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A Shiite Innatist Conception of Reason, and What It Can Do for Religious Education (RE)

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Abstract

In this study I have argued for a theoretical foundation of a coherent and defensible religious education (RE). It has been said that for RE to be accepted as a reasonable subject matter it should be researchable. But for a subject to be researchable, or research based, it needs to be supported by reason, a kind of reason that have a public and universal character. On the other hand we need a conception of religion being capable of giving this conception of reason, and adapting itself with its teachings. I have argued that the Shiite idea of innatism is a good base for providing a theory of reason upon which reason, while having an important role in human life, and an intrinsic connection with religion, has some limitations that can only be compensated by appealing to divine aspect of life and the path of God, namely religion. To show that the Shiite innatist conception of reason can be a good starting point I have argued that, this concept of reason comes from the Shiite belief that humans have a shared nature upon which they have the same emotional and cognitive view. So I have discussed the place and the weight of reason in Islam and Shiism, the idea of innatism, the innatist conception of reason, and connecting reason and religion by suggesting the innate human nature as the same root for both of them. By suggesting the same divine nature for reason and religious belief, I argued that rational principles are at the same time the divine rules for having the best sort of life. That is reason and religion have the shared tasks for following the intrinsic virtues. So we can conclude that a true religious belief, which is supported by reason, as Shiite belief seems to be, can be a reasonable base for making a religious education system. In this work I have referred mostly to Allamah Tabatabaei and Morteza Mutahhari, as the most influential

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contemporary Shiite scholars, to explain the Shiite's belief as to the nature of reason and religion.

Key words: religious education, islamic education, Shiite education, innatism

Introduction

Religious Education (RE), as a subject, is now stronger and more vibrant than it has been for many years. This comes from the questions with which RE is confronted these days. The questions emerge from the debates concerning the nature and functions of RE. The result have been emergence of different conceptions of RE. In most contemporary education debates in England (QCA¹, 2004), and also in most agreed syllabuses for RE (available from www.REOnline.org.uk), RE is a non-confessional (i.e. it should not try to convert pupils to any particular religion), multi-faith (i.e. it should involve learning about a number of religions), and respectful of non-religious way of life (i.e. it is not just about religions). While this, for some, is a normal conception of RE, for others it is an abnormal version of the subject. Even in England there are many who prefer a more confessional RE (i.e. a single-religion RE or an RE that rejects non-religious ways of life), (Thompson, 2004a, and 2004b), as there are others who ban RE or replace it with moral, spiritual, personal and civil or citizenship education. All kinds of RE, to be a subject, or to be rationally taught, must be seen as a matter of reason, and for RE to thrive, pupils and teachers must be involved and active by using their rationalities. This is what Stern (2006) in his book, *teaching religious education*, tries to show by indicating how RE includes research. That is, for RE to be reasonably a subject matter, it needs to be research based, and for being researchable it should be compatible with reason, and especially with its objective and public nature, if it has any. Indeed for RE to be researchable it needs to be established based on a kind of reason that has objective and public nature, on the one hand, and not absolute entity, rather having some limitations, on the other. And the kind of limitations which reason itself introduces are expected to be compensated by religion.

To show that RE needs pupils and teachers to be active, Stern refers to the thirteenth-century Sufi Muslim poet, Mulana Jalal-al-Din Moulavi Rumi, when he refers to two kinds of intelligence or reason,

1 - Qualification and Curriculum Authority: UK curriculum authority, and successor to SCAA (Schools Curriculum and Assessment Authority)

“acquired reason” that flows into a schoolchild from books and teachers, and the reason that comes from within, from the heart of soul, the “God-given reason”. The point is that whatever view you may take about these two kinds, it helps, as Stern says (2006, pp. 5-6), promote the idea of RE being research-based, and pupils and teachers being active in terms of their using reason. But this depends strongly on the place and the weight of reason in the religion that going to be taught, and the conception of reason it may have, and the required conception of reason here seems to be one that has objective and public nature. This is because there might be a religion not capable of adapting itself with reason and does not see any point in obeying reason. And the extent to which a religion may be committed to reason might be different from a religion to religion. On the other hand, a sort of reason adopted by a religion to be followed might be individual and not public, and absolute entity without having any kind of limitations.

So the wide range of, and the continuing debates concerning RE leads us to think that one striking feature of these debates is their interminable character, that there apparently is no terminus for these debates. Leaving aside the question of whether agreement in this sphere is possible, it can be asked why educationalists and philosophers come to different conclusions about the rationality of religion, and RE, the rational way to educate people religiously. A reason for this is that those who use the concepts reason, rationality and religion, have not necessarily the same conception of them, and this may lead them to provide different theories about these concepts and the relation between them. So to see the potentiality of a religion to be rationally taught, or to be a research based subject, and its capability of providing a defensible RE, its conception of reason and the weight it may give to reason should be studied.

