

Integration of Human Reason and Revelation in Islam (Quranic Approach)

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Abstract

Revelation (Qur'an) and human reason are indeed intertwined in Islamic worldview. Revelation, at least in its Islamic form, seeks its justification in empirical reality; it sees empirical reality as manifestation of a transcendental reality. Therefore, human is linked to the truth of God either through revelation or reason. It is undeniable fact that, human reason can guide people to some extent to the broadest universal truths (such as existence of God), it has also contributed immensely to the scientific development and technological advancement in this twenty first century. However, human reason may not be able to provide insight into the details of metaphysical world, such as hell, heaven, creation and eschatology etc... Hence, the role of revelation is emerged to remedy such deficiency that can not be solved by human intellect alone. Thus, it is inadequate to reject revelation and contrast scientific with revealed knowledge. i.e the reality should not be confined exclusively to the realm of visible world and empirical phenomena, under the raison d'être that reason can not ascertain transcendental reality. As a matter of fact, in Islam, both revelation and reason can work together in order to understand this universe comprehensively. Based on this fact, this humble paper will apply Quranic approach to explore vis-a-vis compatibility or integration of revelation and reason in Islam that is by exploring the meaning of revelation (Quran) and etymology of reason according to various scholars. Then, integration and compatibility of revelation and human reason will be disclosed, and some Quranic verses that urge man to use his intellect to comprehend the revelation will be followed. Finally, a brief conclusion will be provided.

Keywords: Revelation, Reason, Science, Integration, compatibility, Qur'an, Islam

Introduction

Islam is a religion based on knowledge, it urges its followers to seek knowledge by using various tools especially revelation and reason in order to discover the truth. It is undeniable, fact that Islam from the early beginning perceives human reason and revelation as methods of learning that are available to seekers of every type of knowledge. As such, these tools are like pair of scissors, they are inseparable in Islamic worldview. Furthermore, human reason is one of the most precious gift that Allah has bestowed on mankind, it is the power of discernment by which humans can distinguish between good and bad, right or wrong. Likewise, revelation in general (including Torah Bible) and Qur'an in particular are full with references which command and exhort people to think, contemplate, and to examine the claims of revelation. This indicates that Islam values reason, and Islam is confident that there will be no contradiction between what is contained in the revelation and what can be reason by human intellect. Based on this fact, this humble paper aims to justify vis-à-vis importance of combination of revelation (Qur'an) and human reason for discovering the truth.

Therefore, to achieve the objective of this humble paper, Quranic approach will be applied and that will be followed by brief conclusion.

Definition: Integration, Revelation and Reason

1. Integration

Linguistically, Cambridge English Dictionary (1999) defines integration as combining, incorporating, fusing and uniting. According to Mariam Webster (1828), integration is the act or process of uniting different things. It means the combining and coordinating of separate parts or elements into a unified whole. It also means, the state of being combined, or the process of combining into a complete and harmonious whole.

2. Revelation:

Based on Random House Dictionary, revelation (noun) is the act of revealing or disclosing. It means something revealed or disclosed, especially a striking disclosure, as of something not before realized. Theologically, revelation is God's disclosure of Himself and His will to His creatures. According to Collins English Dictionary(2003), revelation is the act or process of disclosing something previously secret or obscure, especially something true. That means, revelation is a fact disclosed or revealed, esp in a dramatic or surprising way.

Paul. S. Schilling (1948) defined revelation as the total activity by which God discloses His character, purpose and will to man in order to lead him into fellowship with Him. However, theologically, it is God's disclosure of his own nature and his purpose for mankind, particularly through the words of human intermediaries. According to Muhammad& Husain (2003) revelation (Wahy) is the act by which God, having created the world, discloses Himself to His creation. It refers to a phenomenon whereby a supra human, or supernatural, communication is transmitted from the divine to the human or epiphany of the divine order, which presents itself to the human sight, hearing, sensibility and consciousness as an event out of ordinary course.

