

## The Synthetic Approach to Ration and Faith in Holy Quran and Explanation of its Implication for Religious Education of Adolescents

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**Abstract** There are different views among philosophers of religion in the realm of ration and faith, and the relationship of the two, and they can play a significant role in adopting educational approach. All these views run the gamut between central faith and central reason, with the former viewing understanding of the religious truths possible only through faith and the latter stressing full capability of human reason in understanding religious truths. With a descriptive method, this article attempts to address the issue of faith and ration and their relationship from a different angle, namely the perspective of the Quran. Therefore, after defining the concepts of ration and faith and their features as explained in Quran, the main components of the comprehensive approach of Quran toward faith and ration are elaborated. Finally, pedagogical implications of this comprehensive approach in religious education of adolescents (12 to 15 years) will be explained for parents and educators.

**Keywords:** synthetic approach, ration and faith, the Holy Quran, religious education, adolescence.

### Introduction

There are different views among philosophers of religion in the realm of ration and faith, and the relationship of the two, and they can play a significant role in adopting educational approach. All these views run the gamut between central faith and central reason, with the former viewing understanding of the religious truths possible only through faith and the latter stressing full capability of human reason in understanding religious truths. "Fideists claim that religious truths cannot be achieved through reason and rationality, but only through faith in the Lord" (Pourjavadi, 2006, p. 113). In contrast, rationalists argue that religious truths can be achieved and assessed through reason.

"Fideists" are divided into two major categories: The first group is those who claim there are some anti-rational statements among religious statements. These are known as radical Fideists. A member of this group to be named is Kierkegaard. He believed that since no certainty can be found in the human

sciences and that external research, both philosophical and historical, fail to prove human beliefs, the external reasoning should be dismissed. Internal research (or faith) is the means to achieve happiness and religiosity, hence identifying the relationship between person and piety (Akbari, 2007, p. 36). This type of fideism in Islamic thinking is the result of literalist approach. In this approach, since ration is incapable of access to religious knowledge, the only authentic source to is texts and the book appearances to reach religious texts (Sobhani, 2002, p. 208).

The second group of Fideists is those who claim some religious statement escape ration. They don't believe in antagonism between understanding ration and that of religion, they merely consider them as having separated fields. These Fideists are called moderate. William James, Wittgenstein, and Tillich are of this group. In Islamic thought, Sheikh Saduq's view and somewhat that of Sheikh Mofid are moderate interpretations of fideism highly regarded in recent periods.

"Rationalists" are also divided into two main groups: those who, like Locke, are maximum rationalists and those who have critical or minimal rationalism. In Locke's view, man is responsible to regulate his beliefs based on reasoning practices and base his faith on ratiion (Khalegh Khah and Masoudi. 2007, p. 133). In contrast, critical rationalism argues that religious belief systems can and should be rationally evaluated, although conclusive proof of such systems is not possible.

Both rationalism and fideism (in their radical forms) are neither possible nor desirable. Each is faced with challenges and problems. On the one hand, contrary to the radical rationalists, capacity of human knowledge cannot achieve maximum persuasion based on maximum rationality in any of the fields of human consciousness. On the other hand, radical Fideists cannot escape from reason, when faced with the eternal question that why is this faith preferred over any other faiths? A question which can never be answered unless analyzed in a rational system. Thus, pedagogical approach has to move toward more moderate stances.

The questions raised here is that which approach is approved by Holy Quran regarding ratiion and faith : ratiion-centered, faith-centered approach, or a combination of both? What is the particular feature of Qor'anic approach distinguishing it from other similar approaches? And finally, what are the implications of the Qor'anic approach in religious education of adolescents (12 to 15 years)? These are the questions that this paper seeks to answer with descriptive method (Naderi and Saif Naraghi, 2013, P. 44). Therefore, after defining ratiion and faith from the view of Holy Quran, the main components of the comprehensive approach of Quran toward ratiion and faith are elaborated. Finally, the implications of religious education in training the adolescence (12 to 15 years)

are identified for parents and educators.

