراسة الترجمات المختلفة لهذا المصطلح في اللغة الإنجليزية. بينت الدراسة أن ترجمة هذا المصطلح تأثرت بجملة تفسيرات أو تأويلات سائدة عن مفهوم علم الكلام الإسلامي في اللغة الإنجليزية والثقافة الغربية، مما يعني أن دور المترجمين لم يقتصر على مجرد إنشاء تكافؤ لغوي أو دلالي بين مصطلحين؛ بل تعداه إلى محاولة المواءمة بين لغتين وثقافتين، والتفاعل مع التفسيرات المختلفة والمتنافسة للمصطلح المترجم في اللغة الهدف. وأوضحت الدراسة أن فهم الترجمات المختلفة لهذا المصطلح في اللغة الإنجليزية ممكن إذا ما أخذنا بعين الاعتبار معنى المصطلح في اللغة الأصل، ولكن أيضا الأفكار والقيم السائدة في اللغة الهدف، والدور المهم الذي يلعبه المترجم بصفته وسيطا فاعلا بين ثقافتين. وقد ناقش البحث هذه القضايا استنادا إلى طيف واسع من المفاهيم والمقاربات الدارجة في حقل دراسات الترجمة مع التركيز على أعمال لورنس فينوتي (1995، 2000، 2013، 2019).

الكلمات المفتاحية

التأويلات، الترجمة، التكافؤ، اللغة الهدف، المصطلحات، علم الكلام.

AJRS
/https://albalqajournal.ammanu.edu.jo
Vol.(25) No.(2) 2022

Received: 10/1/2022
Accepted: 15/5/2022
Published: 12/12/2022
10.35875/1105-025-002-002

Al-Balqa Journal
for Research and Studies

Some Remarks on the Translation of the Term ‘Ilm Al-Kalām into English

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Abstract

The aim of this study is twofold. First, it aims to clarify the meaning of the Arabic term ‘llm al-kalām with reference to modern scholarship of the field of Islamic Studies. The second one is to examine the translation of this term into English. The study strives to show that the translation of this term is influenced by dominant interpretations in the target language and culture, making it clear that translators do more than establishing linguistic equivalence between two terms. Translators, it is argued, negotiate not only two languages and two cultures, but also different and competing interpretations (ideas, values, interests) of the translated term in the target language. This study argues that the various translations of this term in English highlight specific features of the source term including its philosophical, scholastic, and prestigious nature. All these features should be explained, it is argued, by specific ideas and values in the receiving language. The study draws on a range of concepts and tools in the Field of Translation Studies, including the work of Lawrence Venuti (1995, 2000, 2013, 2019).

Key words

Equivalence, ‘ilm Al-Kalām, Interpretation, Target Language, Technical Terms, Translation.

Overview

This study aims to show that the translation of the Arabic term 'llm al-kalām into English is influenced by dominant interpretations in the target language and culture. The analysis of the translation of this term will make it clear that translators do more than establishing linguistic equivalence between two terms as they negotiate not only two languages and two cultures, but also different and competing interpretations (ideas, values, interests) of the translated term in the target language. The origin, meaning and importance of 'llm al-kalām has been a subject of an extensive research in Arabic and western languages (Reynolds 2004; Griffel 2011; Renard, 2011; Ess 2016; Treiger, 2016), but the issues which pertain to the translation of the term itself has not been explored in depth yet. This study strives to fulfil this gap.

The study is divided into two sections. Section one is an overview of the study. Section two and three contain the data analysis of this study. Section two provides a semantic analysis of the source term, clarifying its denotation and tracing its use and development in the history of classical Islamic thought. Section three discusses the translations of this term in English, comparing each translation with the source term as well as with other translations of the same term in the target language. The study strives to show why the term was translated the way it was translated and how each translation reflects certain ideas and values in the target language about the translated term and its contexts in Arabic. Although the main concern of this research is to describe and explain the proposed translations, evaluative judgments of the proposed translations cannot sometimes be avoided.

Theoretical Background

The construction of specialised knowledge in natural sciences, social sciences or in humanities and arts in general and the dissemination of this kind of knowledge are inconceivable without terms. Those terms are words that are assigned to certain concepts in a subject field of knowledge. They belong to a specialized language which is generally identified by its topics, users and mode of communication. The topics of this language are usually considered outside the scope of general knowledge, the users of this language are often a limited number of people belonging to a professional domain, and the mode of communication (language) requires formal study and knowledge of the most important concepts in the field. In addition, the mode of communication of the specialized language is formal and is often characterized by a precise and disciplined manner of meaning (Talavan, 2016, pp. 24-25).

