

THE SCOPE OF INTELLEC IN REVELATORY DIVINE SCIENCES

Mohammad Taqi Subhani

Jan 2022

Abstract: Discussion regarding intellect [عقل] are divided into three areas: ontology, psycholog, and epistemology. One of the important epistemological discussions about intellect in the school of the Ahlul Bayt (a) is the interaction of intellect and revelation to derive and understand beliefs of the religion. From this point of view, revelation enlightens the intellect with three functions of awakening [تنبيهی tanbihi], explaining [تبيينی tabyini] and teaching [Ta'limی Ta'limi]. However, in some cases, intellect has an inherent limitation. In this article, the following four rules have been used to discuss the limitations mentioned: prohibition of syllogism [نفی قیاس], the impossibility of deep and complete recognition [استحاله معرفت بالکنه], the impossibility of recognition through comprehension [استحاله معرفت بالاحاطه] and impossibility of recognition through description [استحاله معرفت بالوصف].

Keywords: ontology, intellect, prohibition of syllogism, the impossibility of deep and complete recognition/ comprehension/ recognition through description

The three fields in study of Intellect

In this age, many believe that there are three main issues to be considered about intellect: the ontology of intellect, the psychology of intellect, and the epistemology of intellect. Although these three areas are interlinked, they are distinct in terms of scientific logic and foundation, and each should be considered separately.

The ontology of intellect answers questions such as what is intellect, is it an abstract or non-abstract thing, is intellect outside or inside the human soul, are the essence of human and intellect united or separate? Discussions on this subject have been discussed in

the teachings of the Qur'an and the Ahl al-Bayt. Many theologians, philosophers and mystics have discussed it as well. Since it is outside the scope of intellect, we will not discuss the ontology of intellect.

The second issue is the psychology of intellect or the psychology of the perception of intellect, which, of course, we do not completely agree with this phrase. Here we talk about the process of understanding the intellect and how the intellect accesses the things it perceives. There have been many debates on this subject between Muslim and non-Muslim thinkers. In the contemporary period, a new field called "perceptual psychology" has emerged and deals with the process of perception and cognition from a

specific perspective. In history, Muslim philosophers have been discussing different perceptual powers and showed how each of these powers works in different stages of understanding. The later Muslim philosophers divide knowledge into acquired knowledge [Elm Husuliyah] and Intuitive knowledge [Elm Huzuriyah] and describe a process for each of these two types of knowledge.

Furthermore, Greek thinkers such as Plato and Aristotle have widely different opinions regarding the cognition of intellect. Plato theorized that intellect perceives by getting reminded of the forms in the world of archetypes. are obtained by pointing to examples. He believed that we are familiar with the forms in that world and we see that form in our minds. On the other hand, Aristotle believed that we have

within us a power called the intellect which gives rise to all our cognitions by its interactions [كنش و واكنش]. This intellect, which is passive in the beginning, abstracts the forms felt by the body. Aristotle further believed that when these forms become completely abstract, they become a perception of the intellect.

In the Islamic world, there were differences between theologians and sages. Even among philosophers of names, there are many differences in this regard. For example, Sheikh Ishraq [Yahya ibn Habash Suhrawardi] believes that sensory perception, and especially what we see is not an acquired perception. Rather he believed that our observations are is intuitive perception. According to him, when I look at a glass of water, the form of the glass is not engraved in my soul, rather, I find the external glass. In

any case, the discussion of the cognition of perception or how to intellect perceives is one of the important issues that should be considered in a comprehensive discussion of intellect.

The third field is the epistemology of intellect. Here, the major discussion is whether human intellect's perceptions are epistemologically valid. In the epistemology of intellect, there are at least four main ideas that are also addressed in the new science of epistemology today. First, is intellect a Hujjah [حجيت عقل] and can it bring us to the truth or not? Second is the scope of the perception of intellect. In other words, if the intellect can show us the known object, what is extent of this perception? Is it unlimited or does it have a limit? This is also one of the ancient

debates between philosophers and non-philosophers.

Some thinkers have believed that whoever accepts the authority of intellect [حجيت عقل], must believe in the absolute authority of intellect [حجيت عقل] in all areas because "عقلية" means that the rules of the intellect are not specific to a situation. Secondly, if we say that the intellect understands some subjects and does not understand there subject, there must be a difference between them, and there is no such difference. Of course, the rule does "عقلية الأحكام لا تخصص" not apply to this instance, and this rule is for the place where it is established that we recognize through our intellect. In the situation where the intellect understands a subject or not has nothing to do with this rule.

In our belief system, according to the principles of the Qur'an and Sunnah, there is a difference between what the intellect understands and what it does not understand. This difference is not subjective to every person rather is objective. In other words, the intellect understands in some instances because the relation between intellect and perceived thing is such that it makes this recognition and perception possible. However when such conditions are not established, the intellect does not understand.

There are two other important issues in the epistemology of reason, one is the relationship of intellect with other sources of recognition (such as Fitrah, experience and observing), and the other is the process of intellect in achieving recognition.