### **The concepts of faith and ratiion in the Holy Quran**

#### **The literal and connotative meaning of the term faith**

In Arabic, Iman (faith) is the infinitive of verb efaal with the root "a-m-n" meaning causing confidence and comfort in one's or others' heart. Affirmation of someone's news as a result of being assured of its accuracy and veracity, and elimination of fear, anxiety and terror are some other meanings of the term (Ahmad ibn fars, 1404 A.H). Contrary to the fairly clear literal meaning of faith, the connotative meanings of it widely vary as a result of early theological disputes about it. Ash'arites take "faith" to mean admitting the existence of God, prophets and what was revealed to them by articulating it using tongue. Mu'tazilites don't pay attention to the literal meaning in their analysis of the concept of "faith" believing that all of the names used in Islamic texts signify some religious truths in terms of literal meaning. "Faith" in the view of the Mu'tazilites includes performing certain actions in addition to the knowledge and acknowledgment of God and His Prophet.

Shia scholastics consider "faith" and "knowing" to be the same. However, there are some, among the Shias, who consider a special place for "action" in definition of faith. Allameh Tabataba'i discards the definition of faith as pure acknowledgement and considers practical commitment to at least some of the prerequisites of faith as part of its definition. He cites the verses in which the continuity of faith and good deeds are mentioned. His perception of the concept of faith in the Quran reads: "Faith is the knowledge of something requiring commitment to it, so that its effects manifest in deeds" (Tabatabai, Mohammad Hussein, 1984, p 390).

#### **The literal and connotative meaning of**

**ration**

"Reason" in the Holy Quran is only used as a verb, and it means a certain kind of understanding not limited to appearances recognizing the truth of meaning. In the Holy Quran's view, to achieve such an understanding, human mental activity is not sufficient; rather it is necessary to make effort for the health of innate nature and purification of human soul. Generally, "ration" means an understanding whereby man curbs his desires and understand things as they are not as he wants. But terms like "thinking" and "meditating" cannot be appropriate equivalents for this word; because meditation and thought are processes that lead to understanding; they are do not mean understanding itself. This understanding can be based on thought, but sometimes is immediately achieved without thinking. Also, "reasoning" in Arabic is sometimes a synonym for "reason," but in Farsi it means thinking. Therefore, it cannot be the equivalent of "reason" to apply in Farsi.

"Ration" as a term is sometimes used against revelation and it means all knowledge that man gains using his rational power, unlike the reveled knowledge which are acquired from the unseen world, with man- as man it is - having no role in it. Ration in this sense, includes all the human sciences, either the sciences of observation and experiment or those which are the result of reasoning and argument. Philosophical, experimental, historical, and narrative sciences are all products of human intellectual endeavor, gathered in this vast collection. But sometimes ration has a more specific meaning and is opposed to empirical and narrative sciences. "Rational sciences" are the same philosophical science and "reason" is an argumentative and proving power which reaches where the short-hand experience fails to, becoming aware of it. Using these two senses of "ration" are

frequent in the words of scholars. "rational defense of religion" often means the proof of the truth of religious propositions and by proof, the same meaning used in logics and mathematics is in mind; Sometimes, it means representing the preferability of belief to religious statements. Based on the type of proposition, this is done in one of three experimental, philosophical, and historical ways. "Reasoning" in this context means the path that mind follows to find answers to the unknown, meaning the reasoning thinking based on certain accepted rules.

**Relationship between ration and faith in the Holy Quran (synthetic approach toward ration and faith)**

What is the relationship between ration and faith in Quran? Which approach is approved of in Quran? Ration-centered, faith-centered, or a combination of both? What is the particular feature of Qor'anic approach distinguishing it from other similar approaches? These are the questions addressed in this section and the final result will be the explication of the comprehensive approach of Quran toward the relationship between ration and faith.

The basic and primary principle in comprehensive approach of the Qur'an is that humans have a series of inherent "tendencies" along with "knowledge" intrinsic to it. In the Holy Quran, man has been created with a certain nature that is constant and unchanging: "Therefore, set right your face for the obedience of Allah being one devoted to Him only. The established pattern of Allah upon which He has created mankind. No change in the created things of Allah. This is the only right religion. But most of the people know not" (Rum, 30).