3. Reason

According to Oxford Dictionary of Current English (1992), reason is the power of being able to think in logical and rational manner. It means, the ability to think clearly and coherently, or the process of drawing logical inferences. In this sense, reason is an instrument used for examining the coherence and rationality of a body of statements. As such; the examination allows us to conclude that the examined statements are either coherent, and hence in conformity with the principle of reason; or contradictory, and thus in violation of reason. Davutoglu (1994) however, argued that "Reason" represents the human intellectual faculty that processes a variety of information as premises to draw conclusions thereupon. Whereas, Paul S. Schilling (1948), argued that reason is the thinking activity of man which seeks to discover truth by criticizing, relating, ordering and interpreting coherently the data of consciousness.

It means the premises utilized by the human intellectual faculty and the conclusions drawn thereof can be identified with one or the other discipline of knowledge. Moreover, the human intellectual faculty is not merely considered a processor of information, but is also believed to harbor at least some a priori knowledge consisting of self-evident principles. In other words, it has been argued that a priori knowledge of self-evident principles (also known as the "first principles") is built-in to human intellectual faculty unlike other sources of knowledge (such as revelation, observations, transmitted reports) that are basically external. In short, reason represents the exercise of intellectual faculty in the absence of revealed premises, observations and transmitted reports.

Revelation (Qur'an) as a source of knowledge in Islam

As far as Quranic approach is concerned, this paper will stress on revelation of Islam, with particular reference to the holy Qur'an and the knowledge that can be derived from it. Therefore, a cursory glance on the holy Quran and its definition are highly required. In this regard, Zakir Naik (2007) observed that, the Qur'an is a book believed by Muslims to be of completely divine origin. As such, the Qur'an is the pure speech of Allah, exposition of all things. The speech of Allah, sent down upon the last Prophet Muhammad, through the Angel Gabriel, in its precise meaning and concise wording, transmitted to us by numerous persons (tawatur), both verbally and in writing. As such, the holy Qur'an is the last revelation of God after Torah and Bible respectively.

It is important to mention here that the original language of the holy Qur'an is Arabic, and the word 'Qur'an' in Arabic is derived from the root qara'a, which has various meanings, such as to Read, [Sura 17: 93.] to Recite, [Sura 75:18:17: 46.] etc. Qur'an is a verbal noun and hence means the 'reading' or 'Recitation'. As used in the Qur'an itself, the word refers to the revelation from Allah in the broad sense [Surah 17: 82.] and is not always restricted to the written form in the shape of a book, as we have it before us today. However, it means revelation to Muhammad only, while revelation to other prophets has been referred to by different names (e.g. taurat, Injil, kitab, etc.).¹ The revelation from Allah to the Prophet Muhammad is referred to in the Qur'an itself by the name Qur'an (recitation) as well as by other names, such as e.g. *Furqaan* which means, criterion, see 25: 1), (*Tanzil*:sent down, see 26: 192), (*Dhikr*: reminder, see 15: 9), (*Kitab*:scripture, see 21:10) and other various references to the Qur'an are by such words as *Nur* (light), *Huda* (guidance), *Rahman* (mercy), *Majid* (glorious), *Mubarak* (blessed), *Bashir* (announcer), *Nadhir* (warner), etc.. All these names reflect one of the various aspects of the revealed word of Allah. As far as the integration of revelation (holy Qur'an) and human reason is concerned, we ought to shed some lights on the main characteristics of the Qur'an..

The Main Characteristics of the Holy Qur'an

According to Sayed Qutub (1965) in his highly influential commentary of the Qur'an, (*Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*) , the Qur'an has been a book of guidance and inspiration, a reference point, and a rich source of social and moral dynamism for hundreds of millions of people throughout the world who believe it to be immutable word of God. Based on this fact, the following characteristics are the unique features of the holy Qur'an and the seal of revelation of Allah..

1. Guidance for and Mercy to Believers.

This fact is clearly explained in the Qur'an, when Allah said: "This is the book; in it is guidance, sure, without doubt, to those who fear Allah" . In another Surah, Qur'an said: "For We had certainly sent unto them a Book, based on knowledge, which We explained in detail, a guide and a mercy to all who believe". (Qur'an: al- baqarah: 2) Imam Ali May Allah bless his soul, confirmed the above fact in one of his sermons in *Nahjul Balagha*, said: "Read the Holy Qur'an carefully because, it is the most sublime of all holy Books; try to understand and study it diligently, because it is the best food for thought; enlighten your mind with its teachings, because it's divine is the best cure for diseased mentally; and read it with sincerely good intentions. because it contains very useful and instructive episodes from the history of man." This implies that, this book of guidance is for the complete human race whose problem are answered in a clear form within the verses of the Qur'an.

