

## IMMANENT CRITIQUE OF REASON: THE STRUCTURAL TENSION BETWEEN PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY IN AVICENNA

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### ABSTRACT:

One of the fundamental issues in the history of philosophy is the tension between the rational criteria upheld by rationalist philosophers and their religious or theological commitments. This article examines this tension through the methodological lens of immanent critique, according to which a philosophical system is evaluated based on its own principles rather than from an external standpoint. The primary focus is on Avicenna's philosophy, where rigorous criteria of knowledge, certainty, and demonstrative proof are explicitly articulated, yet his theological commitments—most notably the existence of the Necessary Existent, the Active Intellect, and prophecy—enter into tension with those criteria. A brief comparative analysis of Descartes and Kant shows that this tension constitutes a recurring pattern in the history of philosophical rationalism: self-grounding reason, when confronted with theological or moral demands, must modify or suspend its own standards. The central thesis is that when philosophy ventures into domains justified only by departing from its own principles, the internal coherence of the philosophical system is at risk, compelling philosophical reason to reconsider the legitimate limits of its intervention—without denying the social, cultural, or ethical significance of religion.

**KEYWORDS:** Avicenna; Immanent critique; Philosophical reason; Demonstration; Certainty; Philosophy of religion.

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## Introduction

One of the central questions in the philosophy of rational systems is the following: what happens when the epistemic criteria that define a system are applied universally, without exception, to all of its own commitments? This question does not merely concern the relation between philosophy and religion as two distinct domains; rather, it concerns the internal stability of a system of reason when confronted with the full range of claims it seeks to justify.

Many major philosophers have articulated highly demanding criteria of rational justification in logic, epistemology, and metaphysics, while also maintaining commitments—often theological or metaphysical—whose status within those very criteria is far from clear. The resulting difficulty is not best understood as an external conflict between reason and belief, but as a potential internal tension generated by the universalization of rational standards themselves.

The aim of this article is to investigate this problem through the methodological framework of immanent critique. Rather than evaluating a philosophical system from an external or ideological standpoint, immanent critique seeks to determine whether a system can sustain its own claims when its constitutive principles are applied consistently across all domains. Within this framework, the central question can be reformulated as follows:

What are the consequences for a system of demonstrative rationality if its own criteria of knowledge, certainty, and justification are applied without restriction to all of its theoretical commitments?

To address this question, the article focuses on the philosophy of Avicenna (Ibn Sīnā). This choice is motivated not only by the historical significance of Avicenna's thought, but by the fact that his system offers one of the most explicit and rigorous articulations of demonstrative rationality in the history of philosophy. Concepts such as demonstration, certainty, logical necessity, and scientific knowledge are defined with exceptional precision (Avicenna, 1960b), making his philosophy particularly suitable for a strictly immanent analysis. Contemporary scholarship has reconstructed in detail the logical and metaphysical architecture of Avicenna's system (Wisnovsky, 2003, p. 6; McGinnis, 2010, p. 25), thereby providing the conceptual basis for a systematic philosophical reconstruction rather than a merely historical exposition.

At the same time, Avicenna's philosophy includes a set of commitments—such as the Necessary Existent, the Active Intellect, and prophecy—that play an essential role within his system. The question is not whether these doctrines are true or false, nor whether they can be defended from an external standpoint, but whether they can be integrated into a system governed by strict demonstrative criteria without generating internal tension.

Recent interpretations of Avicenna have often emphasized the coherence and unity of his philosophical project, highlighting the harmony between his metaphysics and his account of religion. While these readings have significantly deepened our understanding of his system, they tend to presuppose that such integration is ultimately consistent. The present article adopts a different approach: rather than assuming coherence, it reconstructs the epistemic architecture of Avicenna's system and examines how it behaves under conditions of maximal internal consistency. In this sense, the analysis does not proceed as an external critique of theology, but as a philosophical stress-test of a system of demonstrative reason.

The central hypothesis of the article is that if Avicenna's criteria of knowledge and demonstration are applied universally and without exception, they generate internal pressure points within the system, particularly in relation to its theological and metaphysical commitments. While the analysis proceeds through a single case study, the tension it reveals is

not merely contingent, but indicative of a more general structural feature of demonstrative rational systems.

