Principles of Certainty

VRC Curriculum Essay Series

Safaruk Zaman Chowdhury

Ibrahim Qureshi

Justin Poe

Aaron Spevack

Renewal
EDUCATION

Verification and Renewal Curriculum Essay Series

The VRC Curriculum Essay Series augments the texts of the classical curriculum that speaks directly to the 'big questions.' The purpose of this series is to capture what is essential to philosophical and theological topics like epistemology (establishing what we know), cosmic semiotics (interpreting the world as signs), and cosmology (understanding God's relation to the universe). The essays seek to form a new English language reference on the subject that can be deployed by scholars and institutions.

Verification and Renewal Curriculum Essay Series, *Principles of Certainty*

The American Society of Islamic Philosophy and Theology
Boston, Massachusetts

VRC Editorial Team
Lead Author and Researcher: Safaruk Zaman Chowdhury
Researcher and Contributor: Ibrahim Qureshi
Researcher and Contributor: Justin Poe
Director and Contributor: Aaron Spevack

Cover Photo: Courtesy of George Sharvashidze from Pexels: Beige Pages Book Open (image number 69004)

بسم الله الرّحمٰن الرّحيم

CONTENTS

◣ Introduction

In this essay, the aim is to introduce students to a set of core principles of certainty discussed in works of classical Islamic theology and philosophy with a focus on applying these principles to central topics like God's existence, the nature of reality, human origins, truth and scepticism. By 'principles of certainty' there are generally two senses. The first sense is using it to refer to rules of inference that are required for reasoning correctly and consistently about something. The second sense is using it to refer to first principles that cannot be deduced from other principles, i.e., postulates that must be accepted to engage in any kind of intellectual reflection (especially metaphysical). In short, they are self-evident principles. In this essay, I am using it in the second sense. Each of the core principles mentioned in this essay will be outlined and then some will be illustrated with examples related to the topics under consideration. While these principles have their roots in works of the Islamic intellectual tradition, their rational nature makes them broadly accessible and valuable for critical thinking in any context. In fact, Muslims have acknowledged their discovery and use within intellectual traditions of other cultures and societies.

◣ The Importance of Core First Principles

In the Islamic theological tradition, faith (*īmān*) is not merely an inherited set of beliefs or a passive acceptance of claims. Rather, it is conviction based on reason, contemplation, and evidence that involves the careful study of both reality and revelation. The rational principles outlined below serve as fundamental tools in this process. They provide a framework that safeguards faith from confusion, helps clarify the nature of reality and truth, and ensures that religious conviction is both intellectually and spiritually sound. Several reasons make these core first principles important for a Muslim. I will briefly outline a few. First, by understanding why certain beliefs are rationally necessary, Muslims can move beyond a superficial acceptance of faith. Recognizing, for example, that infinite regress in causes is rationally impossible paves the way for confidently affirming the existence of a First Cause of the world, i.e., an uncreated creator who brought into being everything other than Himself. Such knowledge imbues one's religious beliefs with a sense of conviction, stability and depth (more on this below).

Second, first principles function like signposts directing the intellect away from incoherent ideas and baseless claims. In a world flooded with conflicting narratives, misinformation, and scepticisms of various kinds and degrees, these principles help Muslims discern credible sources of knowledge from spurious ones. They do not merely support their religious belief but also encourage intellectual rigour in all forms of inquiry, whether in science, religion, philosophy, or the humanities. By learning to identify logical impossibilities, distinguish between improbable and impossible events, and properly assess transmitted reports, Muslims can cultivate a disciplined approach to knowledge. This epistemic discipline ensures that their worldview, or more technically their 'creed' (*'aqīda*), is not built on

conjecture but on rational foundations informed by a reasoned understanding and reliable evidence. Again, we will see the application of this below.