A technical term can be a single word (for example, Deism or Theism), a multiword formula (ex. Logical contradiction or the transcendental argument for God), a noun (ex. mythology), an adjective (ex. mythological) or even a verb (ex. mythologize). Terms are not themselves concepts. Two different terms in one language or more can be used to refer to one and the same concept. For example, 'the ultimate being' 'the cause of all causes' and 'the Absolute' may all refer in philosophy of religion to one concept that is the monotheistic God. Terms, as some scholars have shown, are assigned to certain concepts by some authority, often those experts in the field including specialized translators. However, in many cases, experts differ on the exact meaning of a term, depending on how they define or approach it. For this reason, it is highly important to spell out the denotation or semantic core of the concept denoted by a given term, that is the semantic features by which it is distinguished from other concepts in the field. Identifying those features is important because they enable us "to specify a 'range' covered by a word or phrase (in the relevant sense) in such a way that one knows what items are included in that range or category and what items are excluded" (Dickins et al, 2002/2017, p. 74).

In addition to denotative meaning, terms may have secondary meanings that are associated with them, even though those meanings are not part of their semantic core. For example, in English, the word secularism means "the separation of religion and state". But this word, with the negative meaning of the suffix-ism attached to it, may trigger in readers' mind the French version of "the separation of religion and state" which is often described as being 'strict' and 'rigid'. This additional or secondary meaning is not part of the semantic core of the term; however, it could be in some contexts relevant and important in translation. Terms may also have connotations, positive or negative,

depending on the use of the term by language users or the socio-cultural conditions in which the term is used. However, a lot of terms have 'neutral' connotation.

Although terms differ from words as they are more restricted in meaning and thus less ambiguous, they are not context free and the relationship between a term and the concept designated by it is not thus "a one-to-one relationship" (Rogers, 1999, p.105). In this regard, terms in specialised languages and words in general languages function in the same way for they both depend on the context which can be linguistic and non-linguistic as well. As one scholar put it:

Translation has played a key role in constructing and developing new terminologies and systems of thoughts. It has significantly contributed to the ongoing process of importing new knowledge and new terminologies. Let alone cultivating and updating these terminologies in the receiving language. However, "translating and/or understanding a specialized text is only possible if we know the vocabulary of that particular area, that is, if we are familiar with its Terminology" (Talavan, 2016, p. 11).

The failure of translating technical or specialized terms accurately and appropriately may result in misunderstanding, misinterpretation, and a total miscommunication even among experts, let alone semi-experts or the public readers. Many problems that face translators in general can face those who are working on specialised languages. However, the central problem in this regard is to find the equivalent term in the target language or to choose the most accurate term, if there is more than one, in the target language to match the corresponding term in the source text (Hatim and Munday, 2007, p. 248).

However, when a translator translates a specific work, he does so not only in relation to the original text and its meaning in the original language, but also in relation to the prevailing interpretations of this text in the target language. These interpretations may be ideas, values, interests prevailing in the target language and a specific concept of equivalence. As Venuti pointed out:

a translator turns a source text into a translation by applying interpretants, factors that are formal (such as a concept of equivalence or a concept of style) and thematic (such as an interpretation of the source text presented elsewhere in commentary or an ideology in the sense of an ensemble of values, beliefs, and representations affiliated with particular social groups).

The assigned interpretations are reflected in the translation process and give the translated text a certain shape or color. This process cannot be separated from the work of the translator as a social actor who transmits texts and ideas and presents them in a specific way in the receiving language. The translator's work reflects his ideas, attitudes, social position, and the cultural and historical conditions in which s/he works. His work is also conditioned with the different interpretations of the original text in the target language. The translator may work according to these interpretations or challenge them wholly or partially. In other words, translators' decisions, the lexical choices they make in translation, are always embedded in a context in which they must decide between different and in some cases competing interpretations of the translated text in the target language and culture.