Accordingly, the aim is not to adjudicate the truth of religious doctrines, but to clarify the internal dynamics of a rational system under the unrestricted application of its own principles, and thereby to determine what this reveals about the limits of demonstrative reason.

## 1. Immanent Critique and Its Criteria

The methodological approach of this article is grounded in what is known in contemporary philosophical discourse as immanent critique. By immanent critique is meant a mode of philosophical analysis in which a system of thought is evaluated not according to external standards or presuppositions alien to that system, but rather on the basis of the concepts, principles, and criteria of rationality that the system itself endorses. In this sense, immanent critique differs fundamentally from ideological critique, purely historical analysis, or a priori normative judgment (Pippin, 1989, p. 13).

Within immanent critique, the central question is not whether a belief or proposition is true or false from the standpoint of another philosophical framework, but whether it is consistent with the theoretical commitments, epistemic standards, and logical requirements of the system under examination itself. Put differently, this form of critique seeks to demonstrate that a philosophical system, when it remains fully faithful to its own principles, arrives at conclusions that stand in tension with some of its explicit claims or commitments (Stern, 2012, p. 46).

This mode of critique has a long history in philosophy. Its elements can be traced back to Platonic dialectic, Aristotle's criticism of Platonic presuppositions, and, most notably, the tradition of German Idealism—from Kant to Hegel. In the present article, however, immanent critique is not adopted as a specific metaphysical position, but rather as a methodological tool: a tool that makes it possible to assess the rational coherence of a philosophical system without appealing to external assumptions (Hegel, 1977, Introduction).

On the basis of this framework, three methodological principles guide the analysis that follows.

First, the principle of conceptual fidelity: the key concepts employed by a philosopher—such as reason, knowledge, certainty, demonstration, and necessity—must be reconstructed in accordance with that philosopher's own definitions and usage, rather than on the basis of later interpretations or imposed readings. In the case of Avicenna, this requires direct engagement with his logical and epistemological texts, particularly the *Burhān* section of *al-Shifā'* and the epistemological discussions in *al-Ishārāt wa-l-Tanbīhāt*.

Second, the principle of the universality of rational criteria: the standards a philosopher establishes for the justification of valid knowledge must be applied without exception across all domains in which epistemic claims are made. Within the framework of immanent critique, it is not legitimate for a philosophical system to adopt different or more permissive standards for certain domains—such as theology or religion—than those it accepts in logic and theoretical philosophy, unless such a distinction is itself explicitly and rationally justified.

Third, the principle of internal consequences: if it can be shown that certain commitments of a philosopher are incompatible with the standards he himself endorses, the result of the critique is not merely the rejection of those specific commitments. Rather, it reveals an internal tension within the philosophical system as a whole. Such a tension may lead to a reassessment of the scope of theoretical philosophy, a restriction of epistemic claims, or a differentiation between distinct levels or modes of discourse.

## 2. Knowledge, Certainty, and Demonstration in Avicenna's Philosophy

In Avicenna's philosophical system, the notions of knowledge and certainty occupy a central position and are directly tied to his theory of demonstrative logic. Unlike many of his predecessors, Avicenna formulates the criteria of valid knowledge in a systematic manner and draws clear distinctions among different types of assent (*taṣdīq*). An understanding of these distinctions is essential for assessing the internal coherence of his philosophical framework.

Avicenna does not define knowledge (*ʿilm*) as any form of awareness or even as true belief, but rather as an assent that satisfies specific conditions with respect to its origin, structure, and necessity. In *al-Shifāʾ: al-Burhān*, he explicitly states that genuine knowledge arises only when the assent in question is obtained through demonstration and is composed of premises that are necessary, universal, and true (Avicenna, 1960b, p. 74). Accordingly, knowledge is always accompanied by a form of necessity and cannot be merely probabilistic or conjectural.