In this verse, the word "set right your face for the obedience of Allah" represents the innate human tendency toward religion along with the knowledge intrinsic to it programmed and inherited in humans.

Basically, no innate desire is meaningful intrinsic without knowledge to it. As in Chomsky's theory of "communicative action" also humans essentially "desire" to communicate with others but this innate tendency is accompanied with the hereditary "linguistic proficiency" planned within the human. It makes the general form of all languages be the same and their grammatical rules (UG) universal. These universal grammatical rules (UG) take the shape and form of a particular language when exposed to a particular linguistic environment. We can talk about religious knowledge in the same way: first, there is a "natural tendency" in man to experience and interpret the world and second, along with this innate desire, hereditary "religious knowledge" is laid out in humans, that causes the overall shape of all human experiences (natural world) to be the same. Third, religious knowledge takes shape when exposed to the appropriate external environment.

Before more explanation, it is better to clarify the meaning of "religion". Here, religion does not mean a certain religion (Islam or Christianity and...). Therefore, when we say "religious knowledge" is innate, the revealed truths inherent in a particular religion are not in mind. Here, the general meaning of religion is intended: "Religion is obedience, tendency, obedience and submission to the Truth" (Behdarvand, 2004, p. 2). This fact may include empirical and non-empirical facts. By this definition, religion includes both heavenly and also science in its modern sense. "Science" is, in fact, experiencing and interpreting the world as "natural act" that reveals some facts relating to the mechanical mechanism of the universe to man. These natural truths have innate knowledge and therefore have universal principles. And, the most important principle of which is what Francis Bacon, the father of modern science, discovered.

"The experience and interpretation of the natural world is possible only with critical empirical method." He showed the right way to experience the world in its "natural" form to humans. By applying this method, man learned some facts about nature whereby he was led to mastery over nature freed from the state of cognitive imbalance.

Religious knowledge, in addition to the "natural experiment", includes another kind of experience called "divine experience". "Natural experiment" interprets the world in permanent physical laws and posits the elements of will and knowledge in creation and wisdom of the universe. For the natural scientist, the universe has a constant and deterministic mechanical process that starts from a certain point and has reached the current point. But for the theologian, the world is not merely a constant mechanical action, but the product of the divine plan and wisdom which has begun from a specific point and is moving toward ultimate perfection with a definite goal.

The overall result is that religion, in its general sense, includes two kinds of facts: facts of nature, which come from the senses and experience, and divine or supernatural facts that come from non-experimental ways. And on the basis of that, religious experience also includes two kinds of experience: "natural" experience of the world, which seeks to interpret the world according to the constant physical laws through direct sensory observation, and divine experience which seeks to interpret the world according to supernatural laws by metaphysical means (ie revelation). The important point is that "religious knowledge" of both kinds of experience lies in human nature. (Otherwise people will not have any experience) and this means that God entrusted to human nature the grounds for experience in both areas.

Human nature is like a black box having data of both types of experience within it. It will suffice if this natural religious knowledge be exposed to the external environment by proper cognitive tools, so that it takes shape in the best way. (The principle is also true about linguistic knowledge. If the child lacks the appropriate cognitive tools or is not exposed to the appropriate linguistic environment, he will never be able to learn language.)

Thus, religious knowledge needs two things to take shape in the outside world: proper cognitive tools and specific external environment. Naturally, sense and experience are the proper cognitive tools for determining religious knowledge, in its natural dimension- as it belongs to tangible experience. Therefore, sense and experience are sufficient for knowing it. But, for determining religious knowledge, in its divine dimension, sense and experience alone are not sufficient. Because, it belongs to supernatural, therefore, it needs other proper tools, which is revelation. Religious knowledge to be determined in the outside world needs (or instance) outside environment, in addition to proper cognitive tools. And, external instance of both experiences exist in the outer world. On the one hand, instances are found in nature which confirm the experience of the world as "natural act": the formation of the Philippine archipelago for centuries due to the volcanic eruption, the emergence of new varieties of plants for specific genetic combinations and hundreds of other similar cases, all confirming the gradual evolution of the universe and nature (rather than its voluntary process). On the other hand, there are frequent instances in nature which confirm the divine sense of the world. Today, thanks to genetics, amazing facts have been revealed about the mystery of the creation, which induce

every fair-minded man to accept the elements of will and wisdom in the creation of human.