According to Venuti, translation is mediated by the work of the translator and the context of translation, i.e., by meanings, values, and interests prevailing in the target language. The translator "inscribes an interpretation in the foreign text" by applying a category that mediates between the foreign language and culture, on one hand, and the translating language and culture, on the other. This means that translation transforms or changes the original text in some way, and does not reproduce it or its meaning "intact" in the translating language:

Translation never communicates in an untroubled fashion because the translator negotiates the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text by reducing them and supplying another set of differences, basically domestic, drawn from the receiving language and culture to enable the foreign to be received there. The foreign text, then, is not so much communicated as inscribed with domestic intelligibilities and interests (Venuti, 2000, p. 468).

But this should not mean that Equivalence in meaning

is not essential in translation. It is in fact essential and still generally taken to be an important tool in analyzing the 'similarity' between the source and target text, but this equivalence should not be understood as 'sameness in meaning', but rather as a relevant similarity between the source and target text conditioned by the context and the translator's work. Equivalence in meaning is always contingent upon a certain type or level of 'relevant similarity' imposed by the circumstances surrounding the translation process, the decisions the translator makes, the purpose of the translation, and many other factors. As Venuti (2013) pointed out:

In advancing this hermeneutic model, I am not suggesting that no formal or semantic correspondence can exist between the source text […] and the translation […] but rather that any such correspondence are shaped by the exigencies of an interpretation act that is decisively determined by the translating language and culture" (p. 179).

It can be safely said then that when we translate a text, we do so by interacting with it in some way, carrying into it our thoughts, attitudes, interests, and values. The work of the translator is also affected, consciously or unconsciously, by the existence of translation norms which prevail in the target language. The original text presents itself to us as a unique text. This text was produced by someone in a certain place and time and understood in different ways by the recipients of the text in the source or target language, and this will, without doubt, affect the translator's work itself. This broader and dialectical perspective of translation is dubbed by Venuti (2019) as a hermeneutic model which he defines as a "model conceives of translation as an interpretive act that inevitably varies source-text form, meaning, and effect according to intelligibilities and interests in the receiving culture" (p. 1).

This model enables us to make sense of the various translations of one and the same term in the target language even when the translator claims that the translation given is semantically equivalent to the source term. It enables us to see what lies behind the translations proposed, i.e., the 'interpretations' (ideas) that have motivated them and how they figure in the work of the translator who is perceived here as a positive cultural mediator.

The main purpose of this study is to describe and explain the proposed translation rather than evaluating them, though it permits a limited space for evaluation. Given the limited data of this study, one term and few number of its translation in the target language, as well as its descriptive and explanatory nature, the identification of the techniques and strategies of translation used in translating the term examined in this study falls beyond its main concern.

Data of this Study

The data of this study consists of the Arabic/Islamic term علم الكلام and its common translations in English. The translations have been collected using mainly, but not exclusively, a wide range of books on Google Books Database. The study confined itself to a discussion of the proposed translations of this term, describing and explaining them, not only in relation to the source language and culture, but also the creative work of the translators and the socio-cultural environment in which they conduct their work.

The term 'llm al-kalām in Arabic and Classical Islamic Thought

Before discussing the English translations of the term 'ilm al-kalām, the reader may find it useful to start with a semantic analysis of this term in Arabic and in Islamic Studies. The discussion provides a background for the analysis and discussions of the subsequent section wherein the translations of this term in English are carefully examined.

The term 'ilm al-kalām was used by Muslim scholars to refer to Islamic theology as a field of knowledge or as a specific style of argumentation on theological matters. It is the most common term in this regard. The term is composed of two words, 'ilm which means literally science and al-kalām which means 'speech'. The same term appeared in Islamic texts by its shorter version, i.e. al-kalām (literally, the speech). The latter version of the term is prior in time to the former version. However, the long version of it is more common in use.

But why Islamic theology, or the style of argumentation

pISSN: 1684-0615 / eISSN: 2616-2814 AJRS

on theological matters in classical Islam, was named al-kalām and/or 'ilm al-kalām? The reasons behind this have been, in fact, a subject of constant debate, past and present (see Shu'ayb, 2011, p. 599). Most researchers, particularly Western researchers, point toward foreign origins of this term, saying that this word has a general meaning in Arabic, which is to talk or speak, and a specific meaning, which is to 'discuss' and 'dispute', and this corresponds, as Treiger (2016) pointed out, to the Syriac mamllā, meaning 'speech', and more specifically 'conversation' or 'disputation'. He pointed out that the Arabic term also corresponds to the Greek terms dialexis, dialektos, or dialektikē, all meaning 'disputation' (p. 48). This is no surprising given the fact that this term was coined as a technical term probably in the nineth century, in the first Abbasid century, which was "a formative period for all aspects of Islamic thought, as well as a time during which relations between Muslims and Christians were solidified into patterns that were to last for a millennium" (Keating, 2006, p. 2). Disputation or debating on legal and theological issues was common in the area of Islamic thought at that time, as Josef van Iss pointed out:

Theological and legal thought in the Ancient World had for centuries been embedded in the practice of disputation, which Aristotle already knew from the older Academy and wrote about in his Topics. Not only the Christians, but the Jews and the Manicheans, had gone through the school of ancient rhetoric. Thus Muslims, both by the tone of argumentation of their Prophet as well as by the milieu that they encountered or from which they originated as neophytes, were prepared for the dialectical style of thinking (1973/2016, p. 65).

On this view, al-kalām should have meant something like the discussion or disputation on (theological matters), and the longer term, 'ilm al-kalām, should have meant something like the science of discussion (on theological matters). Those who were involved in kalām, i.e. those who 'discussed' and 'debated' theological issues in Islam were called, accordingly, mutakallimūn (literally, speakers, but technically people skilled in the discussion and debates (on theological issues). Or to put it another way, the word mutakallimūn refers to the speakers of the 'disputing parties' who were involved in theological debates (Treiger, 2016, p. 49). Christopher Hewer (2006) explains how this science came into being in the early years of the establishment of the Arabic state in history:

Theology might be described as the process of speaking about one's faith with accuracy in terms taken from another thought world so that the people of that tradition can understand precisely what one means. For Islam, the first theology was done in Damascus, it was called ilm al-kalam. The bearers of Greek thought were Christians and so they questioned their new masters and through a process of talking things through (dialogue) they contributed to the development of Islamic religious thought (p. 64).

During the long history of this science, two major issues occupied its main concern, and these are the nature and existence of God and his actions in relation to the created world. this concern led Muslim theologians to discuss related issues such as "anthropomorphism and the conceptualization of the divine attributes and their ontological foundation; and the thorny related questions of theodicy and human freedom versus determination." (Schmidtke, 2014, p. 1).

As a religious science, 'ilm al-kalām aims to using rational arguments to "explain and defend the faith against doubters" (Keating, 2006, p. 49). The apologetic or polemical nature of 'ilm al-kalām continued with it throughout its history. Explaining and defending faith against doubters is done with reference to both the holy scriptures of Islam (the Quran and the traditions of the Prophet) as well as to rational reasoning or logic, depending, of course, on each school of theology. However, Josef van Ess has thoroughly shown that this science was more about using rational reasoning than using Scripture, for "Whoever was so bold as to engage in discussion beyond the bounds of his own religion would have to renounce the authority of Scripture; he could only be convincing by means of generally applicable rational proofs" (1973/2016, p. 60).

The feature of kalām as an apologetic science, aiming at defending faith against doubters or innovators by philosophical or logical means, is reflected in this science to the extent that the most common definitions of it in classical Islamic thought emphasized its 'polemical' or 'apologetic'

nature (Frank, 1979, p. 143).

Yet, some scholars have recently argued that the defensive or polemical nature of this science prevailed only in the first two or three centuries (probably between the eighth to the eleventh centuries) and that this science became later more philosophical and more systematic and, thus, far less polemical than it was before (Ess, 2017, p. 107).

In its fully developed form, the science tackles not only obviously theological issues, but also physical and epistemological issues (Treiger, 2016, p. 45). Asked about this change in particular, Josef Van Ess (1975), who is well-known for his extensive research on the origins of Kalām, says:

Kalâm is not always the same; we have I don't know how many centuries of kalâm. Some years ago I thought that kalâm was essentially dialectical and polemical; the mutakallimün were always on the attack, they were destructive, negative, they did not build up. Now, I have changed my opinion. […]. I think I now know what caused my mistake in holding this earlier opinion. Two things. First, I was misled by Maimonides and al-Fârâbi, by all of those Aristotelians who saw kalâm as dialectic; of course, this fitted into their scheme. This is one thing. The second is the fact that at the beginning kalâm is for the most part polemical; but this has something to do with the situation. The Muslims were a minority. They were living in the towns, and even in the towns there were many Christians, Jews, Manicheans, and so forth so that they had to convert people, they had to polemicize against them, they had to convince them (p. 107, italic original).