Interaction of intellect and revelation according to the teaching of the Ahlul al-Bayt (a)

As mentioned, the discussion of the scope of intellect and its relationship with other sources of recognition, as well as the methodology of perception, is one of the topics in the epistemology of reason. Our discussion here is about the scope of rational perceptions, and we want to explain this based on religious sources. In this discussion, the Ahlul al-Bayt (a) have presented complete explanations and arguments that are based on the intellect. In other words, the Imams themselves have rationally argued why intellect is limited and in what ways it is limited. In this way, the intellect, guided by revelation, understands the scope of its recognition.

It is worth noting that the Ahlul al-Bayt (a) have explained a fundamental and methodological point regarding the scope intellect by quoting the Holy Qur'an. However other thinkers have paid less attention to it. In short, from the point of view of all Muslim scholars, the intellect has authority [حجيت] and this authority is independent. Except the Ash'ari sect from the Sunnis, others have a consensus on this principle. The difference between the Ash'arites is also in the scope of intellect and not in the principle of the authority of intellect. Thus, it can be said that almost everyone believes that man has a source of recognition that understands the truths of existence independently. In other words, without the help of another source, he understands and perceives things. This is theory is called the "independent authority of intellect [حجيت استقلالى عقل]." Those who have

researched in verses of the Holy Quran and narrations of the Ahlul Bayt hadiths know that the independent authority of the intellect is among the Mohkamat. But the point of difference between the Ahlul al-Bayt school and other schools of thought is that despite the emphasis on the independent authority of the intellect, they (a) say that the intellect is not independent of divine revelation and the divinely chosen teachers in these matters which it comprehends. The late Sheikh Mofid in the book 'Awayil al-Maqalatsays:

وَأْتَفَقَتِ الْإِمَامِيَّةُ عَلَى أَنَّ الْعَقْلَ مَحْتَاجٌ فِي عِلْمِهِ
وَنَتَائِجِهِ إِلَى السَّمْعِ وَأَنَّهُ غَيْرُ مَنْفَكٍ عَنِ سَمْعِ بَيْتِهِ
”العاقل على بكفية الاستدلال“¹

Sheikh Mofid, the great Shiite theologian and rationalist, says: Unlike the Mu'tazilites, all Imamiyah² believe³ that the intellect

has an independent authority. But this does not mean that intellect can establish religious teachings without a divinely appointed teacher. This is a completely rational proposition and basically the human intellect has followed the same path in history. Therefore, we say that in the position of proof, intellect has independent authority. However, this does not mean that intellect can establish religious teachings without a divinely appointed teacher. This is a completely rational proposition and basically the human intellect has followed the same path in history. Therefore, we say that in the position of proof, intellect has independent authority. Despite this, while establishing proof, intellect still needs revelation to find the content and evidence.⁴As the Ahlul al-Bayt have said, the first and greatest mission of the divine prophets is to awaken the intellect so it can

understand the things to come. Imam Ali (a) says: “وأرسل إليهم رسله وواتر إليهم... لئيبثروا لهم دفائن العقول” meaning Allah (swt) sent to them His prophets and messenger... to uncover for them the buried intellects.⁵

According to the above narration, intellectual information is a treasure trove and humans cannot access it without the guidance of the prophets. As a proof, when the intellect is told that the way of recognition of Allah (swt) and His names is such-and-such, if it understand, it will comprehend. Throughout human history, most human beings - despite having intellect - were polytheists, superstitious and corrupt people. Meaning, despite having intellect, they did not comprehend and understand. Overall, the intellect is not needless of revelation to

comprehend is the true sense of the word.

Some say that because the intellect has independent authority, there is room for doubt and discussion on everything that religion has said about the recognition of Allah and other knowledge because it is "irshadi". In fact, the word "irshadi" means that when a prophet reminds us of a reality among the fundamental truths, the intellect independently understands it and might chose not to submit. However, if the prophets did not exist or did not make human beings aware, would the human intellect be able to perceive these realities by itself? The rationalist in the Ahl al-Bayt school explicitly reject this point. How can a person who believes that the words of the prophets and their divinely appointed successors about the Tawheed,

names and attributes of Allah (swt), His actions, His destiny and judgment, human salvation, the relationship between human action and God's action, resurrection, purgatory and previous worlds were things that humans could understand by pondering about them? In other words, the prophets have said the same things that humans themselves understand! Is this the reality of the history of human thought? Has the mission of the prophets of Allah (swt) been to only convey the laws of worship such as prayer, purification and penalties? Or is the foremost mission of the prophets to awaken the human intellect and Fitrah and to teach them the way of to recognize Allah (swt), themselves and the universe around them?

Based on this, according to the principles of the Qur'an and Sunnah [which we believe is due to

explanation of the Ahlul al-Bayt's school of thought, and has not been mentioned in any other philosophical school or religious group in the history of Islamic thought], the relationship between intellect and revelation can be summarized in reminding, explanation and teaching.

First - Reminding: Revelation awakens the intellect to its comprehension abilities. Even in relation to the basic principles of intellect, human beings need to be reminded and awakened. This is about knowledge about religion and not about self-evident rational axioms. For example, in the discussion of Tawheed, the intellect independently understands the existence of God and has authority. However, in the Holy Qur'an it is mentioned that Abraham used to debate and prove the existence of God, Tawheed and divine attributes.

So, in this section, we need a reminder so that the intellect does not deviate in retrieving its buried treasure. This has also been mentioned in many narrations.