Third, doubts about faith often emerge from misunderstandings—either of religious texts or of reason itself. The first principles address such challenges head-on. For example, some may doubt the existence of God or the possibility of miracles because these realities seem extraordinary or beyond human comprehension. By applying principles like "the inability to comprehend something does not mean it is false" or "the absence of empirical proof does not negate existence," Muslims learn that perceived difficulties do not equal impossibilities. A helpful way to illustrate this point is through a simple example. When someone hears the claim that the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) split the moon, they may respond with disbelief, saying, "I can't imagine that happening!" But the believer can reply, "Is it rationally impossible for the moon to split and then return? Does the moon cease to be the moon if splits?" The sceptic will admit, "No, it's not contradictory—but I still can't picture it." The key lesson here is that just because we struggle to imagine something does not make it rationally impossible. The human imagination has limits, *but those limits do not define the boundaries of what can be real*. This reflects the principle that incomprehensibility does not equal falsehood. Similarly, understanding that revelation and reason operate in harmony prevents the unsettling notion that faith and reason are at odds. When reason is properly employed, apparent contradictions between religion and reason often dissolve, restoring confidence in faith.

Fourth, and related to the third point, is that central to the Islamic tradition is the belief that Allah, as the source of both revelation and human intellect, has created a coherent and meaningful universe. The first principles serve as a bridge between scripture (Qur'ān and Sunnah) and rational inquiry. By applying these principles, Muslims recognize that what Allah reveals, if authentically transmitted and correctly interpreted, cannot be rationally impossible. Instead, any tension between a transmitted text and proper use of reason signals a need for deeper analysis byexamining linguistic nuances, historical contexts, one's own assumptions and the accuracy and strength of one's reasoning. In doing so, believers reaffirm that their tradition encourages critical thought, reflection, and reasoned devotion rather than blind or uncritical adherence.

Fifthly, embracing these first principles nurtures intellectual virtue and spiritual maturity. Intellectually, it trains Muslims to be careful, responsible, and diligent thinkers who appreciate the limits of human knowledge while remaining open to wisdom from revelation and testimonial types of knowledge like transmitted reports (*akhbār*). Spiritually, it encourages humility, for one realizes that just because something is beyond one's current understanding, it does not lie beyond the realm of truth. This balanced outlook counters both naive credulity and rash scepticism. It enables believers to engage with complex philosophical challenges, modern scientific discoveries, and ethical dilemmas with confidence rooted in a stable intellectual and spiritual foundation.

Finally, Muslim scholars were always known for their rigorous intellectual engagement, not only with Islamic texts, but with philosophy, science, and other religious traditions. The core first principles

mirror this legacy. They reflect the high value classical Islamic scholars placed on rational investigation, demonstration, and coherence. By adopting and applying these principles today, Muslims will continue that legacy, maintaining a tradition that is simultaneously faithful to revelation and unafraid of rational scrutiny. In doing so, they honour their heritage and contribute to a rich, ongoing discourse in a current highly challenging liberal, humanistic, secular, materialist, pluralistic and often uncertain modern world.

◤ The Core Principles

As mentioned in the previous section, Muslim scholars systematised a set of rational principles to guide our understanding of reality, truth, and the nature of existence. These principles help us navigate complex questions, avoid fallacious reasoning, and appreciate the limits of human understanding. They also serve as tools for critically examining beliefs and claims—whether they come from philosophy, science, or any religious tradition. This section introduces some key principles and applies them to three fundamental topics: God's existence, miracles, and the nature of truth and scepticism. By studying these principles, students will learn to engage more rigorously with philosophical arguments, appreciate the rationality of Islamic doctrines and depth of Islamic theological thought, and develop a more nuanced understanding of what it means to believe rationally.