As a science, 'ilm al-kalām is characterized by methods of debate. It aims to refute opponents' (heretical) views using a dialectical method based on a question and answer manner: "('If he says X, it should be replied…')" (p. 23). This method of argumentation has been recently found to be rooted in the religious culture of Syria in the 6th and 7th centuries, both in Syriac and Greek religious culture (p. 47). This science is not therefore defined by reference to its contents but rather by its style or method argumentation. (Reynolds, 2004, p. 25).

Although 'llm al-kalām does not seem to occupy a central position in Islamic thought compared to the position of 'Christian theology' in western thought, its role in shaping Islamic thought in medieval Islam cannot be ignored, especially in the formation period of Islam and Islamic thought (the first three centuries of the history of Islam). The reason for this is that the "crucial instrument for the spread and acceptance of religious views" at that time, was debate, as Josef van Ess rightly pointed out (1973/2016, p. 55).

Finally, it is very important to point out that one of the main purposes of ʿilm al-kalām, especially in its late and well-developed form, was to prove the existence of God by reason alone, using Aristotelian categories, to defend faith and to provide theoretical justification for Islamic Law. In this phase, this science became obviously philosophical and theoretical in nature, scop, and approach, dealing with issues ranging from physical theory to divine metaphysics to epistemology.

It could be said in summary that the Arabic term al-kalām, and its long version 'ilm al-kalām, means 'discussion' or 'disputation' on theological matters, and that recently published research has shown that this meaning was a derivation from Syriac and perhaps Greek sources. In its early phase, during the seventh century up to the eleventh century, this science was polemical in nature and highly marked by a dialectical style of argumentation, but this feature faded later when this science became more systematic and more philosophical than it was before. In this phase, ''llm al-kalām encompasses extensive discussions on physics and epistemology that can hardly fit in the traditional sense of this discipline as a study and defence of the divine.

The English Translation of 'ilm al-kalām

It goes without saying that the great religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, all developed a concept of a science or a field of knowledge that is mainly concerned with the articulation, explanation, and defence of faith or religious creeds. The concept of 'theology' in this sense is thus common in Arabic and Western culture. However, several terms have been used in English to translate

pISSN: 1684-0615 / eISSN: 2616-2814 AJRS

the term 'ilm al-kalām. The most common ones are: (Islamic) theology, scholastic theology, speculative theology, systematic theology, kalām, 'ilm al-kalām, the science of kalām. The following section discusses these translations.

Theology/Islamic Theology

Kalām or 'ilm al-kalām is usually translated into English as 'theology' or Islamic theology (Hinnells, 2005, p. 75), and the context would specify whether the reference is to 'Islamic theology' or not. The word 'theology', as it is well-known, can be used in different ways and senses, but the most common use of it is when it is used to refer to a field of knowledge or discipline that is mainly concerned with the discussion of the divine or God and his attributes and actions. In its semi literal sense, the word theology is originally derived from Greek through Latin, meaning 'word or talk on God or gods' (theo: God or gods, logos: talk). Similarly, kalām is understood by some as being 'word or talk (discourse) on God'. According to some researchers, this makes the term 'theology' an excellent translation of the term 'kalām' (Pachence, 2007, p. 703, see also Treiger, 2016, p. 49). According to this point of view, the word 'theology' does not only have the same denotation of the Arabic term, but also reflects "the manner in which [Islamic] theology was conducted" (Shepard, 2009, p. 146).

Frank Whaling (1981) draws our attention to the fact that using the word 'theology' to denote other 'theological traditions' is a modern phenomenon. The word 'theology' has a long and rich history in the West and significant associations with Christianity and Christian thought that it was inconceivable before modern time to use it as a name for other theological traditions such as that one belongs to Islam. Whaling explains this point succinctly:

The first change has been a growing awareness that we live in a world where there are a number of separate religious traditions, each with its own theology, however defined. After Vasco da Gama's voyage round Africa, the realisation slowly dawned in Europe that there were other religious traditions in the world of which Europe had not been aware during her medieval isolation. Along with this discovery of new traditions, there was a growing awareness that the Jewish and Muslim traditions were not mere epiphenomena of Christianity but separate traditions in their own right with their own theology (p. 305).