Within this framework, Avicenna draws a sharp distinction between certainty (*yaqīn*) and other kinds of assent. Certainty, for him, is a state in which the soul not only affirms the truth of a proposition but also apprehends the impossibility of its negation. In other words, certainty entails the cognition of necessity, not merely psychological confidence or strong belief. For this reason, a certain assent cannot be unstable, conditional, or dependent on external authority (Adamson, 2015, p. 113).

To account for the origin of certainty, Avicenna appeals to the notion of demonstration (*burhān*). In his logic, a demonstration is a syllogism composed of true, primary—or reducible to primary—and necessary premises, yielding a necessary conclusion. Only such a syllogism is capable of producing certain knowledge (Avicenna, 1960b, p. 93). Any form of reasoning that fails to meet these conditions—even if it happens to lead to a true conclusion—does not, in Avicenna's view, possess full scientific status.

On this basis, Avicenna carefully distinguishes demonstration from other modes of argumentation. Dialectic, rhetoric, poetry, and sophistry each have their own functions, but none can substitute for demonstration. Dialectic relies on widely accepted opinions, rhetoric on commonly accepted beliefs, and poetry on imagination; none of these, by themselves, generate certain knowledge (Avicenna, 1960b, p. 102). This differentiation makes clear that Avicenna sharply distinguishes persuasion, social belief, and demonstrative knowledge.

Another crucial aspect of Avicenna's epistemology is the close connection between demonstrative knowledge and universality and necessity. The proper object of knowledge is, in the strict sense, universals rather than mutable particulars. Certain knowledge is always directed toward that which “cannot be otherwise than it is” (*lā yumkin an yakūna ʿalā ghayr mā huwa ʿalayhi*) (Avicenna, 1960b, p. 109). Consequently, demonstrative knowledge is intrinsically limited with respect to particular, temporal, or changeable entities.

This epistemological framework is reiterated, in a more concise but equally explicit manner, in *al-Ishārāt wa-l-Tanbīhāt*. In the first *namṭ*, Avicenna once again emphasizes that genuine knowledge is grounded in rational necessity, and that what falls short of this criterion—though it may be practically useful or heuristically valuable—occupies a lower epistemic rank (Avicenna, 1960a, *Namṭ* I).

It can therefore be concluded that Avicenna's philosophy establishes a clear epistemic hierarchy: at its summit stand demonstrative knowledge and rational certainty, while lower levels are occupied by forms of assent that lack necessity and demonstration. This hierarchy is not

merely descriptive but normative, in that it determines which kinds of cognition are worthy of philosophical reliance and which are not.

This reconstruction shows that Avicenna adopts exceptionally stringent criteria for rationality, knowledge, and certainty—criteria that significantly restrict the domain of legitimate knowledge and require every epistemic claim to answer to the standards of demonstrative logic.

### **3. Theological Commitments in Avicenna's Philosophy: God, the Active Intellect, and Prophecy**

Alongside this epistemological and logical framework, Avicenna's philosophy includes a set of theological commitments that play a central role in his overall metaphysical system. These commitments are not marginal or merely supplementary; rather, they are embedded in his discussions of being, the soul, and intellect, and thus constitute an integral part of his philosophical project.

#### ***3.1 The Necessary Existent and the Metaphysical Structure of Reality***

At the apex of Avicenna's metaphysical system stands the concept of the Necessary Existent in itself (*wājib al-wujūd bi-dhātihi*). Avicenna defines the Necessary Existent as a being whose existence follows from its very essence and in which there is no trace of possibility or non-being (Avicenna, 1960c, p. 30). This being is the first cause and the ultimate source of all possible existents, and all perfections of being are realized in it in a simple and non-composite manner.

Avicenna's demonstration of the Necessary Existent is grounded in a conceptual analysis of possibility and necessity. He maintains that this proof is independent of sensory experience or revelatory data and can be established solely on the basis of theoretical reason (Avicenna, 1960c, p. 34). From this perspective, the proof from contingency and necessity presents itself as a strictly rational demonstration and is treated within Avicenna's system as possessing full philosophical legitimacy.

The demonstrative status of this proof has been the subject of extensive analysis in contemporary discussions of Avicenna's metaphysics, particularly regarding the transition from modal analysis to existential commitment and the scope of what the argument is capable of establishing (Marmura, 1980, p. 339; Janssens, 2004, p. 53). While many reconstructions defend the logical rigor of the core argument, questions remain concerning the extent to which its conclusions can legitimately ground the richer theological predicates later attributed to the Necessary Existent.