One set of core principles for any rational discourse is conveniently offered by the Moroccan Sufi-reformist scholar Aḥmad Zarrūq (d. 899/1493) in the prolegomena to his commentary on Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī's (d. 505/1111) creedal work *Qawāʿid al-ʿAqāʾid* (Principles of Creed). These principles are based on what are considered 'impossibilities' (*al-mustaḥīlāt*):

فَالْمُسْتِحَيلَاتُ بِالذَّاتِ سِتَّةٌ: عُرُوُّ الْمَحَلِّ، وَجَمْعُ الضِّدَّيْنِ، وَلُزُومُ الدَّوْرِ وَالتَّسَلْسُلِ، وَوُقُوعُ مَا لَا يَنْتَهِي، وَقَلْبُ الْحَقَائِقِ، وَبُطْلَانُ الْحَصْرِ، وَقَدْ جَمَعَ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوَّلَ حُرُوفِ هَذِهِ السِّتَّةِ بِقَوْلِهِ: عَجِلَ وَقَبْ.

So, the intrinsically impossible things are six: a physical body being free [of opposites], combining two contradictory things at once, vicious circularity, infinite regress, the occurrence of an actual infinite, and reality being otherwise than it is, as well as the falsity of a strict disjunction. Some have gathered the initial letters of these six [impossibilities] in the phrase: *ʿIJL^un WAQ^aB*.[1]

The six categories listed above can be stated as principles:

---

[1] Aḥmad Zarrūq, *Ightinām al-Fawāʾid fī Sharḥ Qawāʿid al-ʿAqāʾid*, ed. Nizār Ḥammādī (Tunis: Dār Ibn ʿArafa and Kuwait: Dār al-Ḍiyāʾ, 2014), 33.

1. No physical object can be free of opposites together.[2]
2. Two contradictory things cannot be joined at once.[3]
3. Vicious circularity and infinite regress cannot exist.[4]
4. An actual infinite cannot exist in concrete reality.[5]
5. Realities cannot be made otherwise than they are.[6]
6. Claiming a strict disjunction is false is impossible.[7]

To this, other important principles have been added such as:

---

[2] Every physical object must be either in motion or still. To say that a physical object is free of motion and stillness together is impossible. This is because to be in motion means 'to be in place after being in another place', and to be still means 'being in a place after being in the same place'. Similarly, every physical object must be either touching or apart from another given physical object. Take a cup for example. It is either touching a given table or it is apart from the table. To say it is free of both touching the table and being apart from the table is impossible. This is because to be touching something else means "to be in a place in relation to something else such that no third thing can exist in between", and to be apart from something else means "to be in a place in relation to something else such that a third thing can exist in between'. See ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Farhārī, *al-Nibrās: Sharḥ Sharḥ al-ʿAqāʾid al-Nasafiyya* (Istanbul: Maktabat Yāsīn, 2012).

[3] A thing cannot be and not be in the same way at the same time. Contradictions cancel themselves out and cannot logically exist. A light switch cannot be *on* and *off* at the exact same time. If someone says, "The light is fully on and fully off right now," that is a contradiction; it makes no sense.

[4] A thing cannot be a reason for itself existing, and you cannot have a chain of causes that never starts. If A needs B and B needs A to exist, neither can get started. If someone says for example, "I'll only start studying if I'm already prepared, and I can only be prepared if I start studying," they will never begin. It is a circular trap, like asking, "Which came first, the chicken or the egg?" A chicken depends on an egg that it comes from and the egg requires a chicken that it comes from, and on infinitely. Likewise, if every book was borrowed from another person, but no one ever owned the first book, then where did the books come from? That is infinite regress—effectively, it explains nothing.

[5] You cannot have a *real* completed set of infinite things in reality. Infinity is a mental concept, not something that can exist in full in time or space. Imagine trying to walk across a path that has *infinite* steps before you can reach the end—you'd never get there. Or imagine a library that contains *every* book, including books with infinite pages—you could not even begin to finish one. These are not real possibilities.

[6] This in logic is called the Law of Identity (LI). It states that whatever is, is; a thing is what it is. Formally, $A = A$. Something cannot have the qualities of one thing and then be said to be something else contrary. Things are what they are; calling them otherwise does not change their reality. You cannot say "Water is a solid," and expect it to stop flowing. Water is liquid by its nature. Yes, that which was water can miraculously be transformed into a rock. But for the very wateriness of water to become solid—that is impossible.