Finally, it should be mentioned that on the one hand, there are innate "desire" and "knowledge" in man to experience and interpret the world as a "natural" and "divine" act, and that, on the other hand, there exist extrinsic evidences of both kinds of experience in the world. Now, when this innate religious knowledge, in its natural dimension, is exposed with the proper cognitive tools, namely sense and experience to the external environment, (sensible world), "natural religious experience" will be shaped in accordance with innate religious knowledge of man and its inevitable outcome will be creation of endless scientific theories. Because of innateness of religious knowledge, human experiences will not be mere reflection of the external data. When external data enter into the innate knowledge of man, the result is birth of new natural experiences that enable humans understand the superior facts of nature (on face value). Similarly, when innate religious knowledge, in its divine dimension, is exposed with the right cognitive tools (ration and revelation) to the external environment, "divine religious experience" will be formed in accordance with human's innate knowledge and its inevitable consequence will be understanding the superior truths of nature (in its internal dimension).

These two "natural" and "divine" experiences present two divergent and incongruous interpretations of the universe: natural experiment interprets the universe in terms of constant physical rules. But divine experience views the world premiere of the constant laws of the physics. Now, how these two contrasting cognitive experiences come together for man's use?

To answer this question, consider the

example of John Hick's in his book "Faith and Knowledge". He says: suppose you're driving on a road with your own car. In front of you a two-seater car is driving with one driver and another blind person who is sitting next to the driver. As you move forward, you notice there had been an accident a few kilometers ahead and someone is injured. The front car reaches the scene of accident. Its driver, who is not blind, understands the natural meaning of "accident". This natural meaning of accident reports the "incidence of overturned car and injured driver." This natural meaning of accident is obtained through sensory observation for the front driver and then you afterwards. But the blind man next to the driver, does not pick any natural meaning, because he has no sense of sight. He therefore does not experience any moral sense. (Here's an example of the innately blind man. If religious knowledge was not innate, man had no natural or moral sense of the world. Making sense of nature testifies to the presence of religious knowledge inherent in man.) Hick goes on to say that the driver of the car in front, though having grasped the meaning of accident, leaves the scene regardless of the injury. You will stop by the crash scene to help the injured and in your mind you are going to say, "What kind of unconscionable person was that." Besides the natural sense of the accident you have understood another meaning, namely meaning of "ethics" that tells you "you have to help the injured." (Hick, 1999, p. 11)

Compared with this analogy, man, believer and unbeliever, first makes the natural sense of things, when faced with nature. First and foremost, men experience and interpret world in terms of fixed laws of the physics. However, this would not be the only meaning that the faithful obtains from the world. In addition to the natural sense, he picks another meaning from the

world, which is called "divine sense". In accordance with this sense, world is not the product of a mere mechanical deterministic process, but is the product of the divine plan and wisdom. This divine meaning places the believer to a higher degree than the disbeliever who only picks the natural meaning of the world. The believer, just like the unbeliever, has understood the natural meaning of the world, but he has also gained an additional meaning that is the divine meaning of the world. This divine meaning is not equal with the natural meaning. The faithful considers world as an "act of God" and experiences and interprets it in and through "natural experience". In fact, he seeks the divine meaning of the world in and through natural meaning

