

EXPLAINING TWO COMMON VIEWS ON THE RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE

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ABSTRACT

In this article, with a distinction between religion and religious knowledge, it is said that religion, unlike religious knowledge, is fixed, sacred and free from any defects, because it has a divine origin. But religious knowledge, like other types of human knowledge, is a mixture of right and wrong or true and false. Therefore, religion cannot be renewed, but religious knowledge is always being understood through continuous communication with other types of human knowledge. of course, this does not mean denying some of the eternal religious truths, but simply means that the mystical and general understanding of religious truths and teachings may change and evolve during time and under the influence of other types of human knowledge.

This article also explains the two main views on religious knowledge. One of them believes in the general not partial change and evolution of the religious knowledge and claims the comprehensive transformation of all components of religious knowledge in general. But the other believes in limited and restricted change and evolution for religious knowledge and that such an understanding is not compatible with the fixed, eternal and unchangeable truths of religion!

It has also been said that the political and authoritarian injunctions of the Shari'a are variable, but the non-political injunctions of the Shari'a are fixed.

Keywords: Religion, Religious Knowledge, Human Knowledge, Religious Rethinking

INTRODUCTION

Before entering the main subject of article, it is necessary to explain the concepts of "religion", "religious knowledge", "reconstruction" and "rethinking"; because many fruitless and useless disputes are due to misunderstanding or lack of clear and distinct understanding of the concepts and terms mentioned. At the beginning of the present century, many positivists thought that many, if not all, of philosophical and religious issues were fundamentally unscientific, false, or pseudo-problematic, arising from the enchantment of language. Wittgenstein, for example, thought that because "the existence of a philosophical problem is a sign of misunderstanding the logic of the language" or "if the possibility of misunderstanding were ruled out, philosophy would not exist", thus the solution to the philosophical problem is to discover how and why the logic of language has been misunderstood" (Hart, 1997).

Therefore, we say that although "religion" has different meanings and examples, in a way that according to some widespread traditions, it even includes non-theistic religions and sects. For example, according to Schleiermacher, religion means "feeling of absolute reliance" and according to William James, it means "the enthusiastic sense of seeing" (Eliade, 1996). But what we mean by religion in this article is only the monotheistic or Abrahamic

religions, which include Judaism, Christianity and Islam, respectively; that is, religions in which the question is oriented to receiving revelation and receiving the divine message through the prophets and believing in the survival and immortality of their respective Shari'a. Thus, in a nutshell, religion, in the general sense, includes a set of beliefs, morality, laws, and regulations governing the affairs of human society and the upbringing of human beings. But, of course, in the language of the Qur'an, the presentation of religion is only in the dignity of the divine essence and usually includes ordinances that are revealed only from God and through the Prophet, and obedience to its commands also provides human happiness in this world and the hereafter.

Of course, some have considered this kind of definition of religion as a view from "God's perspective on man" or a superhuman and inhuman reading of religion, according to which religion is "a collection of occult knowledge and injunctions above human intellect; it has come to human beings so that human beings know this knowledge and follow the injunctions." On the contrary, according to the "human reading of religion" or looking from "man's perspective to God", the religion is a kind of human spiritual behavior or man's understanding of religion and religiosity based on the human requirements (Shabestari, 1996).

However, "religious knowledge" also refers to the truths discovered in religious texts, it does not include all the issues that are involved in understanding the Shari'a (Soroush, 2000). In other words, religious knowledge is a knowledge that man acquires through religion and about religion, and religion has two roles in its realization: it is both the subject of human knowledge and the inspiration of human knowledge about existence, man and the world (Rabbani, 1999).

Finally, about the two key terms of this article, "religious reconstruction" and "rethinking of religious knowledge." There are two different opinions in this regard: On the one hand, at least according to Muslims, due to the stability of religion and the permanence of religious knowledge, the possibility of reconstruction of religion and Sharia is ruled out, but the rethinking of religious knowledge is possible (Tehran, 2004). Because if one accepts the reconstruction of religion, we cannot believe in the stability of religious concepts, while the religious rethinking that is obtained by repeated reference to religious teachings is compatible with the stability of religious teachings. In other words, if we believe in the reconstruction of religious knowledge, then "religion and revelation is ultimately an individual or historical experience that, like other human experiences, occurs in the life of the individual or society and then is interpreted in the form of Human concepts and theories" (Javadi, 1993). But on the other hand, others consider the Shari'a to be as silent as nature. They believe that because the answers of the Shari'a are as much as our questions, and consequently, its personality will be revealed to us little by little, so its personality can be reconstructed continuously (Soroush, 2000). Of course, they emphasize that: "Religion does not need to be reconstructed and completed; religious knowledge, which is a human and imperfect knowledge, needs to be reconstructed".