Second - Explanation: The intellect perceives the basics of the matter, but not its characteristics and details. We will discuss later about why perceiving details is not the role of the intellect. However, it is clear that the intellect is not able to perceive details independently. Of course, humans can guess or imagine the details, but they cannot perceive them independently. For example, some philosophers believe that our knowledge of our souls is a Intuitive knowledge [Elm Huzuriyah]. Assuming we have intuitive knowledge of our souls, the question is whether we can perceive all aspects of the soul with the intuitive knowledge of ourselves or not?If

that was the case, there would be no difference between the great thinkers in history. However, about 45 opinions about the soul have been reported among human intellectuals. Even many Mu'tazilite theologians believed that the soul is not abstract and that the soul is the body that we feel. Among the Shiite theologians, the late SeyyedMorteza and Sheikh Tusi believe that the soul is the "بنية محسوسه". Even now, there is a significant difference of opinion between philosophers and thinkers. This is because they have a superficial understanding of the soul but cannot perceive its detailed characteristics or its relationship with the body because it is beyond the power of his intellect. The role of revelation is that it introduces dimensions of the soul and explains the characteristics of the human soul. When these things are pointed out to the intellect, the intellect accepts it.

This is the explanatory role of revelation for the intellect. Therefore, one of the areas of revelation that the intellect does not have access to is the understanding of details.

Three -Teaching: Revelation is the teacher of intellect. In some area, the intellect realizes that it has reached its limit and can only speculate after that. For example, if one wants to picture the Amazon jungle without seeing it with a set of general information, they can only imagine it. The human imagination can do this, but it is beyond the power of intellect and cognition. This is the border between intellect and imagination. While cognition and perception mean comprehending truth, imagination is similitude and speculation, and in the the Holy Qur'an it is called "خَرَص" - guessing"⁶.

In the Arabic Language, "خَرَصَ" means someone pictures something without knowing the reality and believes it to be real.⁷ Sometimes intellect itself accepts that it understand up to this point, but not after that. The role of revelation here is teaching. At this stage, the intellect must be humble and learn from the divinely appointed teacher. In this third realm, the intellect only obeys and submits. In the first and second realms, revelation played an important human cognition and helped the intellect. However, ultimately the intellect itself understands Maaref. Although without revelation, comprehending these realities would be difficult or impossible for the intellect. For example, it is true that the intellect does not understand the depth of the soul by itself and is unaware of the qualities of the soul. Here the soul does not submit; rather after the

reminders by the revelations it comprehends the quiddity and the characteristics of the soul. The third realm is where when the revelation explains a reality but the intellect does not comprehend it. This is where the intellect learns from a teacher whose truthfulness and nobility it acknowledges. Of course, this submission itself is also rational. If we call it following [Taqleed], it is taqleed based on intellect. All the people with intellect in the world logically follow another when they reach this realm regardless of being an atheist or a believer.

With these three realms, we can understand the discussion of intellect and revelation in Quran and narrations. Our discussion here is about the limitations and the realm of intellect in the third realm (i.e. in the realm of "محدودیت های ذاتی" - intrinsic limitations").

In the discussion of the realm of intellect and revelation, the pure and infallible Ahlul al-Bayt, in addition to the details they have stated, have also given rules through which the limits of each can be correctly identified. This is one of our problems in the topics of "Fiqh al-Ma'arif" compared to "Fiqh al-Ahkam". Our honorable jurists have defined rules for all matters in the "Fiqh al-Ahkam". Now the path of ijihad is very easy for a jurist by reading the rules of jurisprudence and principles. However because we have worked less in religious sources, we have not created frameworks and rules in the field of beliefs. Our suggestion is that a group of researchers and professors in the discipline and methodize intellectual and rational rules based on the Quran and Sunnah.⁸ Here, as an example, are a few rules:

1. The principle of negation of analogy (Qiyas: قياس)

One of the uses of theological principles is to limit the realm of reason (intellect). An illustrative example is the issue of analogy. Ahl al-Bayt have set a framework for intellectual knowledge (Ma'refat 'Aqli). Understanding this principle is based on the understanding of the truth of analogy. Usually in theological sciences, we divide the analogy into logical and jurisprudential "allegory" (Tamthil). But if one knows the history of philosophy, he will realize that the root of both is the same. The reason why we say that jurisprudential analogy is not valid is not because it is based on a different type than logical analogy. The jurists, when they speak of the analogy of Mansu al-'Illah and prove its validity, present it in the form of a logical analogy. For

example, they say that because God has said that "alcohol is forbidden because it is intoxicants", then it can be said that *Fiqah* "beer" is also haram (religiously forbidden) if it is intoxicated. The disadvantage of jurisprudential analogy is that its significant reason causes *Mujebeye Kolliyeh* (موجبة كلية) without any scientific basis. We say that because wine is forbidden, and there is a similarity between beer (فقاع) and wine (خمر) whether causes drunken states or not, then *Fiqah* is also forbidden. But what is the general reason for "the whole drunkard" being forbidden"? So the main drawback of analogy is that you use it as a premise without giving enough reason for a statement. Now, if we ponder on the narrations, we see that in terms of analogy, it is not specific to the topics of jurisprudence; rather, in many cases, it has been used directly in monotheistic discussions. As they

have said: *إن أول من قاس إبليس* (the first one who don analogy was the devil) is concerning the realm of beliefs. Anyone who likens the Creator to creatures does analogy.