[7] A disjunction (ḥaṣr) refers to saying that X is either Y or not-Y. To then say that this disjunction is false is to say that X is neither Y nor not-Y; instead it is something else, a third possibility. But this third possibility is impossible since there is no third possibility other than Y and not-Y. For example, sounds are either white or not white. This is necessarily true; to claim this disjunction is false is to imply that sounds can be in some third state other than being white and not white. But no such third state can exist.

7. Obtaining something already obtained (*taḥṣīl al-ḥāṣil*), i.e. attempting to acquire what one already possesses, is meaningless.[8]

8. Multiple agents for a single effect (*taʿaddud al-fāʿil*), i.e. having multiple independent ultimate causes for the same single effect, is rationally impossible.[9]

9. Preference without cause (*tarjīḥ bi-lā murajjiḥ*), i.e. an uncaused preference or change without any reason, is not rationally acceptable.[10]

Another set of important first principles can be introduced to further augment the above list. These are taken from the Indian jurist and mystic-scholar Ashraf ʿAlī Thānvī's (d. 1943) *al-Intibāhāt al-Mufīda* (*Beneficial Admonitions*) which is a book compiling his lectures addressing early twentieth century challenges to Muslim belief, primarily arising from science:[11]

10. Principle of Incomprehensibility: the inability to fully comprehend something does not imply that it does not exist or is false.[12]

---

[8] Trying to gain something you already have is contradiction in terms. You cannot "achieve" what is already achieved—it is a redundant point. Imagine someone saying, "I'm working hard to become someone who already exists—me!" Or "I'm trying to open a door that's already open." There is nothing to gain because the goal has already been reached. This helps clarify, for example, why God cannot "begin to exist"—existence is already His attribute. Or why it is irrational to seek proof for something already rationally or empirically established.

[9] You cannot have two or more ultimate, independent causes responsible for exactly the same unique outcome, because that would create a logical conflict of authority or control. If two people try to draw one picture on the same paper at the exact same time, using different colours and ideas, the result would be chaos. You cannot have two people writing *exactly the same sentence* in *different ways* on *the same spot* simultaneously. As we will see below, this principle supports the idea that there cannot be multiple gods or creators of the universe. A single, unified effect (like the ordered cosmos) points to a single, ultimate cause—not competing wills.

[10] This is also referred to as "principle of determination". Nothing changes or happens for no reason. If two possibilities are equally balanced, one cannot be preferred over the other unless there is a reason (a *murajjiḥ*) for that choice. Imagine flipping a fair coin and it lands on heads every single time, say, a thousand times in a row. You would assume something is causing this bias, because, otherwise, why would one outcome be constantly chosen over another? This principle helps affirm that the universe must have a cause for why it exists rather than not existing. It did not just *happen* with no reason or preference-maker. God's will acts as the rational cause that 'tips the scale' toward existence. Nothing can pop into existence without a cause, and things that exist must have a cause that determined them to exist rather than not exist.

[11] Note, the labels for these principles are not from al-Thānvī but my own ones. On these principles in more detail, refer to Safaruk Zaman Chowdhury, "Kalām Jadīd from the Indian Context: A Philosophical Examination of Mawlānā Ashraf ʿAlī Thānvī's (d. 1943) Text *al-Intibāhāt al-Mufīda*." https://www.academia.edu/110302378/Ashraf_Ali_Thanwi_Intibahat_al_Mufida_conference_handout.

[12] Just because you cannot fully understand or explain something does not mean it is false or does not exist. Similarly, simply because something seems contrary to the way the world works, this does not make that thing impossible. Most people do not fully understand how gravity works or how Wi-Fi connects their phone to the internet but they still use it and believe in it. *Complexity or mystery does not equal falsehood*. In religion, the fact that we cannot fully grasp God's essence or how miracles occur does not mean they are false.

