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The Relation between the Concept of Intellect in the Qur'an and Traditions and the Concept of Intellect in Islamic Culture and History

HAMID PARSANIA¹

ABSTRACT: Taking a historico-cultural approach towards the meanings of 'aql - or intellect - in the world of Islam, the paper at hand, using a descriptive-analytic methodology, explains the role the Qur'an and other Islamic sources of textual authority played in shaping the meaning of intellect in Islamic culture. The first part of the paper identifies the meanings of intellect in Islamic history and categorizes them on the basis of various standards. The second part studies the historical and cultural categorizations of the meanings of intellect and their relation to religious texts. This study shows which one of the meanings of intellect is caused by the cultural presence and influence of Islamic texts and is thereby given the chance to flourish, and which one is caused by divergent external or internal elements that has met and continues to meet opposition from Islamic textual authorities.

KEYWORDS: theoretical intellect, practical intellect, metaphysics, natural reason, intuition, discursive thought, abstract reason, empirical reason, instrumental reason, demonstration

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Introduction

The term 'intellect' is used in various meanings in different disciplines. One can talk about the different usages and applications of intellect from different perspectives:

1. Understanding various meanings of 'intellect' and determining whether it is used in a homonymous or univocally homonymous way in these meanings.
2. The etymology of the term 'aql (intellect) and its historical developments.
3. Epistemology of intellect in its different senses. Here we will identify the epistemic value of each one of the meanings of intellect.
4. Ontology of intellect. Here we will discuss the instances of each one of the said meanings and the way it comes into being.
5. A historical and civilizational outlook towards the meanings of intellect. Here we will study the following issues: which intellect prevailed in which historical period in which cultural sphere and under the impact of which factors? What were the obstacles on the way and their impact and implications?

This paper aims at studying the fifth approach that studies the presence of intellect and rationality in Islamic history, culture, and civilization. It does not deal with all of the aspects of this problem. It instead studies the role of Islamic texts (namely the Holy Qur'an and traditions reported from the Holy Prophet and his infallible progeny) in the spread of reason and rationality in the world of Islam. It also studies the relation that exists between the said texts and rationality in Islamic world. To deal with this issue, we will make use of descriptive-analytic and historical-concrete methodologies. Each one of these two methodologies explains a part of the problem. The descriptive and analytic methodology exemplifies the opportunities and challenges that exist in Islamic texts for the actualization and proliferation of intellectuality, whereas the historical and concrete methodology deals with the impact of the said texts, keeping in mind other influential factors such as human, political, economic, and cultural factors. It determines how far the said texts were influential in shaping different meanings of intellect. Similarly, it shows how these texts were interacting with other factors in the process of the cultural presence of intellect.

The presence of the concept of intellect in history can be the result of various factors, some of which may be natural and biological whereas others are supernatural and metaphysical. Some of these factors could be individual and psychological while others are cultural and social. Social and cultural factors are in turn either national and intra-cultural or foreign and inter-cultural.

Given the role that Islam played in establishing a particular culture and history and given the authority Islamic texts had throughout Islamic history and culture, it is not surprising that these texts played a determining role in the proliferation of intellectuality in the world of Islam. Proportionate to its authority in the world of Islam, Islamic texts left their impact both on the approach towards the cultural and historical heritage as well as political, economic, and social factors of their environment. Moreover, they delineated the way to interact with cultures outside of the geographical domain of the world of Islam.

This paper uses only a descriptive-analytic methodology and hence instead of dealing with the historical process of the development of intellectuality in the world of Islam and the historical impact that Islamic texts left, it identifies the existing relationship between Islamic texts and these developments, as well as the potentials these texts have on contracting or expanding the cultural foundations of reason.

This paper consists of two parts. The first part explains the meanings of intellect in Islamic history, society, and culture whereas the second part studies the relation between Islamic texts and the said meanings. It tells us which usage of intellect came into being under the influence of Islamic texts or was given the chance to flourish and which one was caused by external or internal elements that were opposed by Islamic texts.

Part 1: Meanings of the term 'intellect'

One: Ontological divisions

In Islamic culture, 'intellect' is used in different senses which can be divided into the following divisions.

a) Ontological divisions

‘Intellect’ is sometimes used in the sense of the human mental faculty and sometimes in the sense of an independent substance. In its first sense, intellect is used either in the sense of a perceptive faculty or in the sense of a practical faculty.

If used in the sense of a human mental faculty it is called ‘theoretical reason’; whereas if used in the sense of a practical faculty it is called practical reason. If, however, it is used in the sense of an independent substance, it is called an ‘immaterial intellectual substance’. Some are of the view that intellect is used in these three senses in a homonymous way whereas others are in search of a common ground among these senses (Shīrāzī 1981: 368).

b) The ontological stages of intellect

Depending on its ontological status, intellect can be divided into potential, habitual, actual, adeptus, active, longitudinal (vertical) and latitudinal (horizontal). Potential intellect is a cognitive faculty found only in human infants. Habitual intellect consists of cognizing self-evident truths and the like. The primary stages of intellectual perception are perfected once a human being reaches the stage of habitual intellect. Actual intellect consists of cognizing truths with the help of discursive thought and demonstration. Actual intellect is more perfect than the previous intellects. Intellectus adeptus is a stage of intuitive intellect where no demonstration is needed. Intellectus adeptus is in existential contact with intellectual substances (Fārābī 1995: 116).

Though the four mentioned stages differ from each other from the perspective of their existential status, they constitute the existential stages of a human soul. Each comes into being as a result of a development taking place in a human soul. Intellect has, however, another station that is superior to all the stages mentioned. Being perfect, it does not seek to attain further perfection. Instead, it helps the human soul to overcome its imperfections. This stage of existence which manages souls and natural beings is called the “active intellect”. Illuminationists believe that this stage of existence is constituted by many intellects. These intellects if ordered latitudinally are called “latitudinal intellects”, whereas if ordered longitudinally are called “longitudinal intellects”. The most superior intellect is called the “first intellect”.

c) Subject-based divisions of cognitive intellect

Given its subject of cognition, intellect, as a human cognitive faculty is divided into the following divisions. The first division is that of the faculty of reason, the theoretical and the practical. The theoretical reason used here is different from that used previously. Here theoretical reason is a part of a human being's cognitive faculty that focuses on certain existential aspects irrespective of practical matters. Practical reason, on the other hand, is a part of a human being's cognitive faculty that focuses on certain existential aspects that come into being as a result of the intervention of practical reason in its previous sense. Consequently, theoretical and practical reasons undergo other divisions also with further divisions of their subjects. These divisions include metaphysical reason, mathematical reason, natural reason, moral reason, and political reason. These terms emerge as a result of focusing on the subjects studied by theoretical reason. Metaphysical reason studies being qua being. Mathematical reason studies quantities, while natural reason deals with material and temporal beings. Moral and political reasons study their own respective subject matters.