Nevertheless, the attributes Avicenna ascribes to the Necessary Existent—such as knowledge, will, pure goodness, and providence—gradually move beyond the domain of purely existential analysis. Avicenna explicitly affirms that the Necessary Existent knows itself and possesses universal knowledge of the order of beings (Avicenna, 1960c, p. 341). Although this knowledge is described as non-particular and non-temporal, it nevertheless plays an active role in explaining the intelligible order of the world.

#### ***3.2 The Active Intellect and the Connection between Theoretical Reason and the Sacred***

One of the key concepts linking Avicenna's metaphysics and epistemology is that of the Active Intellect. The Active Intellect is conceived as the final level among the separate intellects

and as the intermediary of emanation between the intelligible realm and human souls (Gutas, 2005, p. 99).

The metaphysical and epistemological function of the Active Intellect has generated sustained scholarly discussion, especially regarding its role in mediating universality, abstraction, and the possibility of scientific knowledge within an emanationist cosmology (Reisman, 2004, p. 104). These analyses underscore the centrality of the Active Intellect to the internal architecture of Avicenna's system, even where its precise ontological status remains debated.

In Avicenna's theory of knowledge, the human intellect, in the process of intellection, receives intelligible forms not merely from experience but through the emanative activity of the Active Intellect. Consequently, even demonstrative knowledge—which represents the highest form of human cognition—ultimately depends on a form of connection with the Active Intellect (Avicenna, 1960d, p. 249).

Although this connection is articulated in a philosophical and impersonal framework, it functions as a mediating principle that links the human intellect to the overall intelligible structure of reality. In this sense, the Active Intellect is not merely an epistemological postulate but occupies a distinct metaphysical and ontological position.

### ***3.3 Prophecy, the Imaginative Faculty, and the Reception of Revelation***

The discussion of prophecy in Avicenna's philosophy is the point at which his theological commitments become most explicit. Avicenna understands prophecy not simply as a social or historical phenomenon but as the result of a particular perfection in the structure of the prophet's soul. The prophet is someone who, in addition to the perfection of theoretical intellect, possesses an exceptionally powerful imaginative faculty, enabling the reception of intelligible meanings from the Active Intellect and their translation into sensible and rhetorical forms (Avicenna, 1960d, p. 257).

Within this framework, revelation is a type of cognitive reception whose source is the Active Intellect, while its articulation is mediated through the prophet's imagination. As a result, the content of revelation may include images, symbols, and propositions that are accessible and persuasive to the general public, even though their ultimate foundation lies in universal intelligibles (Avicenna, 1960d, p. 249–258).

Avicenna explicitly maintains that this form of cognition, although necessary for social and ethical guidance, differs structurally from demonstrative knowledge. The language of revelation is “rhetorical and symbolic,” shaped in accordance with the cognitive capacities of its audience (Avicenna, 1960d, p. 257–258).

### ***3.4 The Place of Religion within Avicenna's Epistemic Order***

On this basis, religion occupies a dual position within Avicenna's philosophy. On the one hand, its origin lies in rational truth and in the metaphysical structure of reality; on the other hand, its formulation is conditioned by social, ethical, and imaginative requirements. Religion fulfills for the general public a role analogous to that which philosophy fulfills for the intellectual elite; however, the two are not equivalent in terms of their epistemic form. At the same time, Avicenna seeks to demonstrate that there is no genuine conflict between philosophical truth and the authentic content of religion. Apparent conflicts arise from differences in levels of understanding or from the symbolic language of revealed law, rather than from truth itself (Avicenna, 1960a, Namt IX).

The broader question of how philosophical demonstration relates to revealed religion became a defining issue in the subsequent development of philosophical theology, where attempts were made either to defend the harmony of the two domains or to recalibrate their respective epistemic scopes (Acar, 2005, p. 63–65; Griffel, 2009, p. 35–37). This later trajectory highlights the structural significance of a tension that would become increasingly explicit in subsequent philosophical theology, and that can be traced back to key commitments within Avicenna's own system.