The intellect perceives through analogy, and as long as the analogy is within the borders that the intellect can make it, this perception is valid. Most of our science today is based on analogy or induction. If we predict rain for tomorrow, it is because of the analogy to the similar situations that have occurred so far. The problem is that in the divine teachings, we often compare two categories that are not of the same type. We deduce something from the created world and attribute it to the Creator's domain.

It can be shown that many of our errors in philosophical and mystical discussions have their roots here. For example, concerning God's Knowledge ('Ilm), we humans refer

to ourselves and find our knowledge, and because we know our knowledge is either acquired (Husuli) or by presence (Huzuri), we put this as a base and say: All knowledge is either acquired or by presence. It is interesting that when knowledge by presence was not brought up and human sciences elites knew only the acquired knowledge, the philosophers used to define knowledge in this way: “ العلم ” هو الصورة الحاصلة من الشيء عند العقل ” Peripatetic school Due to this, ⁹ believed that God's knowledge is also Irtisami (determinable) ! For Ibn Sina, a science other than Irtisami science could not be imagined. It is because we humans compare everything to ourselves and we extend this to all beings.

It has been said in many narrations that analogy has no place in theology. The validity of analogy in the acquisition of knowledge is to the extent that the intellect itself has

free access and can rule. If reason compares two none of the same type entities and takes advantages from the realm of the knowable for the unknowns, here the limit of the knowledge is not reason.

2. The principle of Istihaleh Ma'refat bil-Kunheh (استحاله معرفت بالكنه)

Of the certainties of the narrations of the Ahl al-Bayt is that it is not possible to know God's essence. Knowledge of essence means that apart from the effects and appearances of an entity, we can have access to the essence and truth of inside. Sometimes we know an object by its sound or color, and sometimes we know it by its essence and substance. It has been said that the knowledge of essence (معرفت بالكنه) is permissible where an object is in the realm of reason, but that which is beyond the realm of reason can not be discovered. We are not

saying that "معرفة بالكتناه" knowledge of essence" is fundamentally false; but we say that the depth of an entity can be found if the intellect can perceive it thoroughly. Therefore, according to the general principle of the dissimilarity between Creator and the creatures, it is not possible to know the essence of God; Because the rules and rational methodology do not allow such knowledge.

3.The principle of Istihaleh Ma'refat bil-Ihateh

This is also one of the very precise points of our narrations. Ahl al-Bayt in many narrations with reference to the verses of the Holy Qur'an has said that one of the types of intellectual knowledge is Ihateh (know limitations of something). Ma'refat bil-Ihateh literally and from the perspective of narrations means Ma'refat bit-Tafzil¹⁰. When you know an entity with all its details, elements and components, you know

its limitations. It is obvious that this knowledge is not possible for us to possess concerning God, and it can not be possible for any truth that is beyond the borders of reason. Reason can know limitations and details of some matters, but it can talk about the truth and attributes of God through His signs, and deeds. In this way, it only recognizes the general properties of any object; he does not understand the detailed facts, and no matter how much it says about that object, it is not considered as rational knowledge.

4. The principle of Istihaleh Ma'refat bil-Tahdid or Ma'refat bil-Vasf

This is one of the important principles concerning the realm of reason. Most of our intellectual knowledge is obtained through descriptions and expressing the aspects of objects. Many of our rational perceptions are Ma'refat bil-

Vaṣf. In the narrations, it has been explained that Ma'refat bil-Vaṣf has a limit. Where we use descriptions, we are limiting what we describe: "This general principle, which is also rational, shows that it is impossible for anyone to describe something but not to limit it.

Everything that is not limitable is indescribable; That is, it can not be known through descriptions. It is why many narrations forbid us from Ma'refat bil-Vaṣf and Ma'refat bil-Tasavur (knowing by imagination) towards God:

كل ما تصور فهو باه

Whatever is imagined, the Almighty is other than that.¹²

كَلَّمَا مَيَّرْتُمُوهُ بِأَوْهَامِكُمْ فِي آدَقِّ الْمَعَانِي
فَهُوَ مَخْلُوقٌ مَصْنُوعٌ مِثْلَكُمْ مَرْئُودٌ إِلَيْكُمْ؛

Whatever you distinguish with your minds in the most precise

sense is a creature and an artifact like yours that returns to you.¹³

ما توهمتم من شئيين فتوهموا الله غيره

Whatever comes to your mind, know God other than that¹⁴.

As you can see, this matter is presented as a general rule in the speeches of the Imams. "Illusion" here does not mean illusion in its logical and philosophical meaning. Illusion means mental understanding; That is, in rational perceptions of the intangible, you finally come to a picture of an object and say that oh, I knew God, I recognized the description of God's knowledge or God's power, I knew the types of God's Deeds, and ... these are all perceptions and all are obtained by a form or description, and the reason gives a kind of cognition, which is a descriptive cognition and is related to the affairs

of creation, to the Creator, as reason has no idea of the Creator.