Yet, some researchers claimed that translating 'ilm al-kalām as 'theology' is vague, because this "science never caught on in Islamic learning as it did in Christianity, because the Muslims strove and succeeded in preserving the transcendence of God" (Ahmad, 2002, p. 116). This objection to the proposed translation is based on a prevailing 'interpretation' in modern scholarship on the peripheral status of 'ilm al-kalām in the history of Islam and Muslims as understood clearly from this quotation by Wilfred Smith (1981) who argued that this science to Islam as like philosophy of religion to Christianity: "a serious, often brilliant discipline for those who are concerned with it, useful as apologetics, but peripheral to the main development, dispensable, and even suspect" (p. 241).

But this objection should be dealt with in caution. First, stating that the status of 'theology' in Islam was far less important than its Christian counterpart should not be taken for granted, even if this 'interpretation' is very common among researchers today (see Esposito, 1998, p. 98). Second, even if this claim is true, the objection against the use of 'theology' as a translation of 'ilm al-kalām does not hold because this feature (i.e., the peripheral status of this science in the history of Islam) is secondary to the concept of ilm al-kalām, and therefore not part of its semantic core. At best, it is an associated or secondary meaning that is related more to the statues of this science in specific 'times' in the history of Arabic and Islamic thought.

Other researchers have objected that this translation is not accurate because it indicates that 'ilm al-kalām is the science of the word (word of God), ignoring the fact that this discipline was more about the philosophical study of the elements of faith as reflected in the word of God itself. Thus, Tariq Ramadan (2017) argues that this science does not involve "strict theological considerations" which are "generally of secondary importance" in it (p. 46). In similar lines, Jon McGinnis (2010) expresses his doubts over the use of the word 'theology' as an equivalent term for 'ilm al-kalām, because this science "is as much of a

philosophical worldview as falsafa [philosophy] was". For him, both workers in these two fields were "interested in roughly the same sets of issues and questions and their answers frequently even shared common intuitions" and differed only on "their own perceptions of themselves and each other" (p. 14). It is for reasons like these that other translators and researchers prefer other translations of the term 'ilm al-kalām.

Scholastic Theology

The term 'ilm al-kalām has been also translated into English by some translators as 'scholastic theology' (Sauter, 2021, p. 469). The term 'scholastic theology' is used often to refer to the theology of the school and the schoolmen, especially in Western Europe in the period 1200-1500 which places much emphasis on the rational reasoning in justifying religious beliefs and on the systematic presentation of these beliefs. The word 'scholastic' is "derived from magister scholasticus, the school master or head of instruction in the studia of monasteries, religious houses, or cathedrals" (Livesey2014 ,, p. 453). It is within these schools that medieval Christian theology flourished and developed what was at that time called the scholastic method. This method is a constitutive feature of this theology. Scholastic method consists of a way of presentation and a way of thought. As a way of presentation, it consists of approaching theological topics or problems through a systematic examination of evidence and arguments for and against a given thesis. It takes the form of "questions that first were debated from opposing viewpoints and only then given a definitive response" (Kruger, 2009, p. 76). As a way of thought, this method involves achieving harmony between faith and reason in approaching theological topics.

Like other terms and categories, 'scholastic theology' as a term was used for a long time to designate Christian scholastic theology. It is a term that is often thought of as being part of Christian thought and Western history not only because it denotes Christian theology as developed by the great Christian theologians and philosophers of the middle age, but also because the 'scholastic method' developed within this theology is generally considered to be of Greek, and thus Western, origins. However, the term 'scholastic theology' is now widely used to refer to other theological traditions such as classical Islamic theology or 'ilm al-kalām. Through the translation of 'ilm al-kalām as scholastic theology, the translator probably aimed to make a comparison between 'ilm al-kalām as a discipline that was developed by the major theological schools in Islam (Mu'tazila, Ash'arite, and Maturidi) and scholastic theology in Christianity as developed by the major schools in the West in the Middle Ages (Thomism, Scotism, and Ockhamism), and between the 'scholastic method' (mainly, dialectic method) as was developed in scholastic Christian theology and its counterpart method which was developed by Muslim theologians in the classical age. According to Pim Valkenberg, it "was this scholastic argumentative method for which the Muslim tradition of kalām could be considered an analogy" (2006, p. 203). The 'dialectical' and 'disputation' elements implied in the concept of 'scholastic theology' is without doubt something that both Christian scholastic theology and 'ilm al-kalām share. The debate revolves only about how this scholastic method developed in these traditions, i.e., to what extent Greek philosophy, particularly Aristotle's logic, influenced scholastic theology in Christianity and Islam. Using the term 'scholastic theology' to translate 'ilm al-kalām suggests that both traditions of theology share the same method which can be traced back to Greek thought which constitutes alongside Christianity the two pillars of Western thought.