Accordingly, Avicenna's philosophy presents a coherent system of epistemic, metaphysical, and theological claims in which reason, demonstration, God, the Active Intellect, and revelation are integrated within a single unified framework.

#### **4. An Immanent Critique of Avicenna's Theology**

As shown in the previous sections, Avicenna establishes highly stringent epistemic criteria for genuine knowledge and philosophical certainty. Knowledge possesses full epistemic validity only insofar as it is grounded in necessary demonstration—namely, a demonstration that proceeds from certain first principles and yields conclusions whose negation is inconceivable. The decisive question now is whether Avicenna's theological claims—especially those concerning God, the Active Intellect, and prophecy—can be defended according to these very criteria.

##### **4.1 The Proof of Contingency and Necessity and the Transition from Being to Theology**

Avicenna's proof from contingency and necessity is undoubtedly one of the most coherent philosophical arguments in the history of metaphysics. The argument begins solely from a conceptual analysis of possibility and necessity and arrives at the existence of a being whose existence is necessary in itself. Up to this point, the reasoning proceeds within a strictly demonstrative framework and remains fully consistent with Avicenna's own methodological standards.

The difficulty arises, however, when Avicenna moves from establishing the existence of the Necessary Existent to affirming divine attributes. Attributes such as knowledge, will, goodness, and providence play a central role in his theology, yet their demonstrative status is open to question. Avicenna seeks to derive these attributes through an analysis of the absolute simplicity of the Necessary Existent and the negation of all forms of deficiency. Nevertheless, this transition is less demonstrative in the strict logical sense than it is grounded in broader metaphysical considerations (Avicenna, 1960c, p. 341).

The difficulty of deriving rich theological predicates from a purely modal proof has been acknowledged in contemporary analyses of Avicenna's metaphysics, particularly concerning the conceptual move from necessary existence to divine intellection and providence (Marmura, 1980, p. 345–349; Janssens, 2004, p. 56–60). Even sympathetic reconstructions concede that this extension involves philosophical commitments not immediately entailed by the initial modal framework.

The attribution of knowledge to the Necessary Existent—even when understood as universal and non-particular knowledge—poses particularly serious difficulties. If knowledge is defined as a relation between knower and known, the question arises as to how such a relation can be reconciled with the absolute simplicity of the Necessary Existent. Avicenna addresses this problem by distinguishing between acquired knowledge and presential knowledge; however, this

distinction itself is not independently established through necessary demonstration, but rather accepted as a metaphysical postulate (Avicenna, 1960c, p. 346–349).

#### ***4.2 The Active Intellect and the Problem of the Source of Certain Knowledge***

In Avicenna's epistemology, the Active Intellect plays a fundamental role in the actualization of human knowledge. Intelligible forms are ultimately obtained through the emanation of the Active Intellect to the human intellect. At this point, however, a subtle tension emerges: if the criterion of certainty is logical necessity and demonstrative clarity, how is the role of the Active Intellect—conceived as a metaphysical principle—to be justified?

Avicenna does not provide an explicit independent demonstrative syllogism isolating the Active Intellect as a separate conclusion within his system; rather, he treats it as what functions as “the best explanation” for the possibility of universal intellection in human beings (Avicenna, 1960d, p. 248–250). Yet being the “best explanation” is not equivalent to demonstrative necessity. Consequently, one of the foundational elements in Avicenna's account of certain knowledge rests on a basis that, according to his own epistemic standards, is at best probable.

This generates an internal inconsistency: a philosophical system that restricts certain knowledge exclusively to necessary demonstration relies, in order to explain the very possibility of such knowledge, on a principle that itself lacks demonstrative necessity.

#### ***4.3 Prophecy and the Descent from Demonstration to Rhetoric***

The epistemological tension reaches its peak in Avicenna's account of prophecy. Avicenna explicitly maintains that the content of revelation is structured through the imaginative faculty of the prophet and that its language is rhetorical, symbolic, and adapted to the understanding of the general public. If taken seriously, this claim carries significant implications.