The experience the world as a "divine act" in and through "natural act" is the very point of healthy religious experience which is aligned with the innate knowledge of human. On both sides of this point of health, there are two serious injuries that always threaten the health of religious experience: on one side, there is this danger that one meaning (natural or divine) becomes dominant and other meaning of the world is marginalized in the world. In Qur'anic term, it means the person is negligent (Kafir) of that meaning. This occurs when the individual limits himself to a specific cognitive tool in experiencing the world. If one uses only sensory tools for experience and interpretation of the world, the natural meaning of the world becomes dominant in him and the divine meaning recesses. The peak of this can be seen in Darwin's theory of evolution. But, if one only uses means of revelation or ration to know the world, it is natural that the divine or philosophical meanings of the world overcome natural meaning. The peak of this can be seen in the geocentric model in medieval churches which offered a merely

divine interpretation of nature. But on the other side of the healthy religious experiences, there is the danger of "Shirk" and it is when the two meanings, natural and divine, are regarded as having equal significance. And, thus meanings are mixed. Whereby the heathen (Mushrik), unlike disbeliever (Kafir), accepts the elements of will and consciousness in the world, but instead of completely attributing it to the Lord, he bisects it, attributing the main creation of the world to God (and if thou ask them who created the heavens and the earth, they will say God/Az-Zumar: 39). But, he attributes the contrivance of things to natural causes which are either handled by himself (like idols and other gods) or are tangible natural phenomena (such as moon, sun, and star). In fact, the Mushrik, deem the will of idols as equaling that of God, and so rather than merely worshipping God, they worship their idols. Because they believe their will affects their lives. "Kufr" and "Shirk" are two dangers of religious experience against which prophets fought fiercely, trying to guide people to the health point of their religious experience. In Islamic tradition, it is stated that when the Prophet buried his son, Ibrahim, sun eclipsed and people attributed this to the Prophet's mourning (his son's death). The Prophet stopped the burial, went to the pulpit and said: O people, the death of my son is a natural phenomenon and solar eclipse is another natural phenomenon and the two have nothing to do. The same Prophet, when recommending people to trust in God in all aspects of life, chided and said to the Arab who had left his camel stranded in front of his home: (In the words of Rumi) "Go handle your camel in reliance on God." It means divine meaning does not contradict the natural meaning of the world. In fact, these two meanings, divine and natural, are not in equal positions. The believer is the one who

searched the world as a divine act in and through natural act. This is the true meaning of faith in the Qur'an which is further discussed later on and its relationship with rations is explained.

The Quranic verses implicate that "faith" has two sides of submission and reason, which are both lifesaving. "and they will then say: 'if only we had listened and understood we should not now be among the inhabitants of the blaze.'" (Malek/10) The juxtaposition of "listening" and "reason" in the Quran leads us to the fact that although "reason" is highly valued, but this is not the only way of salvation. Those who do not have the intellectual capacity to understand, can be saved by "listening". If the heart is not blind, ear is sufficient for salvation. From this discussion it follows that religious experience (and consequently religious faith) can be achieved in two ways for human beings: one from the surrounding environment in which man has no active and informed role in shaping it. The typical instance of that is human religious experience of childhood which are formed by free experiences of the first period (from birth to seven years, according to Islamic tradition) and formal and informal education of the second period of childhood (seven to fourteen). In this period, man has not yet come to think abstractly, and thus his religious experience is shaped by the environment. Now, if the environment is right and fair, it can give rise to a religious experience in line with natural knowledge of man, giving man a "submissive religious faith" that corresponds to his nature, in shaping of which senses (hearing, etc.) play a major role, rather than thinking and reasoning. But religious experience can be achieved through other ways for man which is contemplation and meditation. For example, the human religious experiences after the childhood. After this period, man

enters the second phase of growth which is abstract thinking. Now, in addition to the status quo, he can perceive the ideal situation and by comparing the two, engage in a critique of the status quo and thus growth the negative aspect of reason, which is critical thinking. At this stage of development, in addition to the positive side of ration, gains the other side of the ration (ie, negative and critical aspect) whose function is evaluating religious experience. Positive aspect of the ration, which is responsible for making conclusion based on internal and external, grows from the childhood, but since in this era, the judgments are based on external evidence, they are minor and unstable. With the development of abstract thinking, children will then be able to get a general idea of things and consequently will be in a position to make fixed and permanent conclusions.