RELIGION AND RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE: SOME DIFFERENCES

In general, epistemology has two types: General epistemology that explores the principle of knowledge. Special or applied epistemology, which is posterior and is preceded by other types of knowledge and analyzes them. Therefore, religious epistemology, as one applied epistemology, explores religious knowledge and not religion itself. In other words, it looks at what is happening in the field of religious knowledge from the outside; its object is not faith or religious belief, but its object is only religious knowledge, which is usually achieved by scholars and thinkers.

Thus, in short, "epistemology" (as a second order knowledge) is an art that examines the various branches of human knowledge after their birth and development, and with their collective and historical identities. "Religious epistemology is preceded by religious knowledge, and by the existence of believing scholars and strives to understand methodically the Quran and tradition" (Soroush, 2000).

Of course, some believe that the definition of religious knowledge as human knowledge (which is doomed to human judgments) is a kind *petitio principii*; because religious knowledge (which is a human knowledge) is defined as human knowledge.

It has also been said, "The Prophet of Islam is the last Prophet and his Shari'a is the last Shari'a, but there is no last jurist or last commentator." The last religion has come, but the last understanding of religion has not yet come. One day the religion is perfected, but when is perfected the understanding of religion? On such a day, not only religious knowledge but also other human knowledge will inevitably be perfected" (Soroush, 2000).

Moreover, religious knowledge is a historical knowledge, has a collective, impure and imperfect identity and involves mistakes and in reality and epistemologically, is human knowledge and doomed to human judgments, to the power of reason, and human characteristics, such as being ambitious, jealous, righteous, and defeating rival.

STABILITY OF RELIGION AND ALTERATION OF RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE

As mentioned in the previous discussions, there is no doubt that religion is other than religious knowledge, and there is no doubt that religion, at least in the eyes of believers, is fixed, while our knowledge of religion may be influenced by other human knowledge and undergo changes over time. But are all the components of religious knowledge constantly changing and evolving under the influence of extra-religious knowledge, so that "there is no part of religious knowledge that is not enclosed and confined to non-religious human knowledge (at different levels)" (Soroush, 2000). "Religious knowledge in any person and in any age is contracted and expanded by the contraction and expansion of the collection of human knowledge, and wherever there is a change, it will change everywhere". "There is no understanding of the Quran and tradition (we have said this as a hypothesis) that is not documented by external understanding. This documentation includes stability and change. Therefore, if that understanding remains constant, its stability is due to the stability of the external view, and if it changes, its change is also due to the external change". Finally, this transformation of understanding includes both the constants of religious knowledge and its stable things, and the constant and stable are not obtained before the understanding of religion, but are born after it, in other words, a today's perspicuous verse may be ambiguous tomorrow.

But one of the questions that arises here is whether this theory can be refuted in Dr. Soroush's view or not. In response to this question, he says: "In refuting empirical claims, empirical observations are used, and in refuting epistemological claims, epistemological observations The way to refute our theory is for you to show an example that despite the change in the external view has remained stable, or has changed despite the stability of the external view". Then, in response to the objections like show the connection between the "quantum of light and *ijtihad*": "He says that you show an example that is devoid of relation, not an example whose connection has not yet been discovered".

Of course, the implication of his argument is that if there is a case that confirms irrelevance, then it is said that its connection with other types of human knowledge has not been discovered yet, not that it is irrelevant, and this means the claim is irrefutable!

Opponents argue that it is never the case that all components of religious knowledge are constantly changing and exchanging with other types of human knowledge because: "religious knowledge is primarily due to the manifestations of words and expressions of the law-giver, and prior knowledge has no relevance in the understanding of words, and should not have any relevance. What can be acknowledged is that reliance on the meaning of the appearance of the word has its own presupposition, and that is that the meaning of this appearance are possible" (Larijani, 1991).