d) Methodology-based divisions of the human intellect (reason)

As a human cognitive faculty, theoretical reason is, methodologically speaking, divided into intuitive reason or reason by presence, conceptual reason or reason by acquisition, which in turn is divided into abstract and abstract-empirical reasons. The division of reason into demonstrative, dialectic, rhetoric, and fallacious are other methodology-based divisions. This is because reason identifies different methodologies while applying demonstration, dialectic, poetry, rhetoric, and fallacy. It recommends these techniques in accordance with its own methodology.

e) Application based divisions of intellect

Given its function, intellect (reason) is divided into instrumental, communicational and critical. Instrumental reason helps man to dominate the natural world and exploit things that fall within his realm of observation and investigation. Reflective or communicational reason perceives meanings, values, and actions done by human beings. Critical

reason criticizes values and behaviours related to human life. These meanings may overlap with previous meanings of intellect. For instance, instrumental reason usually has an empirical and natural form, whereas prescriptive or critical reason has an abstract form mainly related to practical reason. In addition to being a methodology-based division, the five divisions of demonstration, dialectic, poetry, rhetoric, and fallacy are ‘applied divisions’. Their emergence is indebted to their applications, and they are defined mostly on the basis of their applications. Demonstration seeks to understand the truth whereas dialectic attempts to overcome interlocutors. Rhetoric is used to convince others whilst poetry is meant to provoke and motivate. Fallacy demonstrates modalities of erring and helps one understand errors and refrain from committing them. According to Avicenna, if one wants to seek the truth one needs to know about demonstration and fallacy.

f) Origin-based divisions of intellect

Based on its origins and its ontological causes, intellect (reason) is divided into secular, religious, and subjective. Profane reason is a sort of reason that has a worldly origin and is seen as a mere historical and cultural reality. Reason in this sense is the product of man’s life in this world. If intellectual knowledge is taken to be the product of human communications and man’s profane activities, the two terms of communicational and public reasons will overlap with profane reason.

A pragmatic approach is to give a profane interpretation of the identity of reason whereas its rival approach bestows a sacred, supernatural and metaphysical identity to it. Based on this latter approach, although reason is present in history and culture and interacts with them, it is not reducible to history and culture; instead it is present there through its manifestations. It has its own independent, stable and celestial sphere. Though Hegel does not regard reason as a mere public or communicational phenomenon, he gives a subjective identity to it, to the extent that it organizes all things through its own developments and is the ultimate reason for everything (Hegel, 1977). Subjective reason in this sense is an origin-based division. We will make use of this terminology later on while keeping in mind its epistemic dimension.

g) Domain based divisions of intellect

Based on its presence in the cultural and social domains, intellect or reason is divided into Western, Eastern, Arabic, public, and Greek.

Based on some terminologies, public reason is a part of intellectual knowledge present in the public domain. Reason in this sense overlaps ordinary logical principles which everyone accepts. According to other terminologies, public reason consists of every kind of knowledge that is shared in the public sphere. Arabic reason is a sort of reason that is accepted in Arab societies whereas Greek reason is an intellectual knowledge available in Greek culture. This division also overlaps previous divisions, for some of the previous divisions are more actively and more extensively present in some cultures. Max Weber holds that instrumental reason is a characteristic of modern reason.

Depending on the groups and currents that use it, reason is divided into philosophical, theological, jurisprudential, and mystical. This division also overlaps with previous divisions. This is because philosophers usually use demonstrative reason whereas theologians usually make use of dialectic reason. The 'reason' mystics use is intuitive and sacred and is not profane or subjective.

h) Epistemic value-based divisions of intellect

Based on its epistemic value, intellect (reason) is divided into enlightened, subjective, deductive, Ash'arite, Mu'atazilite and conjectural. Modern enlightened reason attempts to extend discursive knowledge to all aspects of existence, claiming there is nothing we cannot know through our reason. Cartesian and Hegelian reason has such a characteristic. In a certain period, empirical reason also made the same claim. Some attribute this characteristic to Mu'atazilite or Averroesian reason though this is somewhat uncertain. Subjective reason is enlightened reason insofar as it is "self-sufficient", claiming that it is the ultimate source of knowledge and that the knowledge that does not rely on it is invalid. Used in this sense, subjective reason will centre on the epistemic aspect of reason. Those who do not believe in modern enlightened reason and do not restrict knowledge to discursive and conceptual knowledge differ on how discursive knowledge interacts with revealed knowledge.

In Persian, the word *khodbunyād* means subjective or self-founded reason. *Khodbunyād* is used in different senses with some using it with the adjective ‘religious’ (cf. Muḥammad Riḍā Ḥakīmī, 1380 AH (solar)). This term was first used by late Sayyid Aḥmad Fardīd as an equivalent for ‘subjective’. If *khodbunyād* reason is the equivalent of ‘subjective reason’, it will have an epistemic dimension. Subjective reason is a sort of reason that is related to Kantian and neo-Kantian theories of the human subject. According to this terminology, the subject is not a light that opens up to the truth that lies beyond itself. It is instead a collection of a priori things that impose themselves on realities on the ground. Or else it is a human and historical construction that creates truth instead of coming to know it. Based on this approach, truth is a historical and relative concept constructed by human beings. Ash‘arite reason is one that functions within the red lines that are deemed as ‘religious dogmas’. Deductive reason is one that is helpful in deducing things from textual authority. Some regard deductive reason as the only useful tool for knowing things, disregarding the role of independent intellectual understanding. Conjectural reason is one whose cognitive content is not certain and definitive.

Part 2: Uses of intellect in Islamic texts

In Part 1, different meanings of intellect were presented. Some of these meanings were current among all human beings before the advent of Islam, whereas others were specialized terms that had currency only amongst certain groups in the Arabian Peninsula or elsewhere in the pre-Islamic era. These terms gradually found their way into the world of Islam. Some were terms coined by certain sciences in Islamic societies whereas others originally emerged in the modern world but were transmitted to Muslim societies. Now that we are acquainted with the different senses of the term intellect, it is time to find out how Islam approached these concepts through referring to the Qur’an and the traditions of the Prophet Muḥammad and his progeny. Do Islamic texts have a positive or negative attitude towards these concepts?