¹ *Taurat* is called Torah or Hebrew Scripture in Judaism. It is a book believed to be revealed on Moses. However, the English word of *Injil* is New Testament or Gospel; it is a holy scripture in Christianity, which is believed to be revealed on Jesus peace be upon him. Then *Kitab* in this context, means the Qur'an which is revealed on Prophet Muhammad , peace be upon him

2. *Spiritual/ Social Healer*

In fact Qur'an is considered a spiritual book and social healer, in this regard, the Qur'an boasts of its ability to not only move the soul but to heal it. It addressed the physical, social, mental and spiritual needs of a person; it much like other previous books revealed covers dietary law, metaphysical healing and judicial ruling. All of these combined to heal mankind. In fact, the Qur'an as social and spiritual healer is clear in the holy Qur'an itself when Allah states that if man turns to Him then He would unlock his potential and raise him to great rank. One example Allah gives is of the Prophet Jesus: [The Day] when Allah will say,

"O Jesus, Son of Mary, remember My favor upon you and upon your mother when I supported you with the Pure Spirit and you spoke to the people in the cradle and in maturity; and [remember] when I taught you writing and wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel; and when you designed from clay [what was] like the form of a bird with My permission, then you breathed into it, and it became a bird with My permission; and you healed the blind [from birth] and the leper with My permission; and when you brought forth the dead with My permission; and when I restrained the Children of Israel from [killing] you when you came to them with clear proofs and those who disbelieved among them said, "This is not but obvious magic." (Al- Maidah, 5:110) In another chapter of the Qur'an, Allah said that: "O mankind! There has come to you a direction from your Lord and a healing for the (diseases) in your hearts, and guidance and a mercy for those who believe". (Qur'an: Yunus:57). Thus, the Qur'an is the complete healing for all mental, spiritual and physical diseases, it contains the treatment for hearts and souls, and as a such it is a healing and a remedy for many disease.. For example; honey is mentioned in the Qur'an, and that is a healing for mankind. Allah said: "There comes forth from their [bees'] bellies, a drink of varying colour wherein is healing for men" [al-Nahl 16:69]

3. *Revealing Reality and Clarifying Doubts*

As a matter of fact, the holy Qur'an has revealed to disclose the facts and realities that used to be hidden by its previous revelations especially, Torah and Bible. It is also revealed to clarify doubt and dilemma that are caused by the followers and adherents of former revelations, though the previous revelations also contain some truths, yet, the fact remains that the issue of theology and monotheism argued al- Faruqi (1998), in the worldview of Islam is different from the worldview of Judaism and Christianity respectively. Therefore, the above fact is clearly emphasized by the Qur'an itself, when it stated that: "Ta. Sin. These are verses of Qur'an, a book that makes things clear". Qur'an: *al-Naml*: 1) Again, in surah al *Ma'idah*, Quran disclosed the truth that used to be unclear by Jews and Christians, when it stated that: "O People of the Book! There has come to you Our Messenger, revealing to you much that you used to hide in the book, and passing over much(that is now unnecessary): There has come to you from Allah a (new) light and a perspicuous Book" Qur'an: *al-Maidah*: 15). This does not mean the absence of truth in the previous revelations.. However, some truths are replaced by human invention.

4. *Miraculous Book*

In fact, if Torah is miraculous revelation to Moses, and if the Bible is also miraculous revelation to Jesus, the Qur'an is unanimously agreed by Muslim Scholars to be the biggest miracle of Prophet Muhammad (saw) and the main proof of the authenticity of his prophethood. The miracles contains in it are the proof of its authenticity as the real book of Allah and out of the ordinary book that invents by human being. In the most serious note, some western scholars or orientalist confessed the miraculous nature of Quran. For instance, Maurice Bucaille, French surgeon, scientist, scholar and the author of the book called, "*the Bible, the Qur'an and Science*" in this book Maurice compared between the authenticity of Qur'an and bible, and their compatibility with modern sciences, he stated that, the final conclusion of my study of Qur'an is that, the statements about scientific phenomena in the holy Qur'an are perfectly in conformity with the modern sciences .