Now the question arises, what are the main foundations of Dr. Soroush? Why does he claim that: "Continuous dialogue between various types of human knowledge (including religious knowledge) and their response to the resulting developments, is something that can be confirmed both logically and inductively" (Soroush, 2000). His foundations seem to be of two kinds: logical and inductive. But his logical reason, which he bases it on Carl Hempel's "paradox of affirmation," is that because "every leaf is green," it is equivalent to "every non-green is non-leaf," according to the contraposition. So the green leaves confirm that the cows are yellow and the flowers are yellow and the pigeons are white and the ravens are black and vice versa, the red flowers confirm that the leaves are green. He then concludes that: "The propositions which are confirmed or verified in the various empirical sciences are covertly linked, and their strengths and weaknesses affect each other, and a claim that is confirmed in a science, it ultimately serves other sciences". Finally, he concludes that: "In short, what we understand is either refutes or confirms our past teachings, or if it is seemingly neutral to them, in any case affects our previous teachings and makes them stronger or weaker or elevates us to a higher level of understanding (in avoiding contradiction)".

But in his opposition and in his reference to the paradox of confirmation, it has been affirmed that the paradoxical confirmations, even if they are correct, are completely foreign to the claims of *contraction and expansion*; (firstly) because of their weakness, as a method of research, no researcher seeks such confirmations to verify or confirm his theory. Secondly, paradoxical confirmations, if true, consider the occurrence of any event, and the realization of any situation or object as evidence for confirming a universal proposition such as "every leaf is green" (and this is the secret of their uselessness). That is, except for leaves and green things, everything will be an extension of the proposition "every non-green is non-leaf" and thus confirms the proposition of "every leaf is green". While this issue contradicts the claim of *contraction and expansion*, which seeks to prove the fact that in order for religious knowledge to be fertile, one must be aware of the results of contemporaneous sciences; this has not something to do with the connection of any event (in the world) to (non-religious) knowledge and its possible confirmation (Larijani, 1991).

In addition, the question may be raised that the logical argument only proves the refutation and verification (and conformational) relationship between perceptions and does not prove the deepening of meanings, and the change in the geometry of longitudinal and evolving concepts or perceptions. Unless the deepening of the meanings is a result of this verification and refutation and not a third thing during verification and refutation. In addition, if instead of "green" one of the non-green colors and instead of "leaf", we put things that are not leaves, for example "light", we will have propositions that seem strange, such as: every black is light, every white is a germ etc. (Karimi, 1990). Of course, in defending such restrictions, he considered the general relation of teachings through epistemology, while his "great claim" is the connection between all the categorical propositions with their contrapositions in general (Ghaffari, 1989).

Moreover, are categorical propositions always equivalent with their contrapositions, in the view of logicians? Because Dr. Soroush believes that "A is B" is always equivalent to "Non-B is non-A" (Soroush, 2000).

In answer to this question, Khajeh Tusi says in "Asas al-Iqtibas": "The affirmative universal proposition in modalities is of two classes: the first class is any proposition in which there was a lasting validity or a necessity by nature or condition of description; these propositions have contrapositions ... Their example is every man is animal necessarily, its conversion is as follows: everything that is not animal is not man necessarily The second class is the rest of the inherent and descriptive modalities; they have not contraposition. So refuting the predicate does not imply necessarily refuting the subject, because it cannot be said that everything that is not laughing is not human, but some of what is laughing is necessarily human" (Khajeh, 1982). That is to say, the proposition "every man is laughing" is true, but its contraposition, that is, "every non-laughing is non-man" is not true. It has also been said that the rule of the simple conversion [and consequently its appendages] is not considered a logical rule, because it is violated by some examples: for example, the proposition "every Isfahani living in the Arctic is Iranian" is true, but its simple conversion [as well as its contraposition], that is, the proposition "some Iranians are Isfahani living in the Arctic", is not proven (Movahed, 1987).

But on the issue that the equivalence of A with B "requires that the negation of one be equivalent to the negation of the other, the affirmation of one be equivalent to the affirmation of another, and the confirmation of one be equivalent to the confirmation of another" (Soroush, 2000), we can say that the relation between the proposition and its conversion – whether it is contraposition or simple conversion - is that the conversed proposition is true if the proposition is true, this is not the case about its falsity. Because the proposition may be false, but its conversion is true, like the proposition "no animal is man" which is false, but its contraposition "some non-man is not non-animal" is true and (Ghaffari, 1989).