Our reference to Islamic texts is not limited to a mere recognition of terms related to these concepts. This is because although some of the said meanings were available during the currency of Islamic texts, they were not always expressed in these terms. In some places, they were expressed

with their synonyms or else they were presented figuratively. Secondly, most terms emerged in later periods. They were not current, or at least there was no specific word for them in early Islam. We cannot definitely determine Islam's point of view in regard to this set of terms just by searching for these terms in Islamic texts. We can instead determine Islam's view through its direct or indirect stance concerning the content of these terms.

a) Intellect as a human faculty and an independent substance

1) Intellect is mostly used as a human cognitive faculty in human societies. This term and its derivatives (such as intellectual) are all used in this sense in Islamic sources including the Holy Qur'an. Moreover, religious texts have also used other terms like *dhū al-nuhā*, *ūl al-albāb* and *dhū ḥijr* in the same sense.

The Qur'an has used the term intellect (*'aql*) and its derivatives in 30 chapters and 49 instances, mostly in the sense mentioned. That is to say, the intellect is a faculty through which we acquire knowledge. The Qur'an has a positive approach towards such an intellect and calls on human beings to make use of it. Some Qur'anic verses equate the use of such an intellect as the purpose of human life.

It is He who created you from dust, then from a drop of [seminal] fluid, then from a clinging mass, then He brings you forth as infants, then [He nourishes you] so that you may come of age, then that you may become aged – though there are some of you who die earlier – and that you may complete a specified term, and so that you may apply reason. (Q₄₀:67)

Lubb and *nuhā* also denote a cognitive faculty. They are used 16 times in the Holy Qur'an. There are other terms (like *fikr*) which do not literally mean 'cognitive faculty' but implicitly imply the existence of such a faculty in human beings, and the term *'ilm* which is used 85 times in the Holy Qur'an and implies 'knowledge'. Such usages are more frequent in traditions than in the Holy Qur'an.

2) Intellect as a preemptive practical faculty that prevents man from succumbing to wishful desires or regulates wishful desires.

Though some Qur'anic verses use intellect as a mere cognitive faculty having nothing to do with practice, other Qur'anic verses use it in a more general way which includes practical aspects as well. For example, the Qur'an refers to those who do not do good deeds as people who do not use this faculty. In such cases, intellect means something that includes both cognitive and practical faculties. The Holy Qur'an says: 'Will you bid others to piety and forget yourselves, while you recite the Book? Do you not apply reason?' (2:44) Some traditions also use intellect in the sense of practical faculty or in a sense that includes both practical and theoretical faculties. An instance of such a usage in this tradition: 'Intellect is that by which the Merciful is worshipped and Paradise acquired.' Here intellect is used in a sense that is more general than the practical faculty. The Qur'an has used 'folly' as the opposite of practical reason. The Qur'an says: 'And who will [ever] renounce Abraham's creed except one who fools himself?...' (2:130) Though reason and folly are not technically used to denote practical reason, they do imply practical reason and show the Qur'an's stance in this regard. There are many other verses and traditions that point directly or indirectly to a faculty that prevents man from surrendering to wishful desires and motivates him to move towards things that are understood by man's rational faculty. Piety and the self-accusing soul are among the concepts that imply such a meaning. Islamic texts give high importance to this faculty no matter whether or not it is formally called reason.

3) Intellect as an independent reality and not as a human faculty is another usage that is found in Islamic texts. Based on this terminology, the intellect refers to an independent reality and is not a term that qualifies some other reality. It is immaterial, free from the limitations of time and space, undergoing no temporal changes. Intellect in this sense has a metaphysical and supernatural reality, occupying a high place in the causal chain of natural existents. The Holy Qur'an has not used intellect in this sense, but there are some verses that talk about beings with such qualities. The Holy Qur'an says:

"There is not a thing but that its sources are with Us, and We do not send it down except in a known measure." (15:21)

verses in the Holy Qur'an that show Qur'an's view concerning intellectus adeptus. The Holy Qur'an says:

“...by the soul and Him who fashioned it, and inspired it with [discernment between] its virtues and vices.” (91:7-8)

After the human soul was perfectly created, Allah inspired the knowledge of piety and debauchery in it. This shows that man's first knowledge comes from Allah. This first knowledge can provide the grounds for habitual intellect. There are many verses that tell us that rationality is obtained through observation, contemplation, and intellection. The verses that use intellect as a verb refer to this stage of intellect. This is because the knowledge we obtain through intellection is other than potential or primary knowledge that is obtained through inspiration. This kind of knowledge is an instance of actual intellect.

Yet there are verses that talk of the sort of knowledge that is neither potential for the human soul nor is it obtained through inspiration or intellection. This kind of knowledge can be obtained through wayfaring and training without the intervention of intellection. The term 'ilm-i ladunnī taken from some verses refers to this stage of knowledge which in turn can provide an instance for intellectus adeptus. Concerning Moses, the Holy Qur'an says:

“[There] they found one of Our servants whom We had granted a mercy from Ourselves, and taught him a knowledge from Our own.”(18:65)

There is another stage of the intellect in which intellect is not a human faculty, nor does it describe a human being. Here intellect is an independent substance. This stage of intellect is referred to by Qur'an and traditions as well. When Imam 'Alī(a) was asked about the celestial world, he said:

صور عارية عن المواد، خالية عن القوة والاستعداد. تجلي لها فأشرقت، وطالعها بنوره فتلاأت. و ألقى
في هويتها مثاله فأظهر عنها أفعاله .

It forms images without any form, free from power and preparation. They are manifested to it, and it shines,

shimmering with this light. Something similar is cast into it, and its acts manifest from it. (Laythī Wasīṭī 1376 AH (solar): 304).

This tradition regards the celestial world, which is beyond the natural world, as a world in which, contrary to the natural world, there are no potential or natural movements. It contains images and truths given by Allah. They become manifest with divine manifestation. As Allah approaches them with the rays of His light they begin to shine. He inculcated His example in them and got His works manifest through them.