According to Avicenna's own criteria, knowledge grounded in imagination, symbolism, and rhetorical persuasion is not only non-demonstrative, but lies entirely outside the domain of philosophical certainty (Avicenna, 1960b, p. 101–104). As a result, religious beliefs transmitted through revelation—even if their ultimate source is the Active Intellect—cannot, in terms of their epistemic form, possess the status of certain knowledge.

This point becomes especially problematic insofar as Avicenna himself exhibits philosophical commitment to some of these beliefs, such as prophecy, divine law, and the providential order of the world. If his epistemic criteria are applied without exception, such commitments must either be relegated to the level of non-scientific belief or excluded altogether from the philosophical system.

#### ***4.4 Methodological Implications: Philosophy versus Religious Commitments***

What emerges from this analysis is not merely a set of isolated difficulties, but a structural tension within Avicenna's philosophical system as a whole. A philosophical reason that meticulously delineates the boundaries of knowledge, certainty, and demonstration is, when confronted with theology, compelled to suspend or modify those very criteria.

From the standpoint of immanent critique, the issue is not whether Avicenna's religious beliefs are true or false, but whether they are philosophically justified according to the standards he himself establishes. More precisely, if Avicenna's rational system remains faithful to its own conclusions, it must draw a radical distinction between philosophy as demonstrative science and

religion as a rhetorical and symbolic system—a distinction that Avicenna himself ultimately refrains from fully embracing.

## 5. The Recurrent Pattern of Immanent Critique: A Comparative Note on Descartes and Kant

The analysis conducted with respect to Ibn Sīnā can be regarded as a paradigmatic instance of a broader pattern in the history of philosophy—one in which philosophers who construct coherent and self-grounding rational systems find themselves, when confronted with theological questions, compelled to suspend or weaken the very epistemic criteria they rigorously defend in other domains. In order to illustrate the generality of this pattern, this section briefly considers two prominent figures of modern philosophy: René Descartes and Immanuel Kant.

### 5.1 Descartes: God as the Guarantor of Reason and the Problem of Circularity

In Descartes' philosophy, self-conscious reason and the clarity of distinct ideas constitute the foundation of philosophical certainty. Descartes explicitly maintains that only what is perceived clearly and distinctly is to be taken as true, at least insofar as it is clearly and distinctly perceived (AT VII, p. 35–36). At first glance, this criterion renders reason entirely self-sufficient and excludes any external authority—whether tradition, institutional power, or revelation—from the domain of epistemic justification.

On this basis, reason should be able to secure its own validity solely through the internal structure of clear and distinct perceptions. However, Descartes soon encounters a difficulty: the possibility of systematic error—most notably the hypothesis of a deceiving evil demon—undermines confidence in these very perceptions. As a result, the criterion of clarity and distinctness, taken by itself, appears insufficient to guarantee certainty.

To resolve this problem, Descartes appeals to the existence of a benevolent and non-deceptive God in order to secure the truth of clear and distinct ideas. God thus assumes an explicitly epistemological role: without divine veracity, trust in human reason would remain unjustified (Descartes, 1996, AT VII, p. 53).

The difficulty arises from the fact that the proof of God's existence itself relies on clear and distinct perceptions. Consequently, reason requires God in order to validate itself, while God requires reason in order to be proven. This epistemological circle—well known in the philosophical literature as the Cartesian Circle—constitutes a clear instance of an immanent tension that emerges directly from Descartes' own epistemic criteria.

From the standpoint of immanent critique, the problem is not merely the presence of a logical circle, but rather the fact that Cartesian reason, which was intended to operate without recourse to unproven metaphysical assumptions, ultimately becomes dependent on a theological principle that can only be established through that very reason.

### 5.2 Kant: The Limitation of Theoretical Reason and the Return of Theology in Practical Reason

Kant grounds his philosophical project in a critique of the limits of reason. In the Critique of Pure Reason, he explicitly demonstrates that theoretical reason is incapable of establishing metaphysical claims concerning God, the immortality of the soul, and freedom, and that any attempt to do so inevitably leads to antinomies (Kant, 1998, KrV, A592/B620).