11. Principle of Rational Possibility & Authentic Proof: if something is considered logically possible and authentically proven by revelation (i.e. Qur'ān and Sunnah), we as Muslims accept it as true or possibly existent. However, if it is reliably proven false by revelation, we accept its non-existence.[13]

12. Rational Impossibility vs. Empirical Unlikeliness: this is to say that what is rationally impossible cannot occur, but what is merely unlikely can still happen.[14]

13. Existence is beyond empirical proof. What this means is that the absence of empirical evidence for some particular thing does not imply that that thing does not exist.[15]

14. Transmitted proof vis-à-vis rational proof. Demanding a rational proof for a fact established by reliable transmitted sources is misguided if the nature of that fact is not something that can be rationally demonstrated in the first place.[16]

15. Precedent vs. Proof: the lack of prior occurrence of some particular thing or phenomenon does not equate to proof of its impossibility. Proof rests on established evidence and reason, not merely on whether something has happened before.[17]

---

[13] If something is rationally possible and authentically proven by revelation (like the Qur'ān or sound Ḥadīth), Muslims accept it as true. If it is authentically negated, they accept its non-existence. The splitting of the moon is rationally possible (it involves no contradiction), and the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth confirm it, so Muslims accept it as true. But if someone claimed that a prophet committed a sin that the Qur'ān clearly denies, they would reject that. Thus, reason and authentic revelation together shape what Muslims affirm or deny.

[14] Something logically impossible (like a square circle) can never happen. But something that seems unlikely (like someone surviving a plane crash) can still occur. A person cannot be both dead and alive at the same time (impossible). But winning the lottery—though highly unlikely (and unlawful!) is still possible. Similarly, the sun rising from the West rather than from the East is rationally possible since it involves no contradiction even though it seems to break with the patterns of the natural world. Thus, one should not confuse rarity or surprise with impossibility. Miracles are rare, but not illogical as will be explained below.

[15] Just because we cannot detect or measure something right now does not mean it does not exist. Air was invisible and undetectable for ancient people, but it still existed. Dark matter today cannot be directly seen, but scientists believe it is real due to indirect evidence. God, angels, or the soul may not be empirically measurable, but that does not mean they are not real.

[16] It does not make sense to demand logical proof for something only known through trustworthy reports, especially if it is not the kind of thing that can be logically demonstrated. You believe your great-great-grandfather existed not because you find it rationally necessary, but because your family told you and historical documents confirm it. You do not "prove" it like a math equation. Likewise, many religious facts—like events in the Prophet's life—are known through reliable transmission, not logic alone.

[17] Just because something has not happened before does not mean it is impossible. Before airplanes, people would have said flying in the sky is impossible. Once it happened, that changed. The point is that the absence of past examples is not proof that something cannot happen, especially in the case of miracles or divine action.

16. Contradiction in rational and transmitted proofs. This states that when apparent contradictions arise between claims of reason and claims established from authentic revelation, there are principles for reconciliation and outweighing, typically giving priority to definitive proofs over probabilistic ones.[18]

With these principles outlined, let's apply them to some key questions beginning with the existence of God followed by the possibility of miracles and truth and scepticism.[19]

◣ Applications

God's Existence

The first example with which we will start our exploration of applying some of these core principles is the question of the existence of God. Muslim theological and philosophical literature is replete with details on the various proofs for the existence of God. My purpose here is not to survey them but to show how specific principles of certainty apply to the very question. Below is an outline of the cumulative application of some of these principles.

Conclusion	Principle
The Need for a First Cause of all things	(3) Infinite Regress is irrational.

Consider the world. It consists of what philosophers call *contingent beings* - things that begin to exist at a point in time prior to not existing. If each effect requires a cause and if we keep asking "what caused that cause?" and go on infinitely, we never arrive at an ultimate explanation.

Applying the principle that an infinite regress of causes is impossible we can conclude that there must be a first uncaused cause, described by theologians as "the maker of the world" (ṣāniʿ al-ʿālam). In Islamic theology, this first cause maker of the world is Allah.