Although this humble paper is not concerned about the comparison between authenticity of the Qur'an and the bible, but, the fact remains that the revelation as a whole with particular reference to the holy Quran is always compatible with modern sciences, this shows that, there is a room for integration between revelation and human acquired knowledge that strongly relies on human intellect, this miracle is also manifested in the structure of the holy Qur'an, its meaning and the various knowledge that can be obtained from it, such as historical events, prediction of what will happen in the future, and many scientific facts that make the holy Qur'an to challenge the unbelievers (who used to doubt its authenticity) to produce another book similar to it. "Or they say: He has invented it? Nay, but they do not believe! Then let them produce a speech like it, if they are truthful" (Qur'an: al - Tuur: 33) Qur'an even challenge these unbelievers to produce less than the whole chapter of the Qur'an, it demanded them to produce only ten chapter similar to those of the Qur'an. "Or they say: He has invented it! Say: Then bring ten Surahs, the like thereof, invented, and call on everyone you can beside Allah, if you are truthful" (Qur'an: Hud: 13). Indeed, the authenticity of Qur'an and its miracle is clear when the holy Qur'an the last revelation of Allah persisted to challenge the unbelievers to produce only one surah similar to those of the Qur'an, however, they were unable to do so. Therefore, Qur'an has narrated this incident to us in order to assure people of its authenticity, i.e this Qur'an is neither a book of fluent author nor the writing of ordinary orator, but, it is a book of supreme God the most omnipotent and the most omniscience. "And if you are in doubt concerning that which we reveal to our Messenger (Muhammad), then produce a surah like one thereof, and call your gods and supporters beside Allah if you are truthful" (Qur'an: Al Baqarah:23)..Meanwhile, if the holy Qur'an possesses the above characteristics, the question is that, what kind of knowledge can we find in this holy book? To answer the above question, there is a strong need for evaluating the types of knowledge in the holy Quran?

Types of Knowledge in the Qur'an

Social and Natural Sciences

First of all and foremost, the Qur'an as the seal of revelation of God declares that it is an exposition for all things (*Tibyan li kulli shay*) as guidance and mercy, in which nothing is neglected (*Al-Nahl* 16:89). The inclusion of various branches of knowledge in the Holy Qur'an is such an example of its comprehensiveness. Though, some may argue that the holy book of Qur'an is not a book of social Sciences, yet, in the matter of fact, there are some hints argued Ilyas(2002) that link to social affairs and natural sciences. Being a book of knowledge and being the final revelation of Allah, the holy Qur'an has directly or indirectly discussed various issues in the field of social sciences and natural sciences since 1400 years ago. For example, the issue of economics (Usury, loan and transaction, measure and weight is already discussed by the Qur'an. As such, economically, Qur'an provides guidance to attain and maintain justice, and sets some norms and principle argued Khan(1994) along with some restrictions to ensure the observance of those norms and principles, with particular reference to prohibition of *Riba*, uncertain contracts, etc (usury: Qur'an: 2:275-281. Loan: Qur'an:2:282. Measure and weight: Qur'an: 11:85.) Similarly, judiciary (Qur'an:5:42) Politics (Qur'an:3:159) and history (histories of nations and prophets). Moreover, knowledge about natural sciences are not ignored by the Qur'an, especially, knowledge of astronomy, embryology etc.. Indeed, the aim of Qur'an is to provide guidelines and principles and leaves it to mankind to explore and exercise his intellect to justify the sayings of Almighty Allah the most omnipotent and the most omniscience.

Compatibility of Revelation (Qur'an) and Human Reason in Islam

Is revelation (Qur'an) Compatible with Human reason in Islam?