Undoubtedly, each of these rules, and the like, requires further exploration and study, and we have no intention here except referring to the main point.

Question and answer

1. The late Ayatollah Sheikh Mojtaba Qazvini has said in Bayan al-Furqan that can God bestow knowledge of His Essence on someone? Is such a thing possible?

Ayatullah Seyyedani: Some issues are inherently impossible, and since they are inherently impossible, so in these cases, no defect can be attributed to the Power of God. Basically, what is being asked is inherently impossible.

However, where Sheikh Mojtaba Qazvini - may God bless

him and grant him peace - said in Bayan al-Furqan that God can introduce His essence to His servant, if you pay attention to the words and compare them with other things that he said, you will understand that it does not mean the intellect can reach the essence of the God, knowledge (Ma'refat) is divided into the "Ma'refat bil-Ayat" which is obtained by the intellect and the innate knowledge or the knowledge of God by God (Ma'refatullah Billah) which in the latter case, the Almighty God introduces His holy essence to His slaves. It does not mean that the power of the slave's intellect has reached its peak and reached the essence of God. The latter type of knowledge which he has pointed out, is not Ma'refat by reason, rather, it is of another type and sign that is achieved by God's own definition and beyond normal human evidence. Of course, it itself

is under discussion and there is an extended discussion in this regard.

Mohammad Taghi Sobhani:
The first part of this question is like the question that asks: Can God unite the whole world in one chicken egg, while neither turns the egg big nor the world small. Notice that the intellect obtains information in certain ways, and that all these methods contradict the knowledge of the essence of the Almighty. It is impossible for the intellect to compare or describe the essence of God or to surround it. All of these rational practices are at odds with the infinite essence of God. So this claim is fundamentally inherently impossible.

2. On the basis of what has been said, all kinds of knowledge about God are limited to revelation. So what is the difference between a revelatory method and a rational method?

Mohammad Taqi Sobhani:
The knowledge of God Almighty is sometimes the knowledge of the essence or the knowledge of the attributes, and sometimes it is the knowledge of the principle of the existence of God or the principle of the existence of attributes. We have said that the intellect itself testifies that there is no impediment to knowledge through verses or actions, and in all these cases, the narrations assert this. Therefore, there is no problem that man can prove God with his intellect through verses. But as it is through Actions, it does not need to be enjoyed of surrounding knowledge, and as it is through works, it does not offer His description.

But knowing God through limit and description is not possible. In Usul Kafi, there is a narration from the Commander of the Faithful ‘Ali who says:

الذي سألت الأنبياء عنه فلم تصفه بحد
ولا ببعض بل وصفته بفعاله و دلّت عليه بآياته

God is the One about whom the prophets asked and they did not describe God by neither the limit nor to ba'z; Rather, they described him by His actions and proved Him by His verse¹⁵.

There are two opposing issues here: one is to describe God by His nature and essence, which is not possible and the infallibles did not do that. And the other is that His description is performed by His actions and reasoning through verses, which is allowed. In the methodology of rational understanding, this line and boundary is completely rational. According to the principles mentioned above, it is not possible to know the essence and attributes of the Supreme Being; but we can have rational perceptions through His works and verses.

3. According to the narrations of the limitation (Tahdid) and indescribability of the essence of God, first of all, is this criterion, the criterion of rational cognition or does it include absolute cognition? Secondly, narrations are absolute, and if indescribability is considered the criterion, we must also accept its requisites and say that even revelation and narrations do not give us any knowledge about God, and whatever revelation introduces, and any knowledge that is obtained is not the knowledge of God.

Mohammad Taghi Sobhani:
This feature is not for all perceptions and cognitions; rather, it is about the cognitions that are obtained through reason or human means that are as limited as man himself; but the knowledge given by God Himself is beyond rational perception:

اعرفوا الله بالله و آلرَسُولَ بِالرَّسَالَةِ

“ Get to know God by He Himself and recognize the Messenger through his mission.”¹⁶

اللَّهُمَّ عَرِّفْنِي نَفْسَكَ فَإِنَّكَ إِنْ لَمْ تُعَرِّفْنِي
نَفْسَكَ لَمْ أَعْرِفْ نَبِيَّكَ

Oh God, make yourself known to me by Yourself, for if you do not make yourself known to me, I will not even know your prophet.”¹⁷

In the Ahl al-Bayt school, it has been explained that this type of Ma'refat is beyond rational perception. The late Sheikh Hurr Ameli, in his book Ithbat al-Huda, has very well categorized the narrations related to this subject. Of course, these narrations have been narrated in all the authentic primary sources of hadith. One of the chapters mentioned by Sheikh Hurr includes the following narrations:

هل جعل في الناس أداة ينالون بها المعرفة قال فقال لا قلت فهل كلفوا المعرفة قال لا على الله البيان

Do people have a tool with which they reach the knowledge of God? ... He said: No. It is on God to reveal this knowledge.¹⁸

So we have another knowledge that is not of the type of rational knowledge; But what is stated in the narrations and verses about knowing His truth and attributes, the Ahl al-Bayt themselves have interpreted that these attributes are attributes of confession (Sifat Iqrar) and not the attributes of encirclement (Sifat Ihateh). The attribute of encirclement is what we said earlier; that is, through description, one can perceive the subject. For example, I have no information about behind this wall, if you tell its descriptions, I will find knowledge, and if I do not know its descriptions, I will not find

knowledge. In this case, my knowledge and ignorance are bond to knowing attributes.