Even though Imam ‘Alī(a) has not used the term ‘intellect’ for these beings, they can serve as an example of intellectual substances. Though this tradition does not have a chain of narrators, some collections of traditions such as Āmidī’s *Ghurar al-Ḥikam wa Durar al-Kalim* (Āmidī 1410: 423) and Ibn Shahr Āshūb’s *Manāqib* (Ibn Shahr Āshūb 1379: 50) mention them.

c) Subject-based divisions of cognitive intellect

Many verses and traditions have used intellect (in the sense of cognitive faculty) as a tool for understanding existents that are independent from human will. This shows that Islamic texts recognize theoretical intellect in its technical sense. The Holy Qur’an says:

“Indeed in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of night and day, and the ships that sail at sea with profit to men, and the water that Allah sends down from the sky —with which He revives the earth after its death, and scatters therein every kind of animal— and the changing of the winds, and the clouds disposed between the sky and the earth, are surely signs for a people who apply reason.” (2:164)

This verse introduces natural phenomena such as a subject that the intellect must study whereas there are other verses that introduce values as the subject matter of human knowledge. For example, the Holy Qur’an states:

“Have they not travelled over the land so that they may observe how was the fate of those who were before them? And the abode

of the Hereafter is surely better for those who are Godwary. Do you not apply reason?" (12:109)

Elsewhere it says:

"Fie on you and what you worship besides Allah! Do you not apply reason?" (21:67)

This set of verses shows that according to the Holy Qur'an practical reason is valid. The Qur'anic verses that recommend intellection, contemplation and reflection are of two types. Some persuade us to engage in metaphysical and theological thinking such as this verse:

"But those who are faithless fabricate lies against Allah, and most of them do not apply reason." (5:103)

Other verses like 2:164, mentioned before, encourage thinking about natural phenomena and mathematical values. Such verses approve the validity of metaphysical and mathematical reasons together with their empirical or abstract methodologies.

It has to be noted that the said verses do not consider empirical or natural reason as something independent from metaphysical reason. This is because the verses that lay emphasis on observing natural phenomena place emphasis on metaphysical principles as well. Thus they ask man to use his experience to come to know divine creation. They recognize metaphysics and use it as a tool to interpret natural events.

d) Methodology based divisions of intellect

Based on its methodology of application, intellect (reason) is divided into intuitive reason, reason by presence, reason by acquisition or conceptual reason, abstract reason, empirical reason, demonstrative reason, and dialectic reason. As the terminologies of principles of jurisprudence and literature did not exist at the time of the formation of Islamic texts, neither did these terms exist at that time. The Holy Qur'an and traditions talk about their meanings. One can find instances of their meanings in Islamic texts. The terminologies that later on found currency in the world of Islam have their roots in the phrases used by the Holy Qur'an.

Each said epistemic methodology uses its own epistemic tools. For example, empirical knowledge, being a part of conceptual knowledge or knowledge by acquisition uses senses whereas abstract knowledge, being a part knowledge by acquisition uses only rational arguments. Intuitive knowledge in turn is obtained through spiritual exercises. Islamic texts deal with these tools and detail how to make use of them. There are many verses in the Holy Qur'an that contain instances of intuitive knowledge or knowledge by presence. As an instance the Holy Qur'an maintains:

“Soon We shall show them Our signs in the horizons and in their own souls until it becomes clear to them that He is the Real. Is it not sufficient that your Lord is witness to all things? Look! They are indeed in doubt about the encounter with their Lord! Look! He indeed comprehends all things!” (41:53-54)

This verse declares that after Allah has showed His signs in the furthest regions of the earth and in human souls, people will come to know that Allah is the truth. It also speaks about the encompassing knowledge of Allah.

When Imam 'Alī (a) was asked whether or not he has seen Allah, he answered in the affirmative saying that he did not worship one whom he had not seen. When he was asked about the way he saw Allah, he responded that one was not able to see Allah by physical eyes but one was able to see Him through spiritual vision:

هل رأيت ربك يا أمير المؤمنين؟ فقال: أفأعبد ما لا أرى فقال وكيف تراه؟ فقال لا تراه بمشاهدة العيان
، ولكن تدركه القلوب بحقائق الإيمان (صبحى صالح، نهج البلاغه

[He was asked]: ‘Have you seen your Lord, O Commander of the Faithful?’

He [Imam 'Alī (a)] said: ‘Would I worship something I cannot see?’

He said: ‘How do you see Him?’

He [Imam 'Alī (a)] said: ‘He is not seen with the sight of the eyes; rather, hearts reach Him through the realities of faith.’ (Nahj al-Balaghah, no. 258).

There are some verses in the Holy Qur'an that shed light on the methodology of acquiring intuitive knowledge. The Holy Qur'an states:

“So whoever expects to encounter his Lord - let him act righteously, and not associate anyone with the worship of his Lord.” (18:110)

The Holy Prophet of Islam said that if anyone who is sincere towards Allah for forty days, Allah will make wisdom flow from his heart to his tongue.

من أخلص لله أربعين صباحاً فجرَّ الله ينابيع الحكمة من قلبه على لسانه٥

Whenever someone betakes himself to Allah sincerely for forty days, Allah will make springs of wisdom flow from his tongue. (Majlisī 1403 AH: 349)

In his Sha'bāniyyah invocation, Imam 'Alī(a) says the same:

الهي هب لي كمال الانقطاع اليك و ازر ابصار قلوبنا بضياء نظرها اليك، حتى تخرق ابصارالقلوب حجب النور فتصل الي معدن العظمة و تصير ارواحنا معلقة بعز قدسك

O my God, grant me absolute devotion to You and illuminate the sights of our hearts with the light of observing You so that the sights of the hearts will penetrate the Veils of Light and arrive at the Source of Magnificence and that our souls cling to the majesty of Your Holiness.

The Holy Qur'an rebukes those who do look at the inner meaning of heavens and the earth when it says:

“Have they not contemplated the dominions of the heavens and the earth, and whatever things Allah has created...?” (7:185)

“Thus did We show Abraham the dominions of the heavens and the earth, that he might be of those who possess certitude.” (6:75)

Speaking about seeing hellfire, the Holy Qur'an says:

“No indeed! Were you to know with certain knowledge, you would surely see hell. Again, you will surely see it with the eye of certainty.” (102:5-7)

shimmering with this light. Something similar is cast into it, and its acts manifest from it. (Laythī Wasīfī 1376 AH (solar): 304).

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"But those who are faithless fabricate lies against Allah, and most of them do not apply reason." (5:103)

Other verses like 2:164, mentioned before, encourage thinking about natural phenomena and mathematical values. Such verses approve the validity of metaphysical and mathematical reasons together with their empirical or abstract methodologies.

It has to be noted that the said verses do not consider empirical or natural reason as something independent from metaphysical reason. This is because the verses that lay emphasis on observing natural phenomena place emphasis on metaphysical principles as well. Thus they ask man to use his experience to come to know divine creation. They recognize metaphysics and use it as a tool to interpret natural events.