Although the negative aspect of the ration precedes its positive side, this does not negate the positive sense of the ration. Because, the prevalence of one over the other causes serious cognitive problem. If the negative aspect becomes dominant and the positive aspect is marginalized, it results in "skepticism" in ideas and "uncertainty" in action. On the contrary, if the positive aspect becomes dominant and negative one is marginalized, it leads to "dogmatism" in ideas and "excesses" in action. Proper development of abstract thinking in adolescence prevents man from being caught in these two pathological problems. Perhaps the emphasis Islamic tradition places on parents' accompanying the adolescent in the third stage of growth (14 years and after) is the same fact that parents' companion with children, firstly, causes the child to assess their "submissive religious experience" and as result grow through their critical thinking, and secondly, prevent the cognitive problems (skepticism and dogmatism).

The last point is that from the view of the Quran, rational assessment is not possible by a mere intellectual exercise. Therefore, practice through action is needed. Ration in the Qur'an, "means an understanding that arises from innate nature, tears the layers of appearances and arrives at the inner truth" (Tabatabaei, Mohammad Hussein, 1997, p. 255). To achieve this understanding, mere rational growth is not adequate. But, what is important is the growth of the soul and this is achieved through behavior. Therefore, to take advantage of the "ration," In Qor'anic sense, one should have both scientific and practical exercises; This means that the assessment of religious experience is not purely subjective. Because, religious experience should be practiced so that its internal and external contradictions are revealed. When put to practice, it becomes clear whether or not it will lead to good deeds.

The result is that, from the view of the Quran, ration and faith are complementary, not opposite. Perhaps in time, there is a sequence, but no one can doubt the authenticity of each of them. The initial period of human growth starts with "submissive faith" starts, but in the second period of growth (ie, abstract thinking), ration entirely finds its place in assessing and proving the religious faith. Every faith (intellectual and practical) is critiqued by rational criticism, not to prove it right, but to make it nearer to the point of health which is in accordance with the innate religious knowledge, hence keeping it safe from both sides of problems. Thus, Kierkegaard's idea that "ration prevents excitement of the faith" (Akbari, 2007, p. 40) is only true when we consider ration in its merely argumentative aspect which is to prove religious experience. If ration is viewed in two aspects of "negative" and "positive" and that it is not to prove religious experience, but rather to assess

religious experience in order to bring it nearer to the health point through revelation, it does not make sense any more to say this rational assessment prevents excitement of faith. This rational assessment seeks to understand human innate nature and the nearer it gets to it, the real excitement in faith would be more and more.

### Discussion and Conclusion

This Quranic approach has important educational implications for parents and educators. When religious knowledge is innate, parents and educators need not to rationally prove that. They just need to expose their children to the proper outer environment so that their religious knowledge takes shape. Of course in the first and the second growth periods (from birth to around twelve years), that's when the child does not have abstract sense, the environment has persuasive role. In this period of growth, nature, friends, school, adults, etc. constitute children's religious experience unconsciously. If the environment is fair and in line with the innate knowledge of the child, the child will obtain "submissive religious faith". But if the environment is inappropriate and unfair, he will be faced with two problems of Kufr and Shirk. In the next phase of growth, in which the child has reached abstract thinking, he will have the opportunity to assess his own religious experience. If his submissive religious experience complies with his innate religious experience, he can turn it into "rational religious experience". If not, he can bring it nearer to the health point through assessment and rational proving. At this stage of growth, the role of parents and educators is to accompany children. This should be in both negative and positive aspects of the ration. Accompanying the child in "negative aspect of ration" will grow his critical

thinking and protects him from the dangers of "dogmatism" in ideas and the "excesses" in practice. And accompanying the child in the "positive aspect of ration" (making judgment based on internal and external evidence) prevents other dangers, namely "skepticism" in ideas and "uncertainty" in practice. Parents' companionship in assessing and verifying religious experience may lead to new religious experiences, whether natural or divine, other than the submissive religious experience of the past and parents need to know that it is a natural thing. When the prophets like Abraham, helped people to assess the religious experience of their forefathers inherited and modify them in line with innate religious knowledge, parents should not expect that their submissive religious experience is fully accepted by their children. the parent's companionship at this point gives the chance to review and assess their own religious experience in the light of abstract thinking of their child, and if necessary, modify or change it altogether.

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