أَلَيْسَ لِلَّهِ عَلَى خَلْقِهِ أَنْ يَعْرِفُوا وَ لِلْخَلْقِ
عَلَى اللَّهِ أَنْ يُعْرِفَهُمْ وَ لِلَّهِ عَلَى الْخَلْقِ إِذَا عَرَفَهُمْ أَنْ
يَقْبَلُوا¹⁹

The attributes of confession are when knowledge of God is obtained by God's definition and He introduces Himself, and man does not know Him through His attributes; rather, through the attributes that have been revealed in the revelation one acknowledges the innate introduced knowledge. It is said that if they were not prophets, you would not know how to call God. The divine prophets taught you those attributes and you confess to that truth through these attributes: we call this the attributes of confession versus the attributes of encirclement. Therefore, what is stated in the book and tradition is not a violation of the previous words and

the mentioned rules; rather, revelation facilitates and corrects the path for rational knowledge and innate knowledge.

4. Citing a narration, you said that the intellect can not imagine the essence of God. The fact that the intellect is in veil (can not see) or forbidden to understand an issue, does not indicate its weakness in understanding the subject; Rather, maybe by removing the veil, it will understand it. So where is the inability of reason apparent?

Ayatollah Seyyedani: This noble hadith is *Nas* that the intellect is in veil and has no way to the essence of the God. The implication of this narration refers to the inability of the intellect from reaching the holy essence. If there is a case in which reason can reach, it is natural that the infallibles should state exceptions. Since neither in this

hadith nor in other hadiths, no exception is mentioned, so declaring the inability of reason to reach the holy essence of God is absolute.

5. Why does God forbid thinking about certain things, such as thinking about His essence?

Mohammad Taghi Sobhani: This prohibition is an evolutionary prohibition (Man' Takvini) before it is a legislative prohibition (Man' Tashri'ee). If you also look at the content of the narrations, you will see that the expression "اعجز" or "امتنع" implies one truth. The truth is "man is limited and so is his rationality." The domain of reason and the methods that reason has for cognition are limited. It is natural that infinity does not fit in a limited container. It does not mean God Almighty has given us reason and provided the ground for this knowledge, but He has also sealed

on it. According to the philosophers, Ja'l (جعل) is Ja'l basit (جعل بسيط) , and not a compound Ja'l: ما جعل اهلا: المشمش مشمشا بل اوجده²⁰

God has created the reason. The reason is limited because it is a creature. When this creature enters a limit which is human existence, it becomes more limited. Is it rationally permissible to understand an infinite truth by a limited perception? This *I'jaz* (اعجاز) and *Imtina'* (امتناع) is not *tashri'ee* (تشريعي); Rather, it is rooted from the principle of limitation of the cognitive method of reason. By rational cognition, the principle of proving Sane' (Creator), the principle of divine attributes and our need for the Creator are proved without needing restriction (تحديد) and encirclement (احاطه) , and without the knowledge of the essence. At the same time, God Almighty has bestowed higher

favors and given us a higher degree of knowledge by His own definition. That knowledge is no longer in the realm of limitation and the veil of reason, but is beyond human reason and perception.

6. Some narrations have considered the Sader Avval (صادر اول) (i.e. The first thing that was issued from God's essence and came into being from non-existence) as reason. Which reason do you mean?

Ayatollah Seyyedani: I have not seen the words Sader Avval in the narrations; What I have seen is "the first creature": أول ما خلق الله . العقل . According to the narrations, the reason is an external truth and a creature that people benefit from. A ray of that intellect is given to individuals in many different ways and according to the divine providence and the expediency of creation. The existing intangible

intellect, according to the narrations, is an enlightened truth that is first created. Sometimes in the narrations the first creature is referred to as the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) or to other matters that require a detailed discussion. In short, reason means a truth that all sane people enjoy in different ways and directions.

Mohammad Taghi Sobhani: The Sader Avval expression has come from philosophy. Issuance of first intellect and then '*Uqul Tuliyeh* (عقول طوليه) to '*Aql Fa'al* (active intellect). This is a term for reason that was introduced to the Islamic world by Aristotle and the Alexandrian sages. Another discussion in ancient philosophy is the subject of reason in the homeland of the human *Nafs*. It is said that man potentially has reason and by perception it becomes active (بالفعل), then becomes bil-*Malakeh* (بالملكه) (It

is the level of rationalization of concepts and self-evident affirmations) and finally becomes bil-*Mustafad* (perceived (بالمستفاد)).