---

[18] If there is an apparent contradiction between reason and revelation, Muslims do not jump to rejecting either. Instead, they check: is the rational argument definitive or just probable? Is the transmitted (revealed) text authentic and clearly understood? They then reconcile them based on strength: definitive proofs (whether rational or revealed) take priority over probabilistic ones. For example, if a verse seems to imply God has a body, but reason (and other verses) tell us God is unlike His creation, we interpret the verse figuratively according to the rules and precedence of the Arabic language. One cannot deny the verse, but they must avoid a literal reading that leads to contradiction and instead understand to have a non-literal meaning. The takeaway point here is that the Islamic tradition has a method for resolving tension between reason and scripture by weighing, interpreting, and harmonizing them carefully.

[19] Note, by logical impossibility as used in this essay, the reference is to a formal contradiction, i.e. the inconsistent pairing of two statements or propositions expressed in the form A or $\neg A$ (both A and not A). This is known as the Law of Non-Contradiction (LNC). For example, 'Zayd is standing and Zayd is not standing' are statements about Zayd that cannot both be true at the same time.

Once we arrive at the conclusion of the existence of a first cause of all that exists, the next belief is for this first cause or maker of the world to be singular:

Conclusion	Principle
The cause of the universe must be a singular first cause.	(8) Having multiple ultimate causes for the same effect is impossible.

One way this is argued, inspired from the Qur'ān itself,[20] is that if there were multiple deities, each with equal power and authority, we would face contradictions: for example, who decides what happens if they disagree? The universe would fall into disorder as neither will of each deity would be actualised. By applying the principle that multiple causes for the same effect is not possible, we conclude that it is rationally impossible to have multiple all-powerful creators, and therefore there must be a single, unique Creator, Allah.

With a singular cause established, we can infer how this cause must have chosen the world to exist, i.e. conferred existence on it over non-existence, because the world prior to its own existence could not have actualised one or other of these possibilities. That would be absurd to claim.

Conclusion	Principle
The world exists via an act of preference.	(9) Nothing comes into being without some cause giving it preference over non-existence.

We can quite clearly see that the world exists rather than not existing. If there were no reason or cause, why does it (why *would* it) exist at all? We can legitimately ask that question and seek an explanation for that. Applying the principle in question, we infer that the world's very existence and specific configuration demand a cause that prefers its existence over non-existence. This leads us rationally to the notion of an agent or cause that chose existence for the world over non-existence. Thus, the world's existence is explained by the choice of a cause beyond it.

Finally, the existence of God in general is denied based on assumptions of what counts as real or verified to be real. The objection often raised by sceptics or atheists is that God cannot exist because He cannot be seen or empirically verified. However, the reply is just because we cannot see God does not mean God does not exist.

Conclusion	Principle
The existence of God.	(13) Existence beyond empirical proof.

Many realities (like abstract entities—numbers, moral values) are not subject to direct empirical observation but are known rationally, i.e. via inferences and deduction from other principles.

---

[20] See Q. al-Anbiyā' 21:22: "Had there been in the heavens and earth gods besides Allah, they both would have been ruined. So exalted is Allah, Lord of the Throne, above what they describe."

Similarly, God's existence is not disproven by our inability to physically detect Him. By applying our principle, we can confidently conclude that the inability to find God through material means does not negate His existence. Rational arguments, revelation, and even inner spiritual experiences form different avenues of knowing.

What we can conclude in our brief exploration of the existence of God based on these principles is that certain concepts—such as infinite regress—are rationally impossible, thereby pointing to a necessary First Cause that is uncreated and singular. These principles also show that the non-empirical nature of God's existence does not negate His reality, since reason and revelation affirm Him without any logical contradiction.