In this work I am going to study the potentiality of Shiite's belief, as an Islamic branch of thinking, for providing a religious education capable of defending itself as an objective and public reason based religious education. The Shiite innatist conception of reason can be a good starting point here. Since, as I will argue, this concept of reason comes from the Shiite belief that humans have a shared nature upon which they have the same emotional and cognitive view, and can argue with each other. So I will begin with the place and the weight of reason in Islam and Shiism, and then the idea of innatism, the innatist conception of reason, and connecting reason and religion by suggesting the innate human nature as the same root for both of them, along side with some limitations reason has. I will refer mostly to Allamah Tabatabaei and Morteza Mutahhari, as the most influential

contemporary Shiite scholars, to explain the Shiite's belief as to the nature of reason and religion.

A- Islam, Shiism and Reason

It should be said that thinking about reason is not a new job peculiar to modern philosophers. Rather, it occurs throughout the history of mankind as a rational animal. Historically speaking, it was once customary to divide philosophers into two major groups, empiricist and rationalist, though this classification is not acceptable now, because it is possible to have a theory of knowledge which is neither rationalist nor empiricist but pragmatism, for instance. The dispute between empiricism and rationalism concerned the role of reason as the final assessor. A rationalist maintains that all opinions and beliefs are to be brought before the tribunal of reason. On the contrary, empiricists rely on sense-perception and believe that all the material of our knowledge is supplied by sense experience. But both groups need philosophizing and making use of reason to establish their doctrines. In other words, all of them are going to show the role and the weight of elements and mental activities involved in understanding, perception, and action. So a major part of the history of philosophy could be summarized as the history of trying to show the role of reason in the process of understanding and action.

For the majority of Islamic scholars reason is a source among the other sources; the others being the tradition (Hadith), consensus (Ijma), and the Holy Book (the Quran). There are different comments as to the role of reason as an independent source of religious inferences. This has led to the emergence of different schools among Islamic thinkers.

The Rationality of Islam

One may ask whether reason and giving reasons have a strong place in religion, in general, and in Islam, in particular. If we accept that the Islamic belief, or religious belief in general, cannot be supported by reasons, or in a broader sense, if they cannot be rational, then searching for a rational education, or reason based education upon that religious doctrine is wrong.

By asking the questions such as "Do they not then reflect on the Quran? Nay, on their hearts there are locks." (47: 24), and "Do they not then meditate on the Quran?..." (4: 82), the Quran persuades people to reason seriously. According to Allamah (1975, p: 18), among the more than 6600 verses of the Quran, none wants people to

accept them without assessing. Concerning free or independent reasoning, the Quran says, "...bear thou the glad tidings unto my servants. Those who hearken unto the word [all words, all talks] and follow the best of it; those are they whom God hath guided; and those it is who are the men of understanding." (39: 17-18).

The Quran's respect for reason appears also in its inviting all its followers to gain knowledge, and also in its inviting all people not to obey that about which they have no knowledge. In this respect the Quran says, "And pursue thou not that which thou hast not the knowledge of; Verily, the hearing and the sight and the heart, all these shall be questioned about it." (17: 36). Allamah frequently declares that the Quran sees reason as the essence of human kind--as what makes humans distinguishable from and superior to animals. For instance, referring to the Quran (2: 170-171)¹, he says that Islam rejects blind acceptance, and holds that it is one of the worst characteristics which one may possess. Commenting on the above mentioned verse, he says that according to the Quran one who blindly obeys what others say may not be considered as human; rather he or she would be seen as the animals who cannot understand whatever they hear and see.

The Quran in its teachings uses three different paths. This is because the audiences of the Quran, because of differences in their capacities for understanding, are not in the same position. The ways through which the Quran addresses its audiences are, 1- the path of the external and formal aspect of religion (*the Shariah*); 2- the path of intellectual understanding; and 3- the path of spiritual comprehension achieved through sincerity (*ikhlas*) in obeying God, Allamah says (1975b, pp: 199-202) and (1989, Chapter III).

Concerning the path of intellectual understanding and the priority of this path over others, it could be said that the spirit of the Quranic utterances is that, by attesting to the validity of intellectual proof and rational demonstration, they invite all people to freely contemplate what the Quran says; they want them to return to their reason, freely, and to common sense, then if they see that what is said is right, to

1 - "And when it is said unto them, "Follow what God hath sent down" They say, "Nay! We follow that which we found our fathers upon" What! even though their fathers had no sense at all, nor were (they) guided aright? "The parable of those that disbelieve is the likeness of one who shouteth to (one) which heareth not but a call and a cry; deaf, dumb, blind (are they) wherefore they do not understand" (2: 170-171).

accept it. This is just what is called the philosophical thinking and free reasoning, Allamah says, (1975b, pp: 17-18).