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Each said epistemic methodology uses its own epistemic tools. For example, empirical knowledge, being a part of conceptual knowledge or knowledge by acquisition uses senses whereas abstract knowledge, being a part knowledge by acquisition uses only rational arguments. Intuitive knowledge in turn is obtained through spiritual exercises. Islamic texts deal with these tools and detail how to make use of them. There are many verses in the Holy Qur'an that contain instances of intuitive knowledge or knowledge by presence. As an instance the Holy Qur'an maintains:

“Soon We shall show them Our signs in the horizons and in their own souls until it becomes clear to them that He is the Real. Is it not sufficient that your Lord is witness to all things? Look! They are indeed in doubt about the encounter with their Lord! Look! He indeed comprehends all things!” (41:53-54)

This verse declares that after Allah has showed His signs in the furthest regions of the earth and in human souls, people will come to know that Allah is the truth. It also speaks about the encompassing knowledge of Allah.

When Imam ‘Alī (a) was asked whether or not he has seen Allah, he answered in the affirmative saying that he did not worship one whom he had not seen. When he was asked about the way he saw Allah, he responded that one was not able to see Allah by physical eyes but one was able to see Him through spiritual vision:

هل رأيت ربك يا أمير المؤمنين؟ فقال: أفأعبد ما لا أرى فقال وكيف تراه؟ فقال لا تراه بمشاهدة العيان
، ولكن تدرکه القلوب بحقائق الإيمان (صبحی صالح، نهج البلاغه)

[He was asked]: ‘Have you seen your Lord, O Commander of the Faithful?’

He [Imam ‘Alī (a)] said: ‘Would I worship something I cannot see?’

He said: ‘How do you see Him?’

He [Imam ‘Alī (a)] said: ‘He is not seen with the sight of the eyes; rather, hearts reach Him through the realities of faith.’ (Nahj al-Balaghah, no. 258).

There are some verses in the Holy Qur'an that shed light on the methodology of acquiring intuitive knowledge. The Holy Qur'an states:

“So whoever expects to encounter his Lord - let him act righteously, and not associate anyone with the worship of his Lord.” (18:110)

The Holy Prophet of Islam said that if anyone who is sincere towards Allah for forty days, Allah will make wisdom flow from his heart to his tongue.

من أخلص لله أربعين صباحاً فجرَّ الله ينابيع الحكمة من قلبه على لسانه0

Whenever someone betakes himself to Allah sincerely for forty days, Allah will make springs of wisdom flow from his tongue. (Majlisī 1403 AH: 349)

In his Sha'bāniyyah invocation, Imam 'Alī(a) says the same:

الهي هب لي كمال الانقطاع اليك و ازر ابصار قلوبنا بضياء نظرها اليك، حتى تخرق ابصارالقلوب حجب النور فتصل الي معدن العظمة و تصير ارواحنا معلقة بعز قدسك

O my God, grant me absolute devotion to You and illuminate the sights of our hearts with the light of observing You so that the sights of the hearts will penetrate the Veils of Light and arrive at the Source of Magnificence and that our souls cling to the majesty of Your Holiness.

The Holy Qur'an rebukes those who do look at the inner meaning of heavens and the earth when it says:

“Have they not contemplated the dominions of the heavens and the earth, and whatever things Allah has created...?” (7:185)

“Thus did We show Abraham the dominions of the heavens and the earth, that he might be of those who possess certitude.” (6:75)

Speaking about seeing hellfire, the Holy Qur'an says:

“No indeed! Were you to know with certain knowledge, you would surely see hell. Again, you will surely see it with the eye of certainty.” (102:5-7)

Philosophy has borrowed terms such ‘ilm al-yaqīn and ḥaqq al-yaqīn (kinds of certainty) from Qur’anic verses. Remembrance of Allah, piety, sincerity, good deeds, and the like are the different ways of acquiring intuitive knowledge. Many verses and traditions have elaborated on these methodologies. Knowledge by acquisition is a kind of knowledge that is obtained through concepts using metaphysical or empirical methodologies depending on the topic under investigation. Many verses and traditions allude to these methodologies or else have used them in their dialogues with others:

“If there were, in the heavens and the earth, other gods besides Allah, there would have been confusion in both! but glory to Allah, the Lord of the Throne: (High is He) above what they attribute to Him!” (21:22)

This verse contains what is called tamānu‘ (تَمَانُحٌ) or ‘demonstration’, an important argument for divine unity. Some verses call the claims of those who object as unacceptable or else ask them to present their demonstration or proof. The Holy Qur’an says:

“Say: ‘Produce your evidence, should you be truthful.’” (2:111)

There are many verses that make use of empirical evidence and consider senses as one of the tools of obtaining knowledge or rebuke others for not making use of this methodology.

In addition to demonstrative methodology, the Holy Qur’an has also employed rhetorical, dialectical and poetical methodologies. The Holy Qur’an accepts the use of dialectic and rhetoric for issues that can be proven by demonstration as well. But, if one uses rhetoric and dialectic to defend something that is not in itself true, the Qur’an reproaches such a usage. The Holy Qur’an says:

“Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good advice and dispute with them in a manner that is best. Indeed your Lord knows best those who stray from His way, and He knows best those who are guided.” (16:125)

Wisdom in this verse refers to demonstrative or intuitive methodology, and the other terms allow for the usage of goodly exhortation or rhetoric.

e) Application-based divisions of intellect

Islamic texts contain phrases that are related to the applications and uses of intellect. While these phrases are not technical terms that appear later, one can however comprehend the judgement of Islamic texts concerning the content and meaning of the terms that came later. Instrumental reason helps man predict future natural events and take preemptive measures. It facilitates man's domination of nature. This kind of reason characterized by its uses overlaps with empirical reason that is characterized by its methodology. Islamic texts that consider empirical reason as valid regard this kind of reason as valid as well. Islamic texts allow us to use instrumental reason in interaction with other reasons such as practical reason, deductive reason, moral reason, and juristic reason. This is because these types of reason give judgements on moral and behavioural values and norms.