To answer the above question we should first examine and investigate the scripture of Islam, and to what extend it endorses the use of human reason in exploration or searching for the truth. Having

studied the meaning of reason and having explored the etymology of revelation (Qur'an) and its different characteristics, we ought to explore some scientific evidences from the holy Qur'an which can lead us to possibility of integration of human reason and revelation (Quran). Indeed from the first beginning, some Muslim Scholars such as Imad al-din al Kalid (1995) stated that the process of integration of reason and revelation may not mainly concerned with the pure sciences nor applied sciences, and he said that the process of combination of reason and revelation needs to deals with the social sciences, on the ground that, the social sciences are more vital and because they are concerned with determining the position of people in this world and regulating their lives so that they can fulfill their mission on earth. Imad further argued that the reason why the social sciences should be given top priority is that they operate within value-bound intellectual and moral frameworks.

But in my humble opinion, if we evaluate the meaning of science again, either natural sciences or social sciences, which are strongly linked to human reason we will discover that, the integration is equally relevant to both aspects of science,. According to the Cambridge Encyclopedia of English Language (2003) the word science comes from the Latin "scientia," meaning knowledge. It refers to a system of acquiring knowledge and this system uses observation and experimentation to describe and explain natural phenomena. From the above definition, it is obvious that studying the natural phenomena or physical world require active human brain that will synthesize the data and analyze the information collected.

Undoubtedly, this is the call of the holy Qur'an stated Muzaffar Iqbal (2007) to mankind to exercise his brain to reach the fact of oneness of omnipotence of Allah. As such, the holy Qur'an has touched on the Issues of natural phenomena, though it did not give details of these physical matters; but, it left that duty for mankind to explore and discover those facts stated by by utilizing the faculty of intellect that Allah has bestowed on him. For instance, the science of astronomy that exclusively discussed by revelation of Islam (Quran) since 14 century ago, has eventually proven by human reason and by some scientists. Thus, in the field of astronomy, The Qur'an was revealed 1400 years ago and yet it has scientific information in it that could not have been known to the Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAW) or the people of Arabia at that time. With the advancement of science said Naik (2007) and with dramatic development of scientific tools, more facts and more customary laws of God (*Sunnatullah*) have been discovered in the natural phenomenon.. Interestingly, most of those scientific discoveries are in line with the claim of the holy Qur'an. For instance, in the field of astronomy, Qur'an stated that "Do not the disbelievers see that the heavens and the earth were a closed-up mass, then We opened them out? And We made of water every living thing. Will they not then believe?"

The above verse clearly agrees with the present day knowledge of the beginning of the universe. No other scripture has this vivid description of the creation of the universe. It was Edwin Hubble's observations in 1929, which suggested that there was a time when the universe was infinitesimally small and dense; he discovered that wherever one looked, it appeared that the distant galaxies are moving rapidly away from each other. If this was the case then it indicated that at earlier times objects would have been closer together. Furthermore, in the field of astronomy, expanding universe Expanding universe is one of the astronomical issues that was discussed by the holy Qur'an many centuries ago. According to Qur'an: "And the heaven We built with Our own powers and indeed We go on expanding it".

It was only as recent as the 1920s when Edwin Hubble² made the discovery that the galaxies were speeding away from each other. The above verse, which was revealed to the Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAW) some 1400 years ago, clearly confirms what Hubble observed. This concept of the expanding universe is unique to the Qur'an though other scriptures might come closer to

² Edwin Powell Hubble(November 20, 1889- September 28, 1953) was an American Astronomer. He played a crucial role in establishing the fields of extragalactic astronomy and observational cosmology and is regarded as one of the most important astronomers of all time.

describing such a phenomenon. The knowledge of the expanding universe is of vital importance to scientists as this helps create a better understanding of the creation of the universe. Hubble's data suggested that the farther a galaxy is, the faster it is moving away. This meant that the universe could not be static as was thought to be, but rather it is expanding. Therefore the distance between the different galaxies is growing all the time.

The discovery of the expanding universe has been the greatest landmark in the scientific field. Newton and others should have realized that a static universe would mean that it would soon start to contract under the influence of gravity. If the universe was expanding at a slower rate, then the force of gravity would eventually cause it to stop and the universe would start contracting. If instead, it was expanding at a rapid rate, then gravity would never be strong enough to stop it, and thus the universe would be expanding forever.

