



Revelation and Reason

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Is human reason sufficient for everything? Is revelation necessary? Human reason reaches a point where it's no longer possible to interpret events rationally. At that point, information from other sources, unattainable by reason, is needed. This source is revelation. This information is the news sent by Allah Almighty through His Prophets and Books. Without this revealed information, it's impossible to explain events completely and without contradiction.

For example, today humans know that matter is made of atoms, that atoms consist of a nucleus in the center and electrons orbiting around it. This information has been obtained through reason and experience. However, another thing known through this method is that a very large amount of energy is stored in the nucleus of the atom, and that there is a protective barrier preventing this energy from escaping. Reason can reach this information. But

reason cannot understand who placed this energy there and how. However, revealed information clearly provides the answer. This energy was created and placed there by Allah. The atom and the system in the universe were created and designed by God, and they operate at every moment under His supervision and power.

“He created everything and ordained it according to a measure.” (Al-Furqan, 25/2)

“Indeed, We created everything according to a destiny.” (Al-Qamar, 54/49)

“Surely He is the One who created the grains and the seeds.” (Al-An'am, 6/95)

Those who do not believe in revealed knowledge claim that the great energy in the nucleus of an atom is either created by nature or is a matter of chance. Those who claim that nature does everything are, in fact, deifying nature. But if nature creates and implements everything, why doesn't it reveal its divinity to humanity? There is no message or communication from nature to humanity. Isn't this a deficiency for a deity? Those who claim that all events are coincidental have no knowledge of probability calculations. Because it has been calculated that the probability of a complex system like an atom forming spontaneously is almost zero. This is where humanity faces a test. They will either believe in the existence, attributes, and actions of God, or they will deny them and seek other support. In the first case, if a person becomes a believer and performs righteous deeds, they will be happy in both this world and the hereafter. Those in the second case become disbelievers, and if they do not repent and accept Islam until death, they will be condemned to eternal hell.

Revelation and Reason from an Islamic Perspective

The relationship between "Revelation and Reason" in Islam began to be debated after the death of our Prophet (peace be upon him). However, contrary to the

claims of rationalists and positivists, revelation did not seek to eliminate the realm of reason and establish its own dominance. On the contrary, it opened up a space for reason within itself. The verses of the Quran, addressing the human senses, demanded the use of reason. Thus, the Quran explicitly invited humanity to think and learn lessons.

“And indeed, We have made the Quran easy to understand for those who seek guidance. Is there anyone who will take heed?” (Al-Qamar, 54/17)

“It is a reminder; so whoever wishes may reflect upon it.” (Al-Abasah, 80/11,12)

From the early days of Islam, the relationship between reason and revelation has been addressed from different perspectives by Islamic scholars. No Islamic school of thought has adopted a stance that completely rejects reason. However, Western philosophers, when evaluating reason, have disregarded revelation. Mu'tazilite scholars accepted reason as a definitive source of knowledge. They held reason responsible for reaching the truth in the absence of revelation. They argued that even without revelation, the existence of God, the nature of things, and the beauty and ugliness within them could be known through human reason. Among the most well-known Mu'tazilite scholars are Wasil ibn Ata, ibn Ubayd, Nazzam, and Jahiz.

A dissenting line criticizing such rationalist movements, which began with the Mu'tazilites, has always existed. Initially, scholars of Fiqh and Hadith opposed these views. The fundamental characteristic of this opposition was their acceptance of what was explicitly stated in the texts (Quran and Sunnah) regarding matters of creed (aqeedah), and their avoidance of issues such as anthropomorphism, personification, and interpretation. They followed the path of the Salaf and, while not completely rejecting reason, sided with revelation. They defended the primacy of revelation over rationalism. This group particularly opposed the interpretation of ambiguous verses. According to the Salafi understanding, the Companions did not resort to personal opinion (ra'y) in matters concerning religious belief outside the realm of transactions, nor did

they attempt to interpret the texts. According to them, following the path of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his Companions, and avoiding rational discussions on matters of faith, is the duty of every Muslim.

Malik ibn Anas (d. 179/795), the founder of the Maliki school of thought, opposed the Mu'tazilite theological understanding, that is, the interpretation of religious texts solely through reason. He stated that those who sought to achieve their goals in religion through theological means would be considered heretics. He regarded Kalam not as a science, but as a bad innovation. However, it is not the case that Imam Malik excluded reason. As a jurist, he made rulings based on opinion on many issues.