Contemplative and communicational reason is a sort of reason that seeks to understand human phenomena that are different from natural events. It studies concepts related to human life. Practical reason and its sub-divisions have similar applications. The texts that approve their validity show Islam's opinion about contemplative and communicational reason as well. There are many verses in the Holy Qur'an that encourage man to engage in thinking about things related to human life. The Holy Qur'an says:

“And they sold him for a cheap price, a few dirhams, for they set small store by him.”(12:20)

The Holy Qur'an was revealed in Arabic. The understanding of its concepts and meanings is tantamount to understanding its content. This is done by contemplative and communicational reason. Thus thinking in this verse refers to this level of rationality. Critical rationality is critical of communicational and contemplative reason. It assesses the concepts available in human communication, disclosing the distortions and errors in communicational reason. There are many verses in the Holy Qur'an that use reason as a tool for criticizing some behaviours and thoughts current among human beings. The Holy Qur'an states:

“O People of the Book! Why do you argue concerning Abraham? Neither the Torah nor the Evangel were sent down until [long] after him. Do you not apply reason?” (3:65)

Elsewhere the Holy Qur'an maintains:

Are you then eager that they should believe you, though a part of them would hear the word of Allah and then they would distort it after they had understood it, and they knew [what they were doing]?

“When they meet the faithful, they say, ‘We believe,’ and when they are alone with one another, they say, ‘Do you recount to them what Allah has revealed to you, so that they may argue with you therewith before your Lord? Do you not apply reason?’” (2:75-76)

Here ‘intellecting’ refers to a level of intellection that is related to comprehending the words and phrases of the divine book. The sentence ‘do ye not intellect?’ is uttered by unbelievers but nevertheless it is used in the sense of criticizing conduct.

It has to be noted that the validating of empirical or instrumental reason by Islamic texts is within the framework of epistemic approaches compatible with those texts. Giving validity to contemplative reason or critical reason is not something beyond their epistemic foundations. That is why we must not confuse the epistemic aspects of the applications of these meanings in Islamic texts with their epistemic aspects when they are used in contemporary social or philosophical texts.

f) Origin based divisions of intellect

Islamic texts are not indifferent towards the origin of intellect. They have directly or indirectly declared their position with respect to concepts and terminologies that have given rise to it. According to Islamic texts, all creation originates from the realm of the intellects and super-natural realities. The latter refers to the most supreme divine treasury. And this in itself is the first divine creation. It has a divine origin and holds divine authority calling people towards Allah.

On the basis of Islamic texts, though man’s intellect, being his cognitive or practical faculty, is present in his individual and social life, it originates in the supreme reality of the intellect. According to a tradition found in ‘Ilal al-Sharā’i’, when people reach the age of puberty, they

begin to discover the intellectual reality in proportion to the relation they have established with it. Thus they begin to access this intellectual reality in proportion to the relationship they have established. The fact that intellect is created rejects the notion that intellect is self-established or self-founded. In other words, though intellect is the cause of the creation of other creatures it is itself not causeless, and it is not without a cause. In order to come into being, it needs a superior cause, which is Allah the Exalted and Absolute Reality.

Based on Islamic texts, intellect is not a human work or action. It is not a historical, cultural and civilizational construct or product, having an independent self-founded identity. It has a rather a mediatory status. It is created by Allah. It loves Allah and is loved by Allah. It is the origin of all creatures in the world. It appears in the history and culture of mankind, interacting with history without being reduced to it. Secular, profane, pragmatic, and phenomenological approaches that regard intellect as the product of human social actions that have only an inter-mental reality, do not consider intellect to be anything more than the sum of accumulated historical experiences. One can find signs of the existence of such an intellect in the Holy Qur'an. The Holy Qur'an states:

“They said, ‘Invoke your Lord for us, that He may clarify for us what she may be. Indeed all cows are much alike to us, and, if Allah wishes, we will surely be guided.’” (2:70)

This verse in addition to previous verses tells us that though the intellect can understand a lived historical experience, every accumulated historical experience is not necessarily intellectual. That is why it can turn critically towards them. Here the Holy Qur'an has reproached those who use the historical experience of their forefathers as a license for following them in the same path. Instead, it introduces intellect as a standard that can judge about history and culture.

g) Domain-based division of intellect

The approaches that have a secular attitude towards intellect (reason), believing reason has only a human, historical, and cultural identity have

presented numerous formulations of rationality (such as Arabic reason, Greek reason, and Western reason) depending on different geographical areas, various historical locations and the variety of human societies.

As a common product of human life, reason, based on the above-mentioned approaches is a common phenomenon shared by all cultures. In addition, it does not have a single formulation. Instead, it is a historical and relative phenomenon, with every culture having a sort of rationality suited to its own historical and cultural conditions.

The Holy Qur'an, however, does not consider reason as a common phenomenon equally shared by all cultural and historical domains of human societies. The Holy Qur'an says:

“Do you suppose that most of them listen or apply reason? They are just like cattle; rather they are further astray from the way.”(25:44)

“Certainly he has led astray many of your generations. Did you not use to apply reason?” (36:62)

The likes of the above-mentioned verses show that every understanding by every people cannot be rational. Every public consensus cannot bring about a rational truth. The same verses, however, can carry the message that every society, despite their differences on understanding the world, has the capacity of reaching a common rational understanding. This is because Qur'anic verses rebuke societies that have ignored rational knowledge. Such rebuking is only effective when societies have different options. According to the Holy Qur'an, every modality of thought that exist among people is not necessarily an instance of reason, but reason can influence every domain of human society. When human society avails itself of the rays of the light of reason and intellectuality, it avails itself of divine light. This is because as mentioned in a tradition, reason is a ray of light that kindles that heart chosen by Allah. Thus based on Qur'anic verses people's understanding is not necessarily profane, as part of their understanding can potentially have an intellectual reality.

Although some Islamic texts talk of societies who do not think, the Qur'an's account of these societies is coupled with rebukes and reprimands. Such rebukes and reprimands reveal that those who refrain from thinking and reflecting can in fact do so if they so wished. A person cannot be blamed for not thinking unless he is capable of thinking.

One who is capable of thinking is in possession of potential reason and habitual reason. In addition to being capable of acquiring intellectual knowledge, he must be in possession of a primary intellectual capital that is bestowed by Allah. According to the Holy Qur'an, every soul is created with at least this much capital. Thus, when a society does an action or introduces a norm without thinking, it can avail itself of the benefit of using reason. That is the reason why intellect is a divine authority and based on it Allah argues against deniers and unbelievers.

Irtikāz 'uqalā'ī (people's understanding) is a term that has come into play under the influence of Islamic doctrines in the world of Islam. It refers to a level of reason that is within reach of ordinary people. Though it may vary from place to place, it is available among people as a divine authority and is one of the sources of deducing religious law. In a long tradition Imam Kāẓim(a) as quoted by Hishām says that Allah has perfected His authorities among human being through their intellect.

يا هشام ان الله تبارك و تعالي اكمل للناس الحجج بالعقول. يا هشام ثم خوف الذين لا يعقلون عقابه ... ثم ذم الذين لا يعقلون. يا هشام ان لله علي الناس حجتين، حجة ظاهرة و حجة باطنة فاما الظاهر فالرسل و الانبياء و الائمة و اما الباطنة فالعقول.