In short, scientific knowledge has always been accepted as the test of the truth, argued Gauch(2003). This is because science has a means whereby hypothesis can be tested and proven to be true or false. However, man's knowledge is relative and limited by that what Allah (SWT) allows. Man can traverse the heavens and the earth only to where Allah (SWT) has set the limit, it follows that, human brain is not fully matured it sometimes needs the divine intervention to reach the truth. In this regard, Zakir,(2007) argued that Quran is not only a book of signs but it is also a book of sciences. Based on these ayahs and physical phenomena, human being by using his faculty of reason can easily discover the truths. Furthermore, it is undeniable fact that, reason, is gift from Allah and it is the most valued part of human body. Reason is the basis of *taklif* (legal capacity) said Bakar(2006) because it is the power of judgment by which humans can distinguish between 'good' and 'bad', 'right' and 'wrong'. Reason is also the basis of faith (*Iman*) in Islam. Thus, it is given the authority to examine the authenticity of prophets and the revelation they claim to bring from God. In the most serious note, the holy Qur'an is full of references which command and exhort people argued Davutoglu (1994) to think, contemplate, and to examine the claimed revelation. This shows that Islam values reason; and Islam is confident that there will be no contradiction between what is contained in the revelation and what can be reasoned by human reason. Here are some relevant Quranic verses that prove the possibility of integration of revelation and human reason.

Quranic verses on human reason

According to Kiyimbe (1998), the Qur'an is a book of guidance that contains universal and all-embracing messages for humanity, regardless of time and place. As it covers every aspect of life, it would be surprising if it did not contain science. It means, Quran has strongly endorsed the major tool of scientific discovery which is human reason. Therefore, it emphasizes on this faculty of thinking in its various chapters, and blamed those who don't use their brain properly. It shows that, Quran has put a great amount of emphasis on applying reason and wisdom in all matters including gaining the knowledge about God, life after death, interpreting history, relationships of various religions, knowing good and evils, justice and injustice, freedom and oppression, nature of this world, moral and immoral and the purpose of this life. The following are some Quranic verses that endorse the utilization of reason for the sake of discovering the truth and reality of the existence.

Surely the worst of beasts in God's sight are those that are deaf and dumb and do not reason. (8:22)
And it is not for a soul to believe except by permission of Allah, and He will place defilement upon those who will not use reason. (10:100)
And if you obey most of those in the earth, they will lead you astray from Allah's way; they follow but conjecture and they do but guess. (6:116)
And do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge... (17:36)

And when it is said to them: 'Follow what God has sent down', they say, 'No; but we will follow such things as we found our fathers doing.' What Even if their fathers had no understanding of anything and if they were not guided? (2:170)

Obviously, the above Quranic verses and many other verses prove the importance of human reason and its ability in discovering the truth and reality of this world. It implies that Quran and human reason can work together and they are able to be integrated. In sum, we may conclude that, revelation is compatible with reason in Islamic worldview, and there is no conflict between the both sources of knowledge, because the right reason depends on revelation for correct guidance, and good understanding of revelation should also depend on logical reasoning. Therefore, Islam is confident that there will be no contradiction between what is contained in the revelation and what can be reasoned by human reason.

Conclusion

Based on the above discussion on integration of human reason and revelation (*Qur'an*) in Islam, the paper finds out that, the Qur'an as the final revelation of God has proven the importance of human reason to be another tool of knowledge and perfect way of discovery God's customary way of acting in natural phenomenon (*Sunnatullah*). This fact of the Quran was later confirmed by early Muslim Scholars such as *Kawarizmi*, *Al-Razi*, *Al Zahrawi Ibn Sina* and other scholars whose tireless efforts on integrating Quranic verses and human reason, had been recorded throughout the human history, as their valuable researches had eventually contributed to superiority and excellence of Muslims in all branches of knowledge especially during the Islamic golden age.. Hence, revelation (Qur'an) and human reason can be interrelated and they are able to be very integrated, moreover, they are complementary sources of knowledge and that a real contradiction between the two is not possible. Should there be an apparent contradiction between revelation and reason, the reader should review his understanding of both to see if a subtle point has been missed; such practice is expected to resolve all apparent contradictions between revelation and reason on the fact that, the two sources are inseparable from each other, and perhaps they are like two pair of scissors. Thus, human reason is undoubtedly needed to have a better understanding of revelation, and as far as fallibility of human brain is concerned, revelation is also unavoidable to guide human reason and protect human being from any deviance at large.

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