This view shows, in a sense, the priority of the intellectual understanding over the other paths which I referred. Moreover the validity of two other paths eventually depends upon intellectual reasoning. Though the other paths are valid for comprehending the purposes of religion and the Islamic sciences, the main principles that establish the backbone of Islam should be accepted only through intellectual reasoning. A believer in Islam is one who has definite knowledge, and deep understanding of the main principles of Islam¹. This definite knowledge can only be achieved through intellectual reasoning. Look, for instance, the principle of Tawhid or belief in Divine Unity. To indicate the importance of Reason in the Islamic tradition, William C. Chittick (2003) refers to this very principle and says, “The principle of the primacy of thought is made explicit in first half of the testimony of Islamic faith, the *Shahadah*. *Tawhid* or the assertion of God’s unity which is voiced in the *kalimat al-tawhid*, the statement “There is no god but God”- has no direct relationship with the facts and events of the world. *Tawhid* is essentially a thought, a logical and coherent statement about the nature of reality, a statement that needs to inform the understanding of every Muslim.”(2003, p: 32). By “thought” he means the very root of human existence, which is consciousness, awareness, and understanding. The Islamic intellectual tradition has usually referred to this root as *aql*, or Reason.

After all, in traditional Islamic thinking, it is taken for granted that Reason is the source of being a true Muslim. This is because, as I said, believing in God and the essential principles of Islam, like *Tawhid* or the assertion of God’s unity, can only be accepted if it is an outcome of using Reason. That is, one cannot understand God or oneself by quoting the opinions of others, not even if the others be the Quran and the Prophet. The only way to understand things is to find out for

1 - The principles are; the principles of Tawhid or belief in Divine Unity; Nubuwwah or prophecy; Maad or resurrection. There are two other principles which are special to Shiism, and for a person to be a Shia, along with the three principles, mentioned above, he/she must have definite knowledge of them. They are the principles of Immamah or the Imamate, belief in the Imams as successors of the Prophet; and Adl or Divine Justice.

yourself in yourself-though certainly need the help of those who already known. So being a true Muslim requires using Reason.

Authority in Islam

One way to see whether a thought is based on authority (as something against reason) is to examine what kind of religious order or government is supported by that thought. Sometimes, the Islamic political thought is considered as theocratic which finally leads to a kind of despotic, or dictatorial government. This judgment emerges probably from observing the historical facts concerning what has happened, not only in western countries by Christian governments, but also in eastern lands by Islamic Ottomans. The reasons why Christian political thought (or at least some of its branches like Catholicism) has the potentiality to become a kind of 'authoritarianism' lie, probably, on the epistemological foundations of Christianity regarding the relationship between God and his servants, and the doctrine of original sin and that of revelation. Sinful unredeemed man is supposed to be incapable of reasoning well and understanding the truth. God's revelation is necessary if the human is to know the truth. But in this process there is a mediation between God and the individual, that is a priestly office. Theocracy is a state governed by the church-- that is, by priests. As Lewis Bernard (1991, p: 30) says, this kind of theocracy is impossible in Islam because " there is no church or priesthood in Islam, neither theologically, since there is no priestly office or mediation between God and the individual believer, nor institutionally, since there are no prelates and no hierarchy". Even when the Islamic state has been established the ruler can never be in a position in which he could be regarded as a person who by him/herself is holy, capable of changing the laws which have come from God. Indeed, the sovereign, who is an "Islamic Jurist", namely one who is a skilled man in inferring judgments based on the Holy Book, Traditions, consensus (*Ijma*), and Reason, receives his legitimacy from the following of the Holy laws. So, though the role of ruler in an Islamic state is very important, it becomes limited by being confined to following the path of God, like all other people. Therefore, at least, those grounds based on which the above mentioned hierarchy in Christianity is made have no place in Islam. But it does not mean that there is no authority in Islam at all. S. A. Arjomand (1988) in his introduction to the book, 'Authority and Political Culture in Shiism', noted that the essential component of the notion of authority is 'obedience'. And obedience has an essential place in Islam.

Therefore, although there is a place for authority in Islam, it is not the authority of a hierarchy. Authority is the authority of the Quran. Thus, if what makes a thought or a religion incapable of being rational is the kin of authority based on a substantial hierarchy, then it is possible to see Islam, in general, and Shiism in particular, as capable of representing a rational education, or at least, as a thought which is compatible with a theory of education which has been made based on reason alone. So the authority in Islam, as I said, is the authority of the Quran. But there is no privileged interpretation of the Quran, because there are no prelates and no hierarchy in Islam. The matter of how the Quran should be interpreted is a matter to be decided by the individual, using reason.