Miracles

In this section of the essay, I present a structured explanation of how we can apply several of the listed rational principles from Islamic theology and philosophy to the question of 'miracles' (*mu'jizāt*). The aim is to help students understand that the acceptance of miracles does not rest on blind faith, but rather on a reasoned approach that distinguishes between what is rationally impossible and what is extraordinary and beyond our current understanding yet still possible.

The first point on the question of miracles—which is often defined in Islamic theology as the contravention of the customary experience and regularity of nature—is differentiating between something being rationally impossible from it being highly improbable.

Conclusion	Principle
Miracles are possible.	(12) Empirically unlikeliness does not negate something extraordinary.

Something that is logically impossible (like a square circle or married bachelor) cannot occur. However, something that is merely empirically unlikely or extraordinary may still happen. It cannot be ruled out because it is not something in principle that is inconceivable. A miracle, by definition, is an extraordinary event that defies normal expectations and habits of experience. While miracles are extraordinary such as parting of the sea, healing without medicine, and fire being cool,[21] none of these are logically contradictory. A logical contradiction would be like the claim that the sea both parted and not parted or the fire that cooled both cooled and did not cool There's no intrinsic *logical* contradiction in saying that the natural order was temporarily suspended or altered by a higher power. Thus, miracles do not fall under the category of the logically impossible; they are simply events that are beyond the natural regularity we commonly experience in the world.

---

[21] References to Qur'ān 26:63, 3:49: and 21:69 respectively.

Another two related points on the question of miracles is firstly that just because we cannot fully understand how something or some phenomenon occurs does not make it false and secondly the lack of direct empirical evidence does not mean something does not exist or did not happen.

Conclusion	Principle
Miracles are possible.	(10) Principle of incomprehensibility.
	(13) Existence beyond empirical proof.

On the first point, miracles often involve events that break the known laws of physics or biology. Our inability to comprehend how exactly God brings about such events does not negate their possibility. Our limited understanding of natural laws and divine power means miracles may remain beyond our complete comprehension - without implying they cannot occur. On the second point, many miracles are one-time events in history. Just because we cannot replicate or empirically verify them now does not mean they never happened. We accept historical events based on reliable testimony. Similarly, miracles are accepted on the basis of sound transmitted reports (revelation and reliable historical accounts), not on the possibility of empirical verification.

In addition to the above points, the objection of the sceptic towards miracles can be addressed with additional principles, each of which will be explained in turn:

Conclusion	Principle
Miracles are possible.	(11) Rationality possibility and authentic proof.
	(14) Principle of transmitted proof.
	(15) Precedent vs. proof.
	(16) Contradiction between rational and transmitted proof.

Firstly, if something is rationally possible and is authentically established by revelation, then we must accept it because the indubitable authority of Qur'ān as divine speech has been proven as well as being an infallible source of truth. The Qur'ān and authentic Ḥadīths relate numerous miracles performed by prophets (e.g., Prophet Moses's staff turning into a serpent and Jesus healing the blind). None of these miracles entail logical contradictions; they are extraordinary but not impossible events. Given their authenticity in revelation and lack of intrinsic logical impossibility, believers accept these miracles as true historical occurrences. There is nothing unjustified about this.

Secondly, asking for a purely logical proof of something that is historically or scripturally transmitted is a category error. Miracles are often known to us through revelation and sound historical reports. Expecting a logical demonstration akin to a mathematical proof for a historically contingent event is misplaced. Instead, we rely on the authenticity and trustworthiness of the transmitted accounts, just as we do with many historical facts. Historical knowledge is not verified via mathematical criteria of certainty.

Thirdly, the fact that something has never happened before or since does not prove it cannot happen. A sceptic might argue that since miracles are rare or unprecedented in their own experience, they must be impossible. But absence of precedent is not proof of impossibility. The world's history is filled with unique events. If God, as an omnipotent being, chooses to manifest a rare sign, it cannot be ruled out simply because it defies common experience.