Accordingly, Kant restricts the scope of theoretical knowledge to possible experience and its transcendental conditions, regarding any attempt to transcend these limits as epistemically illegitimate. From this perspective, reason is justified only insofar as it remains within the bounds of its own cognitive capacities.

Nevertheless, Kant reintroduces these very concepts in the Critique of Practical Reason, not as objects of knowledge, but as “postulates of practical reason.” God and the immortality of the soul are presented as conditions for the possibility of the highest good and the coherence of the moral order (Kant, 1997, KpV, AA V, p. 122–125).

The tension here is evident: concepts that lack any epistemic standing from the standpoint of theoretical reason come to occupy a foundational role within Kant’s philosophical system through moral reasoning. Although Kant explicitly distinguishes between knowledge and moral faith, from the perspective of immanent critique one may question whether this return of theology constitutes a practical departure from the very project of limiting theoretical reason.

In other words, Kantian reason, after carefully delineating the boundaries of theoretical cognition, appeals in the practical domain to concepts that, by those same standards, lack theoretical justification. This suggests that even critical reason, when confronted with ethical demands, is compelled to accept elements that exceed the strict criteria of theoretical knowledge.

### 5.3 Comparative Synthesis

In all three cases—Ibn Sīnā, Descartes, and Kant—we encounter a structurally similar pattern: philosophical reason is defined by precise and restrictive criteria, yet at a certain point, in response to theological or ethical demands, that very reason is forced to transcend, suspend, or reinterpret those criteria. This phenomenon is not the result of personal inconsistency on the part of these philosophers, but rather an indication of an internal tension within the project of philosophical rationalism when it confronts religion and theology.

### Conclusion

The aim of this article has not been to offer an external judgment concerning the truth or falsity of religious beliefs, nor to provide a historical critique of the intellectual conditions of past philosophers. Rather, its purpose has been to examine the internal coherence of rational systems from the standpoint of the very criteria these systems themselves establish. By adopting an immanent critical approach, the article has shown how the religious and theological commitments of certain rationalist philosophers encounter fundamental difficulties when measured against their own logical and epistemological principles.

In the initial sections, Avicenna’s criteria of science, certainty, and demonstration were reconstructed—criteria that restrict genuine knowledge to necessary cognition grounded in syllogistic demonstration and exclude rhetorical, symbolic, or imaginative forms of cognition from the domain of philosophical certainty. It was then shown that Avicenna’s theology—ranging from the demonstration of the attributes of the Necessary Existent to the doctrine of the Active Intellect and the explanation of prophecy—at crucial points departs from these very criteria and, in order to preserve its internal coherence, is compelled to accept assumptions that lack demonstrative status.

The brief comparative analysis with Descartes and Kant further indicated that this tension is not confined to Avicenna’s philosophy or to any particular intellectual tradition, but rather constitutes a recurrent pattern in the history of philosophical rationalism. In all three

cases, philosophical reason initially establishes itself by precisely delimiting the scope of legitimate knowledge; yet when confronted with theological or ethical demands, it appeals to elements that, according to its own standards, cannot be fully justified.

On this basis, the central thesis of the article may be formulated as follows: when philosophy enters domains that can be defended only through the suspension or weakening of its own rational criteria, the internal coherence of the philosophical system is thereby put at risk. From this perspective, a philosopher who claims fidelity to demonstrative reason cannot, without methodological cost, remain committed to positions that lack sufficient justification by that very reason.

The implications of this conclusion are not merely negative or dismissive. Immanent critique shows that philosophical reason, insofar as it remains radically faithful to its own standards, is compelled to reconsider the legitimate boundaries of philosophical inquiry. Such reconsideration does not entail the elimination of religion as a cultural or historical phenomenon, nor the denial of its social or ethical significance. Rather, it leads to a precise distinction between what can properly be an object of philosophical knowledge and what lies beyond the scope of demonstrative justification.

Accordingly, the final conclusion of this article is that philosophical reason, if it is to preserve its own credibility, must refrain from entering domains that can be sustained only at the cost of abandoning its own principles. Otherwise, philosophy becomes subject not only to external critique, but also to an unavoidable critique from within.

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