O Hishām, it is certain that Allah has completed proofs for people (to refer to) through intellect... O Hishām, Allah then has given warnings to those who do not think about the punishment... O Hishām, Allah has placed two kinds of authority over man. The apparent and manifest authority and the internal and hidden authority. The prophets and messengers are the apparent and manifest authorities and intellect is the hidden and internal authority. (al-Kulaynī 1429: vol. 1, Kitāb al-'Aql wa al-Jahl, no. 35).

Islamic texts do not recognize everything that has appeared in human culture, history and society as instance of intellection, though they do not regard intellection as something beyond the reach of the average man. On the contrary, these texts accept the role of intellect and reason once it emerges in societies no matter to what degree.

Based on our previous discussions, it is clear that from the point of view of Islamic texts, though reason is a common phenomenon, each and every society and culture is not in possession of it. Many societies and

tribes have turned away from the requirement of reason adopting instead irrational means. Moreover, though reason appears in different tiers of various histories and cultures, it has a single reality. The appearance of reason in Greek, Arab, Western and modern culture, is not tantamount to being different types of reason. In other words, reason is not relative. It is rather a single entity with every culture having a specific share of it depending on its choices.

Thus if the terms Greek reason, Arabic reason, etc. attempt to reduce reason to a particular historical and cultural context or to specific group of people, it will not be accepted by Islamic texts. If, on the other hand, they are used to tell us that every region and people is capable of actualizing some part of intellectual knowledge, it will be in harmony with what is found in Islamic texts. As far as public reason is concerned, it is taken to mean that human societies have a shared and actualized understanding; this will not be compatible with Qur'anic use of reason. However, if it is taken to mean that the very presence and possibility of intellectual understanding among people is pervasive, this will be in agreement with Qur'anic conception.

h) Epistemic validity of types of intellect

Islamic texts are not indifferent towards the epistemic domain of intellect (reason) and the concepts and terminologies related to it. Based on the Qur'anic view, intellect is characterized with the quality of enlightening and disclosing the truth. The Holy Qur'an links understanding Qur'anic verses to man's intellection. It says:

“We have made plain to you the Signs, if you would intellect.”
(3:118)

Traditions, on the other hand, have introduced reason as something that sheds light on the truth of existence. According to Imam Abū 'Abd Allāh's (a) long narration:

The first, the beginning, the force, and the structure of something is that without which something would be of no benefit. The thing that Allah has made as beauty and light for His creatures, the people, is intellect. With intellect people come to know their Creator and that they are created and that

He is the one who has designed them and they are the ones who are being maintained. That it is the Creator that is eternal and it is the creatures that are mortals. It is with intellect that they reason about what they see of His creation such as the heavens, the earth, the sun, the moon, night, and day. In this way they learned that they and the creatures have a creator and maintainer who is eternal. With reason they learn about good and bad and that darkness is in ignorance and light is knowledge. These are facts that they learn with intellect. (al-Kulaynī 1407 AH)

According to Qur'anic terminology, the intellect does not veil reality. Instead it unveils the truths such as the earth and the heavens and whatever they contain, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, the good and bad and the fact that knowledge is light.

Based on Islamic texts intellect is not, ontologically speaking, self-founded nor is it, epistemologically speaking, absolutely and totally valid. It understands its creator but it does not comprehend His essence. The Holy Qur'an mentions:

“Allah warns you to beware of [disobeying] Him.” (3:29)

Imam 'Alī (a) also says the same thing:

لا يدركه بعد الهمم ولا يناله غوص الغطن.

The height of intellectual courage cannot appreciate Him, and the depths of understanding cannot reach Him. (Nahj al-Balāghah, sermon 1)

لم يطع اليه سبحانه العقول علي تحديد صفته و لا يجيبها عن واجب معرفته، فهذا الذي تشهد له اعلام الوجود علي اقرار قلب ذي الجحود

He has not informed intellects about the limits of His qualities. Nevertheless, He has not prevented them from securing essential knowledge of Him. So he is such that all signs of existence stand witness for Him till the denying mind also believes in Him. (Nahj al-Balāghah, sermon 49)

According to the Holy Qur'an, the domain of intellectual knowledge is limited and this is what intellect itself realizes. The next tradition goes on to say:

فقليل يكتفي العباد بالعقل دون غيره، قال إن العاقل لدلالة عقله الذي جعله الله قوامه و زينته و هدايته علم أن الله هو الحق و أنه هو ربه و علم أن لخالقه محبة و أن له كراهية و أن له طاعة و أن له معصية، فلم يجد عقله يدلّه على ذلك و علم أنه لا يوصل إليه إلا بالعلم و طلبه و أنه لا ينتفع بعقله إن لم يصب ذلك بعلمه فوجب على العاقل طلب العلم و الأدب الذي لا قوام له إلا به

People asked the Imam (a), 'Is the intellect sufficient for people?'

The Imam(a) replied, 'With guidance from the intellect that Allah has made him to depend on – it being his beauty and guide – a person of intelligence learns that Allah is his Creator and that He is his Lord. Through intelligence one learns that his Creator loves and that He dislikes certain things, that the Lord must be obeyed and that certain acts are acts of disobedience to Him and that nothing but intellect shows him all these facts. One also (with intellect) learns that it is only with knowledge and searching that one may reach the Creator. That one may not benefit from his intellect if he cannot learn the truth about Him through his knowledge. It then is necessary for a person of intelligence to acquire knowledge and proper moral discipline without which there is nothing else to depend on.' (al-Kulaynī 1429: 66)

When Imam 'Alī (a) was asked whether man's intellect would suffice him, he said that man knows by his intellect which is the reason why man is great and finds the right way, that Allah is true and his Creator and has love and hate and mandates obedience and disobedience. He knows by his intellect that he cannot realise these things except through knowledge. That is why it is necessary to acquire knowledge and this is something on which man's life depends.

Intellect obtains the knowledge it cannot gain by itself through direct contact with Allah. In his Sha'bāniyyah invocation, Imam 'Alī (a) asks Allah to open up his spiritual eyes to divine magnificence and says:

و اجعلني ممّن ناديتّه فاجابك و لا حظته فصعق لجلالك فناجيتّه سرّاً وعمل لك جهراً

My Lord, look upon me as the person whom You called and he responded to You, whom You helped by using his services,

and he obeyed You... My Lord, make me one of those whom You call and they respond; when You look at and they are thunderstruck by Your majesty. You whisper to them secretly and they work for You openly.