Philosophy in Shiite Society

If we agree that one of the supreme examples of reason is philosophy (genuine, open minded philosophy), then if we can show that philosophy has a strong place in Shiism, or that Shiism has a strong sympathy to philosophy then we probably can conclude the assumption that Shiism is capable of possessing a kind of rational theory of education and giving a rational account for religious education. This is because having sympathy to philosophy implies and even requires having sympathy to reason. And if a person or a system of thought has sympathy to reason then it is plausible to expect him/her or it to base his/her or its account of education upon reason. If reason has a considerable role to play in this branch of Islam, then it probably has a job to do in the educational sphere. So I shall look at the position of philosophy in Shiism.

Maintaining that the main key for happiness in life is 'culture, or actualizing culture' and 'education', and also that the only way to achieve this aim is using critical discussion, Allamah criticizes Islamic society during its early period, especially in the times of the first and second Caliphs. He believes that during this period Islamic society did not show the considerable effort in the realms of culture, education, and critical thinking, that it showed in being involved in Jihad or holy war. During this period, a belief was being encouraged that the holy Quran with its literal translation is enough to give one the true happiness. Anyone who wanted to attempt to get deep understanding of what the Quran says, which necessarily was done by asking questions about what it says, was seriously punished, he says. Because they had this superficial view, they discarded the main principle upon which the Quran and Islam are laid, namely, the principle of reasoning and free discussion(1975b, pp: 46-9). For this reason, the main source

of belief for a theologian, especially for an Ashari, became *Ijma* or consensus.

Nevertheless, there has been a rational branch in Sunnism which is usually referred to as 'Islamic Rationalism' or 'the champion of rationalism in Islamic theology', namely Mutazila (See M. Fakhry, 1970 p: 228; George F. Hourani, 1971; Hourani, 1985). They were rationalists in the sense that the source upon which they relied was reason, though their point of departure was a few principles stated implicitly or explicitly in the Quran. They deduced their logical consequences from those principles, without too much regard to the problem of consistency with other verses of the Quran. Hourani (1985, p: 7) says that their being rationalist comes from their method, which was a kind of mathematical reasoning, starting from a few principles and going on to logically deduce. In addition, their being rationalist was for their exposing some new important matters in Islamic theology that their influences went beyond the theology and made some new questions for philosophy--for instance, their belief in liberty of human reason and its ability to solve at least some problems independently (that is without regarding the guidance of the Quran and Traditions), their belief that in conflict between the Quran and Reason, Reason should be preferred; and about the social and political affairs, their belief that we are allowed to criticize the caliphates' actions and their political manner.

The movement against Mutazila, a rationalist branch of Sunnism, in Sunnite countries led to the eclipse of rationalism. The school of Asharyya which was against philosophy became predominant in Sunnite Islam. This, of course, does not mean that we have no great philosophers in Sunnite Islam, but it means that philosophy was so affected by Traditionalism, and later on by the highly influential works of Gazali (in Latin Algazel, 1057-1111) that it became a subject which was not important in the educational curriculum of Sunnite Islam. In fact, after Ibn-Rushd (in Latin Averroes, 1126-98) who was the last great philosopher in Sunnite Islam, philosophy couldn't rise in Sunnite Islam again. As T. J. De Boer (1967, p: 200) remarks, the works of Ibn Rushd were not influential even in his time, and he had no disciples or followers. So, indeed, in Sunnite societies, philosophy began to decline before Ibn Rushd.

Although Mutazila views were criticised by Shiism as well, it did not lead to the eclipse of philosophy in Shiism. Indeed, philosophy continued in Iran and great philosophers, well-known in all departments of Islamic studies, rose. Among them one who was very influential is Sadr al-Din al-Shirazi (1572-1641), more commonly

referred to as Mulla Sadra¹. Indeed, as Hourani (1985, p: 19) notes while Traditionalism prevailed in Sunnite countries, "rationalism continued to be widespread in Shiite countries such as Iran, where it was incorporated into Shiite Islam". Meanwhile, the Islamic doctrines which are taught in Sunni countries are those of Asharyya and Ghazali, while Persian philosophers like Mulla Sadra and Hakim-e Sabzavari are not taught--even though, as Hourani(1985, p: 22) notes, we can find ethical ideas of interest in them. Asharism is still taught at the famous center of Islamic education of Azhar in Cairo and other colleges of Islamic theology. What I want to note is that philosophy has had a long history in Shiite Islam, in comparison with other branches of Islam, and one could even say it has been inseparable from Shiism. This is, probably, the reason why Mutahhari (1980, p: 76) holds that the authority of reason has a stronger place in Shiism than in Mutazila.