Halverson proposed a different interpretation of why the term 'scholastic theology' has been used in English to translate a term such as 'ilm al-kalām, pointing out that the use of a modifier such as 'scholastic' in a term such as 'scholastic theology' serves to draw a clear distinction between 'theology' as a reference to the creeds of faith, and 'theology' as the study or defense of faith (2010, p. 2). On this view, when a term such as 'scholastic theology' is used to render the term 'ilm al-kalām it is used as a general description to denote the tradition of studying and defending Islamic beliefs rather than the creeds of Islam themselves. However, this note is only important when the context is not clear enough to differentiate between 'theology' as a reference to the creeds of faith, and 'theology' as the study or defense of faith.

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Richard McCarthy argues that terms such as 'theology' or 'scholastic theology' are often used to translate 'ilm al-kalām, but they are not the most appropriate translation of the term. McCarthy argued that 'ilm al-kalām is more accurately translated as "defensive apologetic" because it is much like the Latin conception of theology as "defense of faith" than being "faith seeking understanding" (1980, p. 112). Valkenberg argues in similar lines, pointing out that 'ilm al-kalām should be rendered in such a way that indicates its defensive or apologetic nature (2006, p. 231). Terms such as 'theology' or 'scholastic theology', on this view, might be understood as being more about articulating and explaining theological doctrines which "would articulate a mystery" rather than as a science that aims to refute or defend innovations. According to this interpretation, kalām aims to defend faith, whereas theology or scholastic theology in its typical sense in English aims to illuminate, i.e., explain elements of faith that are beyond human understanding. To signify this difference, McCarthy preferred to render 'ilm al-kalām as the science of kalām, preserving thus the key word kalām through transference or transliteration. However, not all researchers share these objections:

kalām does nonetheless articulate in analytic form what it sees as the essential and fundamental of Islam's belief, constructing in the dialectical discourse the speculative framework according to which it understands the rational content and coherence of the principles and elements of this belief (Frank, 1979, p. 73).

Yet, we should not forget that even a term such as 'scholastic theology', which McCarthy criticized as being insufficient in rendering the defensive nature of 'ilm al-kalām, has often been seen or understood as having a defensive or apologetic nature as one of its important tasks was to defend orthodoxy against heresy. Most theology, As John Webster put it: "is written with an eye to its occasioning circumstances-with an eye, that is, to what it identifies as the main theological trends in the consistuency it addresses, and with the intention of reinforcing, criticizing, or, perhaps, revising those trends" (2002, p. 180).

Systematic Theology

Some translators have rendered the term 'ilm al-kalām as 'systematic theology' (Renard, 2011: 276; Roy Jackson, (2014, p. 5)). The latter term can be defined by different ways and contexts. Probably, what those translators sought to emphasize using the term 'systematic theology' in their translation of the term 'ilm al-kalām is the notion of system or order implied in the English adjective 'systematic'. It is a way to emphasize the systematic nature of 'ilm al-kalām as a science that aims to present and defend theological concepts and principles of Islam in a form of system. However, some researchers have argued that this notion is, in fact, implied in the very nature of the notion of 'theology' itself. As David Worthington Simon put it:

The expression "systematic theology" is really an impertinent tautology. It is a tautology, in so far as a theology that is not systematic or methodical would be no theology. The idea of rational method lies in the word logos, which forms part of the term theology (quoted in Warfield, 2010, p. 127).

This interpretation of systematic as being in the very nature of theology as an organized study of faith is echoed in the following quote by Brown and Flours (2007) who regard the words 'systematic' and 'theological' as two words that express the same notion:

The systematic or theological approach to Scripture arose through the need to establish official Islamic doctrines by unifying seemingly incompatible Koranic passages, and through the need of Islam to defend itself in the face of other traditions, particularly Judaism, Christianity, and Greco- Roman culture (p. 166, italics added).