Imam 'Ali (a) further elaborates on the communication between intellect and Allah saying:

وَمَا بَرِحَ لِلَّهِ - عَزَّتْ أَلَاؤُهُ - فِي الْبُرْهَةِ بَعْدَ الْبُرْهَةِ، وَفِي أَرْزَامِ الْفَتَرَاتِ، عِبَادٌ نَاجَاهُمْ فِي فِكْرِهِمْ، وَكَلَمَتِهِمْ فِي دَاتِ عَقُولِهِمْ، فَاسْتَصْبَحُوا بِنُورِ بَقِظَةِ فِي الْأَسْمَاعِ وَالْأَبْصَارِ وَالْأَفْتِدَةِ، يُذَكَّرُونَ بِأَيَّامِ اللَّهِ، وَيُخَوِّفُونَ مَقَامَهُ، بِمَنْزِلَةِ الْإِدْلَةِ فِي الْفَلَوَاتِ، مَنْ أَخَذَ الْقَصْدَ حَمِدُوا إِلَيْهِ طَرِيقَهُ، وَبَشَّرُوهُ بِالنَّجَاةِ، وَمَنْ أَخَذَ يَمِينًا وَسِمَالًا (دَمُّوا إِلَيْهِ الطَّرِيقَ، وَحَدَّرُوهُ مِنَ الْهَلَكَةِ، فَكَانُوا كَذَلِكَ مَصَابِيحَ نَلِكِ الظُّلُمَاتِ، وَأَدِلَّةَ نَلِكِ الشُّبُهَاتِ)

There are some people devoted to the remembrance (of Allah) who have adopted it in the place of worldly matters so that commerce or trade does not turn them away from it. They pass their life in it. They speak into the ears of neglectful persons warning against matters held unlawful by Allah, they order them to practice justice and themselves keep practicing it, and they prevent them from the unlawful and themselves refrain from it. It is as though they have finished the journey of this world towards the next world and have beheld what lies beyond it. Consequently, they have become acquainted with all that befell them in the interstice during their long stay therein, and the Day of Judgment fulfils its promises for them. Therefore, they removed the curtain from these things for the people of the world, till it was as though they were seeing what people did not see and were hearing what people did not hear. (Nahj al-Balāghah, sermon 221)

This makes it clear that the knowledge that prophets and divine saints receive through direct contact with Allah is not something irrational. It is instead something of which reason is unaware if it is not in contact with Allah. In addition, this knowledge is very useful in understanding divine will and love. The Holy Qur'an says that man cannot reach such knowledge without the help of divine prophets and saints. Speaking with the Holy Prophet, Allah terms revelation as a sort knowledge one cannot obtain without divine intervention. The Holy Qur'an says:

“Allah has sent down to you the Book and wisdom, and He has taught you what you did not know”. (4:113)

The Holy Qur’an tells others as well that the Holy Prophet teaches them something they could not know:

“...and teaches you what you did not know...” (2:151)

In another verse, it is mentioned that revelation is something without which man will go astray:

“...and earlier they had indeed been in manifest error.” (62:2)

When human reason understands this it will understand that it is in need of such knowledge and if there is no such knowledge it can put Allah to question. That is the reason why Allah says that He sends prophets so that man should have no plea against Allah. Thus, Islamic texts believe that intellect is intrinsically luminous. At the same time it assumes that it naturally suffers some sort of limitations. Thus the theory of self-founded reason is not welcomed by Islamic texts. Neither is the Kantian theory of enlightenment that restricts itself to knowing the limitations of intellectual knowledge.

According to Islamic texts, intellect is a ray of light that seeks to understand truth. Intellect in this sense is not self-founded or subjective. This is because subjective reason in its Kantian or neo-Kantian framework is a phenomenon related to human life. In its Kantian sense, reason is a hurdle to know the truth. In its neo-Kantian framework, reason does not seek to understand the truth. What it terms as reality is the product of human culture and a construct of the human mind. The limitations faced by theological reason are not accepted by Islamic texts. Theological reason is a discursive or dialectic reason that moves alongside some principles that impose their authority on reason. Theological reason does have the right to reject them.

In the Islamic context, intellect is a divine creation. Nothing can undermine its authority. It understands that it cannot understand the essence of Allah. It receives divine messages and delivers them to others in the form of divine obligations. The audience understands the difference between what they receive through divine prophets and saints

and what they perceive through their own reason. Theological reason does not allow one to explain and shed light on the limits of traditional arguments whereas intellect in Islamic texts knows its own limits and at the same time seeks to understand the meanings of divine speech. It is intellect that can understand the words uttered by divine saints. Intellect is highly active in understanding Islamic texts to the extent that its independent rules can serve as evidence for understanding Islamic texts.

It has, however, to be noted that the negation of the limitation imposed on intellect by theology does not imply that we must not use dialectic. Dialectic reason needs to use dialectic in line with the principles proven elsewhere by demonstrative reason. If dialectic takes place within such framework it will be valid. Otherwise it will be rejected. The above-mentioned quality is characteristic of a major part of Islamic theology, namely Shiite theology. Shiite theology is not opposed to demonstrative reason. Instead, it works within the domain of such intellectuality. The stance of Islamic texts on empirical, positivistic, scientific or instrumental reason is the same as its stance on theological reason. Empirical or instrumental reason that appeared in the nineteenth century is based on empirical and epistemological foundations. It deems that sense is the only source of knowledge. Hence, there is no organic connection between empirical rationality and metaphysics.

The Holy Qur'an situates empirical rationality within the margins of metaphysics. It considers the observation of natural phenomena to be tantamount of divine signs. The negation of a positivistic approach towards empirical rationality is in itself not tantamount to the omission of such rationality from Islamic texts. Rather, it implies that empirical reason needs to be taken in a way such that it corresponds with and is subsumed under the divine levels of intellectuality.

Conclusion

This paper has presented a broad overview of the meanings of 'aql ('intellect') in the Islamic heritage. From it, it can be seen that the Qur'an and narrations from the Prophet Muḥammad as well as his family(a) have influenced the development of the meaning of 'intellect' in Islamic culture. Particular emphasis was given to narrations from Imam 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib(a) as well as narrations elaborating on trans-mundane nature of the intellect, and the perception of the worldly as well as the spiritual.

While the concept of intellect can be subdivided in numerous ways, concepts that came from outside the Islamic context tended not to take root in the Islamic consciousness, whereas concepts that were reinforced by these texts had the opportunity to flourish.

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