Shiism and Reason

The relation between Shiism and reason is so strong that it is a part of the Shiite's belief that reason must be obeyed as the religious laws must be obeyed. (Consider that the validity of Shiite people's belief depends on whether they have followed the path of reason or not; if they have followed the path of reason they are true believers.) Explaining this, in his major work, *al-Mizan fee Tafsir al-Quran* (The criterion in commentary on the Quran), vol. 5, p: 266, Allamah says that the kind of obligation in saying that "the obedience of reason is obligatory" is just like the kind of obligation which is applied in the sphere of religious law, jurisprudence, following which one who does not obey the religious law deserves punishment. It is similar to the obligation of obedience of a knowledgeable and benevolent person, or the obligation of doing justice in judgment, which are the matters of practical reason. This concept of reason as that whose authority is compatible with the authority of the Quran and Traditions is a common belief between the most major Shiite scholars, like Allamah al-Hilli (d. 1325/726), (whom John Cooper, 1988, p: 240, calls "the best representative of medieval Shiism"), and Mulla Mahdi Naraqhi. In his book, *Jame al-saadaat*, vol. 1, p: 147, Naraqhi says that the principles of Islamic belief should be deduced from religious law and reason. So in the same way that the obedience of religious law is

1 - Fakhry (1970, p: 339) quotes E. G. Browne as writing in his 'Literary History of Persia', IV, 53 f. Cambridge, 1924, of Mulla Sadra as "unanimously acclaimed as the greatest philosopher of modern times in Persia".

obligatory, obedience to what reason says is obligatory too. It means that the religious people should obey what their reason says, what they understand, if it is the result of a process of impartial reasoning. Mulla Mahdi Naraqī illuminates reason as "the inner religious law and the internal insight".

Concerning the Shiites' Imams' approval of rational thought, when dealing with the reason why philosophy remains in Shiism, Allamah points to their praise of reason and free thinking as 'the treasury of knowledge left behind by the Imams'. In the same way, M. Mutahhari in his introduction to Volume Five of one of Allamah's major works, *Usul-i Falsafa wa Rawish-i Rialism* (The Principles of Philosophy and the Method of Realism, 1971), says that what has made 'Shiite Reason' a kind of philosophical reason was the philosophical and deep questions posed by Shiite Imams from the very beginning of Islam. On this matter, in his book, *Shia*, 1989, Allamah explains that at the beginning of Islam the Arabs in general were not familiar with free philosophical thinking and discussion, and in the words of the scholars of the first two centuries we cannot find a kind of deep philosophical discussion. They in fact became acquainted with philosophical discussion after numerous translations of Greek writings into Arabic, during 2nd/8th century. But within the Shiite minority, as Allamah says, from the very beginning we can see "the profound sayings of the Shiite Imams, particularly the first and eighth, contain an inexhaustible treasury of philosophical meditations in their Islamic context. It is they who acquainted some of their students with this form of thought."(1989, pp: 107-8). Shiism continued to develop philosophy and made philosophical achievements.

Although there are no differences between philosophy, on the one hand, and the Quranic verses and the Islamic traditions on the other, in terms of the aim which they pursue, referring to the longtime challenge between philosophers and jurists, Allamah (1977, p: 85) concludes that philosophy was dismissed from the scene in that period just because the culture of society had been formed upon imitation, instead of critical thinking. The real knowledge in which the Book and Tradition consist is the same truths that are achieved through rational discussions. Both philosophy and religion are searching for the truth. The difference is in the kind of language which they apply. That is, the language which the Book and the tradition use is simple and common, while the language and the concepts which are used by philosophers are technical. This is because, their audiences are different. So the challenge between the philosophical attitude and the religious or theological attitude is a mistake. This leads us to believe

in the compatibility of philosophy with theology, and following this, in defending a reason based religious education system.

B- The idea of Innatism or the doctrine of nature

According to Shiite scholars, humans have been created with a certain kind of structure in which there are some cognitive and emotional characteristics which are invariable and are inherent in human nature from the very beginning, (Allamah, 1975b, pp: 61-62 and 109; 1967, pp: 165-6; Al-Mizan, vol. 5, p: 311, vol. 10, pp: 298-9, vol. 13, p: 92, and vol. 20, pp: 297-8; and Mutahhari, 1979; 2009-1387). There are certain inclinations and perceptions which are innate. In so far as human beings are human beings they possess these characteristics. These innate characteristics, in their developed states, are manifested as the principles upon which reason in both the practical and the theoretical areas acts, and religious belief is taken.