Imam Shafi'i (d. 204/819), continuing the line of Imam Malik, asked his students to stay away from Kalam. According to him, those who become addicted to Kalam cannot attain salvation. People show interest in Kalam because they are unaware of its essence. If they knew the truth, they would avoid it. However, Imam Shafi'i was not against reason. He criticized the Mu'tazilite scholars and the rational way of thinking they expressed, and rejected views that fell outside of Sunni creed. Nevertheless, Imam Shafi'i put forward ideas consistent with his own method of jurisprudence on issues such as the vision of God, destiny, and the attributes of God. In these ideas, he primarily based his opinions on the rulings in the Quran and Sunnah. However, he attributed the quality of discernment (distinction) to reason. He stated that reason can show the difference between various things, but it does not have the function of making judgments in the realm of values.

During the time of Ahmad ibn Hanbal (d. 241/858), a student of Imam Shafi'i, theological debates took place, and even the views of the Mu'tazilites became the official view of the state. The view that the Quran is created was forcibly imposed on the famous scholars of jurisprudence and hadith of the time. Imam Hanbal suffered greatly for not agreeing with this view. According to him, the tenets of faith (aqeedah) are based on what is stated in the Quran and Sunnah. One cannot express opinions about beliefs using reason alone. It is narrated that he said about him, "Those who engage in theological debates will never be

saved." Ahmad ibn Hanbal did not completely exclude reason from the religious sphere. As a scholar of hadith and jurisprudence, he did not disregard reason in jurisprudential matters, using methods such as analogy (qiyas), public interest (maslahat), and preference (istihsan).

Abu Hanifa (d. 150/767), the founder of the Hanafi school of thought, was not entirely opposed to Kalam (Islamic theology). His opposition was to a form of Kalam that was not based on the Quran and Sunnah, but rather influenced by foreign cultures, and whose aim was not to reveal the truth. He opposed the prevalent Mu'tazilite Kalam of his time, and the Kalam scholars who supported whims, desires, and tribalism. In Imam Abu Hanifa's system, reason holds a significant place. According to him, the primary source of responsibility is reason. He argued that even if no divine message reaches people, they are obligated to know God through their reason. His views on fundamental issues of Islamic creed were later published by Abu Ja'far al-Tahawi (d. 321/933) within the framework of the Salaf understanding.

Furthermore, these views of Imam Hanifa were also explained and published by Abu Mansur al-Maturidi as part of Kalam. Imam Maturidi is the person who best understood the Hanafi school of thought and followed it most closely in its principles and branches. He was the first to elevate Hanafi theology to the level of a systematic science.

Examples of the inadequacy of reason and the necessity of revelation

1) Through reason, man comprehends obligations, permissible things, impossibilities, and states that were not previously present in him. There is another state beyond reason, in which another eye opens for man. With it, he sees the unseen, future events, and some things that reason cannot grasp. Reason considers these things impossible. Some people with reason did not accept the things that prophethood comprehended, considering them impossible. This is ignorance itself, because they cannot show a reason or a basis

for these claims. This is a state they cannot reach, a state that does not exist for them. God, in His grace, has given His servants an example in the form of prophethood. This is sleep. A person who is asleep becomes aware of the unseen. They perceive something that will happen in the future, either clearly or through interpretation. It is impossible to understand this with reason. Prophethood is a state in which a spiritual eye develops within a person. This eye contains a light with which one sees the unseen and things that reason cannot comprehend. The proof of the possibility of prophethood is its existence. Its existence is established by the existence of certain knowledge that cannot be conceived by reason in this world.

2) The following hadiths cannot be known by reason:

“If someone acts upon their knowledge, God will grant them knowledge of things they did not know.”

“If someone helps an oppressor, God will make that oppressor a scourge upon them.”

“If a person, upon waking in the morning, focuses their worries on only one point (i.e., only God), God will relieve them of worries about this world and the hereafter.”

If you try these hadiths thousands of times to understand their truthfulness, you will see that the results are the same. This will cause you to acquire a necessary knowledge. After that, you will not doubt the Prophet (peace be upon him).

3) Positive scientists know the heart only as a piece of flesh. For them, heart diseases are physiological things. These are known through reason and experience and are related to the health of the body. However, as revealed to us through revelation, the real heart is not this piece of flesh; there is another heart beside it. Through it, God is known, and it is the truth of the soul. This also means the heart is healthy and sound. Among people, only those who come before God with a sound heart find salvation. There are diseases of the heart that cause the eternal and otherworldly ruin of a person. "There are diseases in the hearts," and not knowing God is the deadly poison of the heart. Following the desires of the

self and rebelling against God is the cause of its illness. Knowing God is the life-giving antidote. Opposing the desires of the self and performing acts of worship is the healing medicine. Curing the heart's illness and restoring it to health is only possible with these remedies. This quality cannot be comprehended by intelligent people solely with their intellectual capacity. It is also impossible for intelligent people to comprehend, with their intellectual capacity alone, the effects of the remedies of worship, the amounts of which have been specified by the prophets.

4) The knowledge gained through discovery and inspiration in Sufism, and the knowledge derived from the miracles of prophets and the wonders of saints, cannot in any way be obtained through reason.

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