The medieval Christian philosophers themselves, who borrowed these two texts from ancient Greece, were unable to figure out the relationship between these two. That is, the ten intellects (عقول ده گانه) that are in the level of *Mujarradat* (مجردات) , and this human intellect, which is part of our existential truth, how they relate to each other, and basically why we call both of them intellects. When it was the turn of Islamic scholars, this problem arose again and the issue was not resolved. But in the narrations of Ahl al-Bayt: It has been mentioned that the first being of the world of *Mujarradat* and Ruhaniyeen (روحانیین) God Almighty created was the reason:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ خَلَقَ الْعَقْلَ وَ هُوَ أَوَّلُ
خَلْقٍ مِنَ الرُّوحَانِيِّينَ²¹

Then it is stated in the narrations that what exists in us as reason is a ray of that same light of reason. Therefore, the relationship is clear. Why did the philosophers have a problem with this? Because they considered human reason to be inherent in human beings, and believed in the union of 'Aqil and Ma'qul (sane and reasonable). Reason in the narrations of Ahl al-Bayt is a virtue of perfection which is given to the human soul and is also taken from him; whereas the philosopher considers the reason as the essence of man and says that man is the rational animal and his speech is the same as his essence.

Now, how is it possible that the reason is in the world of *Mujarradat* be an undependable truth, and at the same time the light

of the reason be also part of my essence? But on the basis of the principles of the Ahl al-Bayt, that light of reason that is in us is a ray of that *Mujarrad* light of reason, not our essence. The union of sane and reasonable is not acceptable from the point of view of the Ahl al-Bayt.

Reason is imparted to our souls. Therefore, that light is the reason, and we also benefit from the same light. Of course, in this way we really become the owner of the light of reason. But if it is taken from us, we become unwise. This analysis has not any problem in Ahl al-Bayt's school; As it is clearly explained in the narrations.

7. Considering that you have said that the relationship between reason and revelation is "interaction", is it possible that some hadiths or even verses of the Qur'an be in contradiction with reason or it

seems so? In this case, which one should you get your hands on? Should it be combined between the two or not? Is it not better if we use the word "flourishing" of the intellect with the hand of revelation instead of "interaction"?

Mohammad Taghi Sobhani:

We do not discuss words. First we have to see what the essence of the word is, so that it becomes clear what interpretation should be used for it. The gist of the words is that, first of all, the reason needs awareness and the guidance of revelation in order to be effective and motivated.

Secondly, there is a part of rational knowledge that the reason knows in short, but its details are not understandable by the reason. Revelation comes and elaborates on those succinct rational statements. There is also a place where

revelation shows the reason that your understanding is limited, and you do not understand such things, and the further you go, the more you become overwhelmed and puzzled. In such cases, a wise man accepts reason and accepts the word of revelation.

The important point is that we must not only believe in the logic of the interaction of reason and revelation, but also we should accept it as a scientific method. This methodological principle must be fully manifested in the matter of monotheism, Names and attributes, predestination (Jabr) and authority (Ikhtiyar), up to the issue of resurrection. We must see how the intellect flourishes under the training of revelation; In short, first of all, reason is not an exclusive source. Secondly, the reason, in understanding itself, has limitations, and thirdly, even in the same limited field, it needs receiving external

awareness, guidance and explanation.

The illusion of the conflict of reason and narration with its current interpretation is rooted in seeing the view of these two sources of recognition undependable. We read and hear again and again that the school of separation believes in the separation of reason from narration, or reason from revelation. Even some of the great philosophers have repeated this in their recent works!²² Nowhere have I seen any of the greats of the school of separation claim the distinction between reason and revelation. If someone from the Ahl-e-Hadith or from the Sunnites has said such a thing, it is another matter. The school of separation believes that one should not distinguish between reason and revelation, but that, on the contrary, a kind of interaction should be established between reason and

revelation. The root of the conflict between reason and revelation lies in the fact that we consider an intellect, completely independent of revelation; A reason that independently strives to establish a system of thought.

We then see that the appearance of *Nas* is incompatible with this rational discussion. If reason and revelation go hand in hand and interact with each other, most of what we see today as conflict will be resolved. Either the appearance that is claimed for *Nas* is not apparent, because the rational thinkers understand the opposite, or what we have made for ourselves in the name of rational perceptions is not the rule of reason. In the theory of interaction, from one hand, the real themes of the reason are narrated by revelation, and the difference of the argument of the reason with the fantasies of people

and in the other hand, with the presence of reason in all the stages of understanding the text, nothing that is against real intellectual knowledge will be understood from the text. So, according to the theory of interaction, the discussion of the conflict between reason and revelation should be re-analyzed and defined. Then we will see that the problem of conflict is solved from the very beginning of the process of understanding.

About the Author and the Article

He is a graduate from the seminary of Qum and a professor of Islamic philosophy and theology. Sobhani studied jurisprudence and principles with professors such as Javad Tabrizi, Hossein Vahid Khorasani and Seyyed Kazem Haeri, and Islamic philosophy with professors like Hasanzadeh Amoli, Javadi Amoli and Mesbah Yazdi. He completed

his master's degree in the fields of religious philosophy and Islamic philosophy and his doctorate degree in comparative philosophy (at University of TarbiatModares Qum). The management of the Institute of Islamic Sciences and Culture, the Islamic Research Center of the Radio and Television, and the Ahlul Bayt Theology Research Institute are part of his academic managerial experiences. In addition to teaching at seminaries and universities, he has authored and translated several books and more than forty articles. Among his works are Commentary on al-Asfar al-Arba'a by Mohammad Taqi Mesbah Yazdi, "Rationalism and textualism in Islamic theology", "Rationalism" by Bernard Williams (translation), and critique of the book "Critique of Crisis and Consolidation in the Formative Period of Shi'ite Islam" (conference). The present article is the result of two sessions among a series of specialized sessions on beliefs that were held in the holy city of Mashhad with the presence of professors and scholars of the

seminary and the university. These sessions, which were well received by scholars and intellectuals, were held under the auspices of Allameh Seyyed Jafar Seyyedani, and he himself attended gave the concluding speech. His words in these sessions adorn the present text.