The innate cognitive characteristics

What the doctrine of innatism says is that the human is not a blank tape on which any song can be recorded. This innatism is not similar to that of Plato regarding the human soul's awareness of goodness. According to Plato the knowledge of goodness and the ideas of good and right, exist in the human soul from the very beginning, and for this reason, education, for Plato, was considered as reminiscence or reminding. On the contrary, what the principle or doctrine of nature says is that at the time of birth one does not possess perceptual knowledge, but on the other hand, the basic principles of human thinking are not learnt. Saying that the basic principles are not acquired does not mean that they are intrinsic, (in a way in which Kant and Plato believe). The individual does not understand these basic principles from the very beginning, they are not achieved through reasoning, or through experiences, either. Instead, according to this doctrine, the mind has such a structure that when a set of primary concepts comes from outside into the mind, it naturally perceives a relation between them. These kinds of relations range between theoretical and practical judgments. The self-evident judgment that 'whole is bigger than part', for instance, emerges just from the imagination of concepts 'whole' and 'part'. One comes to the arithmetical formulae, $2 < 4$, or $2+2=4$ as being absolutely true for all times and places, after arriving at the ideas of numbers 2,4 and so on. Of course one learns the idea of numbers from society. So, according to this view, the individual learns simple concepts, which are the

primary elements of thought, from the society, but his or her mind makes a relation between those concepts naturally, and achieves a conclusion which is manifested as a practical or a theoretical judgment. These kinds of judgments are the basic principles of human thinking. These are those to which we refer as self-evident principles. In this sense when we say that a proposition is self-evident it means that there is something innate in us which forces us to believe that the proposition is true. The principles thus known are the principles upon which human logic has been established.

It is worth mentioning here that concerning the matter of human knowledge, contemporary Shiite thinkers, including Allamah and Mutahhari, are deeply influenced by one of the most influential Islamic philosophers namely Sadrad-Din Shirazi (sometimes referred to as Molla Sadra), (d. 1640), who gave an Islamic type of 'existentialist' philosophy formally called '*asalat al-wujud*'. According to him, for the human mind to achieve knowledge of physical objects which are existentially independent from our mind, it needs a kind of intermediary which is their representations. He says, "A treatise on the theory that the knowledge of these objects whose existences are absent from us is possible only through the intermediary of the representations of these objects in us." (*Kitab al-Asfar*, Journey I, Part 10, vol. III, p: 280). By the phrase 'absent from us' he means that physical objects are entirely independent from our mind and unaffected by our mental act of knowing. He points to these physical objects as 'absent objects'. In contrast, the representations of these objects which work as necessary intermediaries, are referred to as 'present objects', the objects to understand which mind does not need a further intermediary. It implies that the external objects differ from their representations, and while the external objects are not, in a true sense, present to us, their representations are. It might be compatible with Russell's saying that, "We have seen that, even if physical objects do have an independent existence, they must differ very widely from sense-data, and can only have a correspondence with sense-data in the same sort of way in which a catalogue has correspondence with the things catalogued" (1964, pp: 37-38).

The point is that according to Shirazi, the human mind does not have these representations from the beginning; instead, they are the outcome of experiences and interactions with the external world.

The Shiite Innatism: A kind of structuralism

To show how this innatism is different from those of Kant and Plato I shall compare this theory with some contemporary theories

about language and the innate endowment in language acquisition which I think (because of their emphasis on the innate structure instead of innate knowledge or information) to a large extent are similar to what Shiite contemporary philosophers hold in their innatism.

There are a variety of formulations about the information children bring to the language-learning situation. D. McNeill (1966, p: 33, Figure 8-1) assumes that the child has available the universal definitions of fundamental grammatical relations such as 'subject of,' 'object of,' etc., and a universal hierarchy of syntactic categories. But the most explicit attempt to characterize the general nature of the innate contribution to language learning is found in N. Chomsky (1965). He says: "A child who is capable of language learning must have

- (i) a technique for representing input signals
- (ii) a way of representing structural information about these signals
- (iii) some initial delimitation of a class of possible hypotheses about language structure
- (iv) a method for determining what each such hypothesis implies with respect to each sentence
- (v) a method for selecting one of the (presumably, infinitely many) hypotheses that are allowed by (iii) and are compatible with the given primary linguistic data."(1965, p: 30).

In brief, for Chomsky, the child must have five distinct types of techniques available to him/her if he/she is to be able to learn the grammar underlying the corpus of utterances to which he/she is exposed. These techniques are assumed to be the grammatical structure which is innate for the child.

Evidently, Noam Chomsky's doctrine concerning the idea of innatism is restricted to the language faculty. That is, according to him, humans possess a distinct language faculty which is involved in the acquisition and use of natural language, so that the most of our linguistic knowledge is embodied in the structure of the language faculty. To explain this I should say that there are other faculties which have innate constituent structures, manifesting information about the world. For instance, concerning the faculty of vision, Peter Carruthers (1992) believes that perceiving the world three-dimensionally is innate to us. He says, "It has been shown that three-dimensional vision is innate in at least some other species. In particular, new-born chicks will stay away from a visual cliff, despite having had no previous visual experience. Considerations of

simplicity then suggest that three-dimensionality is innate to human vision also" (p: 92). This idea has been supported by the development of computational theories of vision. It has become obvious that for constructing a computer model to decipher the detail of the visual sense from the two-dimensional information there should be a rich of assumptions available; the assumptions which visual faculty innately has. One of these assumptions is three-dimensionality .