But his foundation in induction is also a reference to a pure example (individual by itself). He says: "Of course, I did not rely on induction at all, because induction is when you ask for help from many examples to strengthen your judgment, but I have not used many examples at all," but, "If I saw someone like Mr. Tabatabai who says that because the scientific theory of meteors has changed, the verse about meteors must be interpreted in a different way, I think that I have reached a pure example of interpretation. [Because] there is no feature in this verse and in that scientific theory that has led the commentator to that view. [Rather] this is true in all the same cases, and the pure individual has no other meaning than this" (Soroush, 2000).

But in critique of his argument of the individual by-itself, it is said that according to this argument, "whatever is true of the natural individual by-itself (or its pure example) is true of the whole of nature." But the question that now arises is that even if we find a religious understanding that is related to all types of human knowledge, how we can know that this "relation with all types of human knowledge" is one of the attributes of the essence of religious understanding and is not due to other accidents and phenomena. For example, the evolution of Sheikh Tusi's understanding can be documented for a variety of reasons (such as error and other intentions) and does not necessarily reveal that the "essence of knowledge" and the "essence of understanding" qua knowledge and understanding has required such an evolution (Larijani, 1993).

In addition, the question arises as to whether we can claim to have reached the individual by-itself in the mentally posited knowledge. Because it may be said that the mentally posited knowledge such as interpretation and religious knowledge, finding the individual by-itself is essentially meaningless. An implication of introducing a "pure interpretive example" as an individual by-itself in the hermeneutics is to show the criteria of pure interpretation.

In addition, the critique of this theory states that its proponent claims that religion (for believers) is perfect, sacred and heavenly, etc., but religious knowledge (human

understanding of religion) is incomplete, earthly, human and changeable. While "understanding the Shari'a" like understanding the principle of the necessity of religion and its revelation, and its pure, complete, fixed perception and its righteousness like "understanding the Shari'a" [meaning religious knowledge], like understanding the seven heavens, understanding the meteor should be human, fluid and vulnerable to decay. However, it can never be said that religion itself is fixed and absolute, but human understanding of religion is subject to the evolution. Because the very statement that "religion is fixed and absolute" is also one of the human understandings and like any other human understanding is not immune from the possibility of decline (Javadi, 1993).

In addition, if someone claims that no definite knowledge is available to human beings, then one should not have a definite and fixed knowledge of the contents of this proposition; it is clear that by invalidating the contents of the said proposition, its contradiction, that is, the particular affirmative proposition: "Some knowledge is definite," is proven. For example, the evolution of inductive sciences and scientific hypotheses have not the slightest effect on the Shari'a laws, and the changes that occur in the scope of their subjects and instances not only do not change the laws but also provide a fixed scope for the governing laws. In other words, the implication of this view is that "religion and revelation is ultimately an individual and historical experience that occurs in the life of the individual and society like other human experiences and is then interpreted in the form of human concepts and theories".

Of course, the proponent of the theory of contraction and expansion believes that it is not possible to conclude from the stability of some propositions and judgments that our understanding of those fixed judgments has also remained constant; because the stability of affirmation is one thing and the stability of understanding is another. For example, $5 \times 3 = 15$ remains the same, while mathematicians' understanding of multiplication and number is not the same as their predecessors; for instance, that is analytic or syntactic will change its meaning, although the product of multiplication 3 and 5 will still remain 15 (Soroush, 2000).

Moreover, the epistemologist never claims that everything is changing (which is paradoxical). He can at most claim that all first-order knowledge is in evolution (which has no logical flaws)". In simpler terms, the meaning of "all understandings are evolving" is first-order understandings, and does not include itself, which is a second-order knowledge, as if one were to watch the sea and say, "The water of the sea is in turmoil".

Of course, in the critique of this argument, which is based on the separation of first-order knowledge from second-order knowledge, it is said that since according to the owner of the theory of contraction and expansion, the evolution of understandings is due to their human nature, the epistemologist's understanding, which observes the scientific endeavors of scholars from the outside, is itself a human understanding and, consequently, like other types of human knowledge, it will be subject to change (Vaezi, 1997).

In addition, some proponents of contraction and expansion theory say that the evolution of epistemological domains has nothing to do with the stability of its components. For example, the general theory of electrons has been constantly evolving throughout its generation, but the belief that electron is the primary unit of electrical charge and indivisible into smaller units is fixed and maintained. In addition, the transformation is primarily current in the descriptive structures of epistemological fields and the transformations of other strata, if realized, will be only due to them (Soroush, 2000).