Therefore, it is the notion of 'system' that is to be highlighted here, i.e., the notion that theology considers theological doctrines in their logical connection as parts of a system. However, the use of the term 'systematic theology' can also be simply explained by an attempt amongst Western researchers to emphasize the fact that the concept designated by the term 'ilm al-kalām is meant to refer to the study of Islamic creeds rather than to these creeds themselves, a point we have emphasized when we dis-

cussed the term 'scholastic theology'. Halverson (2010) clarified this point, saying:

Theology, in proper usage, is the systematic, rational, defensible articulation of one's beliefs about God, revelation, the cosmos, and humanity's relationship to the Divine. Therefore, in order to distinguish between theology in the technical sense, and its popular counterpart denoting simple religious convictions, many scholars have used terms such as "scholastic," "dialectic," or "systematic" theology (p. 2).

Less Common Translations

Some researchers prefer to use the Arabic term instead of the available English terms because of the philosophical nature, scop and issues which this Arabic science included (Dhanani, 1996, p. 157n). Even terms such as 'rationalist theology', which was used to translate the term 'ilm al-kalām, is problematic in some sense, because it "neglects the philosophical part of it especially in its late phase" (Griffel, 2011, p. 665). The same objection applies to the term 'speculative theology' which is also used in the literature to translate the Arabic term ilm al-kalām on the basis of its being "formal, conceptual and theoretical reasoning into subjects such as God and subjects of ontology and ethics" (p. 666). Critical remarks like these motivated some scholars and translators to use the Arabic term 'ilm al-kalām or shortly kalam instead of the equivalent English terms discussed in this section. This translation is common in English (Baldwin (2010) and Morris (2005). Those scholars retained the Arabic term in the English text perhaps to give translation a foreign flavour. Using this specific method of translation is not only widely common in the literature, but also preferred and acclaimed (Venuti, 1995, 2013). It is a stylistic choice, a decision taken by the translator to register the 'foreignness' of the translated term. However, it could also be seen as a sort of 'indeterminacy' about the best way to translate the source term, given the fact that this term has been translated in different ways in English.

In some English materials, the term 'ilm al-kalām is translated as "the science of kalām", a sort of "partial translation" as Salaymeh (2021, p. 5) called it. This translation will, of course, be understood only from the context or by an expert in Islamic studies. Salaymeh argues that partial translations like this one could lead to miscomprehension whereas the aim of translation is to make "scholarship more comprehensible to both specialists and non-specialists". She highlighted the importance of translating foreign Islamic terms, rather than borrowing them or translating them partially, on the basis that the translator has a responsibility to make the meaning of the source term clearer in the target language, otherwise the term's meaning will be "whatever is ascribed to the term within the reception (or target) language, rather than the source language" (p. 5-6).

One could also argue that the increasing tendency of borrowing this Arabic term indicates that western scholars and translators, who are often scholars themselves in this field, started to show more 'respect' for this tradition of theological thinking and its complicated and rich nature, especially in the last few decades with the extensive research, and translation, on this field. Therefore, some have defined kalām as being an umbrella for a distinctive genre in Arabic of theological and philosophical reasoning that goes beyond the traditional or narrower sense of theology as a scientific study of the religious creed (Griffel, 2011).

Venuti, in his hermeneutic model introduced in section two of this study, recognizes this sort of an interpretation as a value which has, one could argue, motivated the transliteration of the Arabic term rather than using the prevailing equivalent terms of it in English.

Conclusion

Different terms have been used in English to translate the Arabic term 'ilm al-kalām. Though all seem prima facie to refer to the same concept, each can be used to highlight a specific feature of the original term. Those who wanted to highlight the semantic core of the original term as well as its Greek or Western origins (derivation), tend to use the English term 'theology', whereas those who wanted to highlight the style of argumentation of 'ilm al-kalām tend to use the term 'scholastic theology'. Others see its 'philosophical' aspect as being very important and this seems to have motivated them to use terms such "systematic" or "speculative" theology. Still others tend to highlight the prestigious position of Islamic theology in this tradition and preferred to register this 'value' by using or borrow-

pISSN: 1684-0615 / eISSN: 2616-2814 AJRS

ing the Arabic term into English. In all these translations, translation appears to be more than a sort of finding a semantic equivalence or relationship between source and target term as it reflects the creative work of the translator and the dominant interpretations of the foreign term in the target language.

Declaration of conflicting interest

The author declares no conflict of interest exists in the submitted manuscript

Funding statement:

This work did not receive any funding.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank Oreib Masadeh-Tate for reading some parts of a first draft of this paper and the editors of Al-Balqa Journal for Research and Studies for considering this manuscript for publication.

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