In 'Linguistics and Philosophy' Chomsky says that study of the nature of language, the way in which language is used, and the basis for its acquisition 'can clarify and in part substantiate certain conclusions about human knowledge that relate directly to classical issues in the philosophy of mind' (Chomsky, 1975b, p: 196). The results of studying language (for example his own doctrine on the nature of language), according to him, support the conclusion that the role of intrinsic organization is very great in perception. It also supports a view of language and mind that has a distinctly rationalist flavor, and is in conflict with the empiricist view which Chomsky holds cannot give an adequate explanation of language learning. According to Thomas E. Wren (1991, p: 14), the results are not confined only to human cognitive characteristics, but the result of Chomsky's theory goes beyond the cognitive sphere. Chomsky's approach is not only concerned with the sphere of human cognitive characteristics, but also with human emotions and inclinations including moral motivations. This means that moral motivations and inclination towards good things, based on Chomsky's view, should be regarded more as a structure than as a choice. Therefore, the innatism upon which mind has such a structure that it naturally perceives the relation between the simple ideas and concepts is similar to Chomsky's view that what is innate is not some kind of knowledge or information, but rather some kinds of structure which mind has innately, or some sort of formula which mind follows innately.

Chomsky is for the most part concerned with the language faculty, but the Shiite innatism, like that of Descartes and Leibniz, is not

1 - Indeed, one of the basic problems that arises in the construction of the computer vision system and has received a great deal of attention recently is the problem of how we recover the three-dimensional structure of moving objects, (see Christopher Brown, 1988, Vols. 1 & 2), and (A. Blake and T. Troscianko, 1990). It has been argued for instance by Brown (1988, vol. 1. p: 119), that in constructing a computer vision system 'we assume that there should exist modules that compute three-dimensional parameters from specific cues, such as shading, motion, stereo, contours, and texture".

limited to only one sphere of human activity. Nevertheless, Chomsky's doctrine concerning the nature of language acquisition has made great contribution to the idea of innatism in general, so that it can be considered as providing a further development of the doctrine of innate ideas (see Chomsky, 1975a, pp: 128-131).

The innate emotional characteristics

According to the idea of innatism, humans have innate positive inclinations towards some things, and negative inclinations towards some others. Truth telling, keeping promises, being interested in beauty, are some of those things towards which all human beings incline by nature, and on the other hand, hatred of lying, for instance, is one of those negative inclinations which all humans have. Consequently humans have a shared nature upon which they have the same emotional view towards certain actions, such as truth-telling and keeping promises. These inclinations and wants are manifested in natural or innate humans' decision making, when they are going to decide to do something, or to choose something. Since, as I said earlier, natural or innate humans are dominant by their reason, they can be referred to here as rational people. In these cases, based on innatism, rational people use those invariable principles which are manifestations of the invariable innate inclinations of humans. Thus, reason in both practical and theoretical spheres uses the fundamental principles which are natural or innate to humans.

Given that the inclinations and judgments that constitute our fundamental practical and theoretical principles are universal, how does it come about that people do not always follow them? Rational people, for Shiite scholars, as rational people, do follow them. Indeed in so far as they are doing rationally, they are declared to be those that are not dominated by delusions and superstitions, and this in turn means that in assessing actions as good or bad, right or wrong, people in similar circumstances make the same judgments, if they are not dominated by delusions and superstitions. The phrase 'if they are not dominated by delusions and superstitions', means that human beings in assessing actions as good or bad are alike in so far as they use only their reason, or if something which is not rational does not overcome them, or if reason is not dominated by delusions and superstitions. This, in turn, means that reason can be dominated by non-rational desires or inclinations, in some circumstances or in some particular

domains. This shows that reason is not an absolute entity, rather it may have some limitations.

C- The connection between reason and religion

Going back to the question I posed concerning what the innatist conception of reason can do for religious education to be more defensible, in terms of its being rational and researchable, I will explain 1-the innate human nature as the shared root for both religion and reason, and 2-the limitations of reason and how religion can compensate it.