But it seems that not only here is no distinction made between the mentally posited knowledge, of which religious knowledge is one, and the real knowledge in which the example is given, but the analogy is the basis of the argument.

Finally, it has been said that according to Islamic thinkers such as Allameh Tabatabai, Motahari, Seyyed Mohammad Baqir Sadr, Mohammad Abduh, Mawdudi and Mohammad

Qutb, "the human life has two fixed and changeable aspects: the eternal rules (of Shari'a) are dedicated to the fixed aspects of human life, because it is only in these cases that it is possible to make the eternal rule. In other cases, there is no eternal rule, because the making of such a rule is not possible for these cases (impossibility of the making in the station of subsistence is meant)" (Shabestari, 1996).

But the critique of this view also states that "it cannot be inferred from a certain rule whether that rule is related to a fixed issue or not, and this knowledge is not related to the science of jurisprudence or the science of principles of Islamic jurisprudence" and "the jurist who does not know the human world, does not know which rule is eternal and which one is temporary and changeable; he does not know what is the main rule and what is secondary. "He also does not know what a system the set of rules constitutes and what its purposes are and how it should be used." Of course, "it does not mean that the jurist of this age should be a specialist in sociology, psychology or other sciences, [but] it means that the jurist of this age should pay attention to the researches of these sciences in order to obtain general theories about man and various aspects of his life".

It goes without saying that some believe that the theory of the theoretical contraction and expansion of the Shari'a, which is presented on the relation of religious knowledge to other types of human knowledge, can have two theses: the "weak thesis" according to which "no understanding of the Shari'a is not and has not been achieved for a scholar without a relation to the "external teachings, without reference to any human knowledge and inconsistent with it." The "strong thesis" according to which (a) all religious understandings are changing. (b) The secret of this change is the relationship that exists between religious knowledge and other types of human knowledge, so that any change in religious knowledge is due to a change in external human knowledge. (c) The implication of the above explanation is that in order to fertilize religious knowledge, one should accumulate as much human teachings as possible, and therefore even mujtahids should know cosmological theories in jurisprudential rules, because they are one of the unlikely foundations of their ijihad. He then concludes that the weak thesis is acceptable and without objection, while the strong thesis is a point of contention and unacceptable, because: 1) The content of the weak thesis is to refer the religious teachings to the external affirmations and perceptions of a particular channel, while in the strong thesis, any intra-religious knowledge refers to all extra-religious knowledge. 2) The weak thesis, unlike the strong one, does not claim the "evolution of all religious knowledge." 3) Weak thesis never proposes the strong thesis's suggestion (Larijani, 1993).

CONCLUSION

When we come to religious rethinking, the question immediately arises whether religion is not eternal and fixed, at least according to the claims of Muslims. Why talking about religious rethinking that requires a kind of renewal and change of religious positions? In answer to this question, we can say that yes, the religious principles and foundations are eternal and for all time, but what changes is our understanding of these principles and foundations. Of course, this understanding itself must be methodical and within the framework of logical, interpretative, jurisprudential and principal rules and foundations. It is not permissible to have any tasteful and undisciplined understanding of religious texts and claims.

Therefore, despite acknowledging the legitimacy and authority of religion, it must be said that our understanding and knowledge, like any other human understanding and knowledge, is always interacting with other human knowledge. In other words, religious knowledge, like other types of human knowledge, is shaped and preceded by time and place,

because how can knowledge be human, but, unlike other human knowledge, free and independent of human requirements, including time and place constraints.

Of course, this does not mean that religion is not fixed and eternal, or that the original truths of religion are denied, transgressed or invalidated during the time. This means that our understanding of religious truths, like other teachings, constantly accepts human requirements, including communication and exchange with other teachings; because religious knowledge is no exception to other human knowledge, we cannot claim that some human knowledge is preceded by human requirements, but others are devoid of such requirements. Therefore, this claim means a change in religious variables or our understanding of religious teachings, which, due to being human, are constantly renewing, evolving and interacting with other human teachings, and consequently, will not be free from error.

Therefore, in short, we can say that no understanding of the Shari'a has been achieved and will not be achieved to a scholar without reference to any human knowledge and inconsistent with it. Of course, this does not mean that all religious understandings are changing, and that any change in religious knowledge is due to a change in external knowledge, and that any change in human knowledge is definitely associated with a change in religious knowledge.

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