Sources

The Holy Quran.

Nahj al-Balaghah, corrected by Subhi Salehi.

Hilli, Hassan Ibn Yusuf, (1363) "*Al-Jawhar Al-Nadhid fi Sharh Mantiq al-Tajrid*", Qum: Bidar,.

Ibn Babawayh, Muhammad ibn 'Ali, "*Al-Tawhid*", (1398 AH.), edited by Seyyed Hashim Hosseini,

Qom, Qom Seminary Teachers Association, first edition.

Ibn Manzur, Muhammad ibn Mukarram, Lisan al-‘Arab.

Javadi Amoli, Abdullah, (2007), “*The Status of Reason in the Geometry of Religious Knowledge*”, Qum: Esra Publishing, First Edition.

Khoramian, Javad, (2009), “Rational rules in the realm of narrations”, Tehran, Suhrawardi Research and Publishing Office.

Kulayni, Muhammad Ibn Ya'qub, (1429 AH.), “*Al-Kafi*”, correction by Dar al-Hadith, by Muhammad Hussein Derayati, Qum, Dar al-Hadith Institute.

Majlisi, Muhammad Baqir, “*Bihar Al-Anwar Al-Jame'a Idorar Akhbar al-aimmah al-Athar*”, Beirut, Dar Al-Ihya Al-Turath Al-‘Arabi.

Mufid, Muhammad Ibn Muhammad, (1413 AH.), “*Avail al-*

Maqalat fi al-Mazahib val Mukhtarat”, Qum, Sheikh Mufid Millennium World Congress.

Sabzevari, Hadi Ibn Mahdi, “*Sharh al-Manzumah*”, Tehran, Nab Publishing.

Subhani, Muhammad Taghi, (2001), “Names and Attributes of God”, *Encyclopedia of Imam ‘Ali* (a.s.), by the Institute of Islamic Culture and Thought, Tehran, first edition.

Tabarsi, Ahmad Ibn ‘Ali, (1403 AH.), “*Al-Ihtijaj ‘Ala Ahl al-Lijaj*”, edited by Mohammad Baqir Khorasan, Mashhad, Murteza Publishing, first edition.

Endnotes:

¹Mofid' Awayil al-Maqalat page 44

²That is, until his time. (4th century AH)

³The sheikh goes on to write: “*وانه لابد في أول التكليف وابتدائه في العالم من رسول وواقفهم في*

ذلك أصحاب الحديث واجمعت المعتزلة والخوارج
[Awayil al-Maqalat "والزيدية على خلاف ذلك
page 44]

⁴The basis of what has been said is that the difference between the teachings of the Ahlul al-Bayt and what the Mu'tazilite theologians or our philosophers have said in history is that in the teachings of the Ahlul al-Bayt and the works of the great Shiite scholars in the first centuries, intellect has independent and inherent authority without a doubt. Where the intellect understands the principles of religion, it has an independent and inherent authority. However, its authority is not exclusive. The intellect is not self-sufficient and self-reliant in understanding what it perceives. In order for the intellect to attain knowledge about religion, it needs to be warned, explained and taught by revelation. This conclusion is the main basis for understanding the commonalities and differences in the two realms of intellect and revelation.

⁵NahjulBalagha Sermon 1

⁶ وَإِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا يَخْرُصُونَ، - they do nothing but surmise” [6:116]

⁷”اصل الخرص التظني فيما لا تستيقنه“، Lisan al-Arab (لسان العرب) by Ibn Manzur Volume 7 Page 21

⁸Of course, we mean here the extraction of the principles and foundations of Maaref by relying on methodologies based on intellect and revelation, not the interpretation of verses and narrations based on human thoughts, which is often neither logical nor permitted. See an example of such interpretation in the following book: Khorramian, "قواعد عقلی در "قلمرو روایات

⁹ Hilli, al-Juhar al-Nazid, p.311

¹⁰ ibid.p.103

¹¹ Nahj al-Balagheh, sermon 152, p.212.

¹² Tabarsi, al-Ihtijaj, vol.1, p.201

¹³ Majlisi, Bihar al-Anvar, vol.66, p.293

¹⁴. Kulayni, al-Kafi, p.249; Ibn Babuyah, al-Tawhid, p.114.

¹⁵ Al-Kafi, vol.1, p.345; al-Tawhid, p.32

¹⁶ Ibid, p.213; al-Tawhid, p.286

¹⁷. Al-Kafi, vol.2, p.149

¹⁸ Ibid, vol.1, p.396; al-Tawhid, p.414

¹⁹ Ibid, p.398; al-Tawhid, p.412

²⁰ Sabzevari, Sharh al-Manzume, vol.2, pp.223-224, quoted from Ave sina

²¹ Bihar al-Anwar, vol.1, p.97

²² Javadi Amuli, p.184