Innate human nature: the root of reason and religion

According to Shiite innatism, humans have been endowed with a special sort of nature which can be called the divine essence of humans. This divine essence shows itself in both cognitive and emotional aspects. All fundamental principles (which are self-evident) upon which rational people, in both practical and theoretical aspects, reason are attributed to this divine aspect. Following the truth is a divine and natural inclination which originally comes from the divine aspect of human nature. Reasoning and demanding reasons (which is the way through which one can follow the truth) are actions which emerge from the divine aspect of human nature. Reason, in this view, is a faculty that employs the invariable natural inclinations, and perceptions (which, as I noted above, could be seen as the fundamental principles for reason) to discover what the truth is, and to help one to do good actions. These guiding principles are indeed rational values that mostly have the procedural function, though it does not mean that they are not substantive. They belong to both theoretical and practical spheres. In the theoretical sphere reason has principles such as the law of non-contradiction, and the principle of causality. And in the practical sphere reason has invariable judgments about certain practices, like truth telling, and keeping promises, which play the role of criteria. Allamah (al-Mizan, vol. 13, p: 92) and (1975b, pp: 96-7) says that natural or innate humans are those who are not subordinated by irrational wants and passions. Rather they are inclined to follow the truth; they are interested to discover what the truth is. In order to reach the truth, natural humans use their own reason which is capable of distinguishing good and bad, right and wrong actions. This implies that 'virtue is nothing but conformity to reason'. And this strong and intrinsic link between virtues and reason is because of their having the same root, namely the divine aspect of human.

This essential link between reason and virtues, bring us to see the connection between reason and religion, just like the connection between reason and morality. Actualizing these virtues in individuals is a main task of divine religions which is done through religious education. For instance, when we say that the aim of Islamic education is upbringing the natural human, or developing the human nature, it means that the positive inclinations towards virtues which emerge from the divine aspect of human is to be developed. In the same way, reason is going to actualize the other manifestations of this divine aspect of human nature, namely innate rational principles and virtues. This is done through the rational education which some times is manifested in moral education or normative ethics. So reason and religion go in the same direction.

Furthermore, as I said, philosophy, as one of the main manifestations of reason, and religion are searching for the truth. The difference is in the kind of language which they apply. While the language and the concepts which are used by philosophers are technical, those of religious scholars are simple and common. For this reason the challenge between the philosophical attitude and the religious or theological attitude has been seen as a mistake. That is, there can be a compatibility between philosophy and theology, and following this, between reason and religion.

Religion and Reason's limitations

In addition to the tasks of upbringing the human nature and actualizing the divine virtues, religion is due to help reason to overcome its limitations. Although reason is the distinctive characteristic of human beings, and the only basis upon which human beings are superior over other animals, but it is not an absolute entity, rather in some circumstances or in some particular domain it can be dominated by non-rational desires or inclinations. So reason cannot be fully helpful for one to achieve the best sort of life. So we need some thing to compensate this limitation. Some may believe that this limitation should be seen in individual reason and not collective reason. So the only way, for them, to fix this deficiency is appealing to collective reason, the reasons of all or the majority. But, according to Allamah's view, if individual reason basically is not able to achieve truth and the best way of life, then this will be the case for all others' reasons; if this deficiency is related to the nature of reason then the collective reason is deficient too, though it may do the job better. Therefore, something else needs to be found to compensate for this limitation. What Allamah suggests to compensate is religion.

In addition, not only human nature but also reason is not enough for one to achieve the best possible life. According to Allamah's view, which under the title of "eatibar-e estekhdam" he refers to, humans naturally desire to get only their own benefit as much as possible, and to do that they use their reason. If we see this natural inclination as one of the main factor responsible for widespread disagreements which usually appear as wars which threaten all social life, then we can come to the conclusion that human nature, and also human reason are the basis of these kinds of behavior. These disagreements have to be dismissed, and the possibility of war and any harmful conflict must be decreased if humans are to achieve the good life. But those factors which are the causes of conflicts between people cannot be the ones that can solve the problems. For Allamah, the only way through which we can establish the social rules upon which humans can come into the good life in which all people will get their rights, and are going to be developed perfectly, is the way of God, the way of revelation. What appealing to the way of God, or to revelation brings to the scene is a sense of divine commitment and responsibility for others, a belief in seeing all people as the servants of God, and intrinsically worthy of respect. This divine belief is not irrational or a-rational, but, along with its most powerful motivation towards choosing the best way of life, it is rational because, in addition to having the same root as reason has, it is supported by reason and rational arguments.

Conclusion

For RE to be accepted as a reasonable subject matter it should be researchable for all. This assumes that it needs to be supported by reason. But there are many different conceptions of reason. Some of them may and some other may not be the good foundation for supporting RE to be objectively a defensible subject matter. A suitable theory of reason here is one based on which reason has public and universal character, and its principles or values are mostly procedural. Reason here has some deficiencies in particular domains and circumstances that can only be compensated by appealing to religion; a religion while compatible with reason is supported by God revelation. I argued that the Shiite innatism with its emphasis on the structural nature of human divine inclinations, is a good base for providing a theory of reason upon which reason, while having an important role in human life, has some limitations that can only be compensated by appealing to divine aspect of life and the path of God,

namely religion. So we can conclude that a true religious belief, which is supported by reason, as Shiite belief seems to be, can be a reasonable base for making a religious education system.

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