Finally, when an apparent conflict arises between reason and revelation, one must carefully examine the interpretation of the transmitted text or the reasoning process to resolve the apparent conflict. Should one believe miracles contradict reason, the issue is often misunderstanding the scope of reason. Reason tells us how nature usually operates, not what an omnipotent Creator can never do. If revelation states that a miracle occurred, and the event entails no logical impossibility (i.e. no formal contradiction), then there is no true contradiction. Instead, the believer re-examines their assumptions about what is impossible. Nature's regularities do not confine the scope of God's power. To summarise then, when considering miracles in light of these rational principles, we find that:

- They are not logically impossible (no contradictions are involved).
- Their rarity or inexplicability does not negate their possibility.
- They are supported by reliable transmitted evidence (Qur'anic verses and authentic prophetic narrations) – and thus must be true.
- They do not violate reason but rather transcend our usual expectations of how the world works.

Therefore, miracles stand as extraordinary signs of God, not irrational claims. By applying these rational principles, one can appreciate that belief in miracles is not about abandoning reason, but about recognizing reason's scope and the omnipotence of the divine.

Truth and Scepticism

This final section will apply some of the now familiar rational principles to various issues related to scepticism around truth and the possibility of knowledge. Often, sceptics argue that there can be no objective truths or that we are unable to know things in any reliable way. These claims and many more contravene clear principles and are fallacious in nature.

Conclusion	Principle
Reality can be known.	(2) Contradictions cannot be true.

We live in a world where things are a certain way rather than another. Reality—what actually exists— is not a matter of opinion or belief; it is not a figment of one's imagination. To describe it meaningfully, our statements must correspond to how things truly are. A statement and its direct negation cannot both be correct at the same time and in the same respect; this is the Law of Non-contradiction (LNC). Radical scepticism that denies this principle destroys the very possibility of reasoning or understanding. For instance, claims like "Nothing is real" or "Reality cannot be known" are self-

defeating: if they were accurate, they would themselves represent knowledge about reality - which contradicts their own content. Therefore, while our grasp of reality may be limited or fallible, it is meaningful to say that reality exists and can be known, at least in part.

Sceptics also argue that attaining knowledge itself is not possible. In claiming this, they confuse the rationally impossible with the merely challenging or unlikely. Not being able to fully comprehend a complex matter (like God's essence) does not mean we cannot know anything true at all.

Conclusion	Principle
Knowledge is possible.	(10) Principle of incomprehensibility.

Just because complete certainty in some things is hard does not mean that some partial truths or well-substantiated truths cannot be attained. Rational inquiry and reliable testimony give us truth, even if not absolute truth about everything. In addition, just because we cannot fully comprehend something does not make it false. Consider quantum physics or the depths of the ocean's ecosystem. Our lack of full understanding does not negate their reality. Sceptics often claim if we cannot see or test something, it might not be true. However, this helps us understand that truth is not limited to what we can currently grasp. We acknowledge our cognitive limits. Hence, scepticism should not be absolute but tempered by humility before complexities.

Finally, on specifically religious knowledge, sceptics here also have misplaced objections. Some forms of knowledge come through authentic transmission (historical truths, revelation), and not everything must be proven from scratch *logically* from deduction and inference. If sceptics demand that every piece of information (historical events, linguistic meanings, or even scriptural truths) be proven purely by logic, they misunderstand the nature of knowledge (and logic). Historical truths are known through reliable reports, scientific truths through empirical observation, and religious truths through authentic revelation. Each type has its proper method of verification.

◣ Conclusion

In exploring these principles, we find a robust and nuanced intellectual framework, one that values reason, recognizes our cognitive limits, and remains open to truths that come from revelation, rational inquiry, and reliable testimony. By applying these principles to the questions of God's existence, miracles and the nature of truth, we can conclude that Islamic theology and philosophy encourage a rational faith: belief that is not only sincerely held but also critically based. These principles do not only serve religious inquiry; they can shape our engagement with any field. Whether examining the existence of a Creator, navigating sceptical arguments about truth, or evaluating claims in science or history, these tools help ensure our thinking is coherent, consistent, and comprehensive.