Rationalism and Scripturalism in Shīʿī Islam: A Comparative Study of the Views of al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq and al-Shaykh al-Mufīd

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Abstract

With the commencement of the occultation of the Twelfth Imam (a), a period of perplexity (*ḥayrah*) begins in the Shīʿī community: on the one hand, the Shīʿī community is faced with questions from within, and, on the other hand, the Shīʿīs are confronted with doubts and questions from other sects and schools, especially the Zaydīs and the Muʿtazila. It was in this intellectual milieu that the two schools of Qom and Baghdad shaped the two distinct Shīʿī doctrinal systems based on scripturalism and rationalism. The crises of the period of perplexity led al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq and al-Shaykh al-Mufīd to employ their innovative thinking in their respective scripturalist and rationalist approaches so as to bring the Shīʿī community out of this plight. The present article seeks to carry out a comparative study of the place of intellect in the doctrinal systems of the rationalist school of Baghdad and the scripturalist school of Qom, as well as the innovations brought about by al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq and al-Shaykh al-Mufīd in presenting the role of reason. In examining this question, an attempt will be made to show that, due to the guiding teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt (a), the place of reason in Shīʿī doctrines and the categorization of the two schools of Qom and Baghdad into scripturalist and rationalist

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in the era of the Infallible's occultation did not result in a deep fissure, as witnessed between the Ashʿarī and Muʿtazilī theological schools. After the commencement of the age of occultation and the needs of Shīʿī communities in this era, al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq and al-Shaykh al-Mufīd, with their novel approaches in hadith studies and theology, elevated the role of reason in Shīʿī teachings. The effects of this were subsequently transferred from ḥadīth studies to theology and thereafter to jurisprudence and legal theory, and reason became the fourth principle in jurisprudence.

Rationalism and Scripturalism in Shīʿī Islam:
A Comparative Study of the Views of al-
Shaykh al-Ṣadūq and al-Shaykh al-Mufīd

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Introduction

One of the most important issues that has long challenged the scholars and academics of the Islamic world is the discussion pertaining to reason and scripture, which has led to the rise of several trends among Shīʿīs and Sunnis. In this regard, it should be noted that due to the original and pure teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt (a), the discourse on reason and scripture in the Shīʿī world differs significantly from that of the Sunnīs. In the Shīʿī world, during the first three centuries, due to the presence of the infallible Imams, we do not see a deep rift on the issue of reason and scripture, but after the beginning of the period of occultation, Shīʿī communities were faced with the crisis of the Imam's absence, and on the other hand, waves of novel ideas entered the Islamic world from different cultures, and the Shīʿī community had to answer the doubts and questions they raised. It was during this period that theology grew into a formal discipline, and its influence became apparent in other Shīʿī sciences, especially jurisprudence. The most important debate in this period was the place of reason in the Shīʿī intellectual system, which manifested itself in the form of the two trends of rationalism and scripturalism in the two schools of Baghdad and Qom respectively.

In connection with the scripturalist approach which was founded in Qom, one of the influential and important figures was that of al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq, who is known as the last leading luminary of the early school of Qom. In contrast, the school of Baghdad, with scholars such as al-Nawbakhtī, al-Shaykh al-Mufīd, and Sayyid Murtaḍā, had a differing view on the place of reason in the Shīʿī epistemological system. The present study seeks to carry out a comparative study to examine the place of reason in the teachings of the rationalist school of Baghdad and the scripturalist school of Qom in order to determine the novel contributions of al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq and al-Shaykh al-Mufīd on the role of reason in Shīʿī teachings during the age of occultation. We will show that unlike

with the Ahl al-Sunnah, the place of reason in Shīʿī teachings has not gone to extremes. The initial answer to the present question is that the place of reason in Shīʿī teachings and the categorization of the two schools of Qom and Baghdad into scripturalist and rationalist after the era of the occultation of the Infallible (a) did not result in any major rift as witnessed among the Sunnī theological schools of the Ashāʿira and the Muʿtazila. After the commencement of the age of occultation and due to the needs of Shīʿī societies that were felt in this era, al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq and al-Shaykh al-Mufīd, with their novel approaches in ḥadīth studies and theology, expanded the role of reason in Shīʿī teachings. The effects of this were subsequently transferred from ḥadīth studies to theology and thereafter to jurisprudence and legal theory, and reason became the fourth evidence in jurisprudence.

1. Concepts

Intellect (*ʿaql*) has been defined in various ways. Lexicographers say that it is synonymous with intelligence and rationality, and is the opposite of ignorance and foolishness. The meanings mentioned in Arabic lexicons for this word can be divided into two categories. The first category includes "prevention", "prohibition", "abstention", "deterrence and preservation" while the second category includes "binding", "attributing" and "relating". Accordingly, since the numerous derivatives that are mentioned in the lexicons are related to the two meanings mentioned above, these two can be considered the primary meanings of the word intellect, which is somehow concealed within each of its derivatives[1] (Khosropanah and Amiri 2009, 34).

In philosophy, the word intellect is contrasted with the term empiricism, meaning that any matter which pertains to the fundamental realities of

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1. Intellect has several lexical meanings that are sometimes used in the verbal and active sense and at other instances in the nominal sense.

Rationalism and Scripturalism in Shīʿī Islam:
A Comparative Study of the Views of al-
Shaykh al-Ṣadūq and al-Shaykh al-Mufīd

Abdul Majid Hakim Elahi

the universe can be explained by the intellect. Rationalism in theology stands opposed to blind faith, meaning that reason is considered to precede faith, and all religious principles and truths are established on the basis of reason, not on the basis of faith. Its third application is rationalism in the "age of reason" or the "Enlightenment". This term is used to describe the worldviews and approaches of eighteenth-century Enlightenment philosophers in whose estimation reasoning is opposed to faith, traditional authority, orthodoxy, and superstition, and is especially opposed to orthodox Christianity. Enlightenment thinkers were completely convinced of the capability and sufficiency of reason in all spheres of human life, including science, religion, ethics, politics, etc. ("Rationalism" 2003, 125-26).

2. Rationalism in Theology

In the Shīʿī world, and especially with the spread of generational gaps and the emergence of intellectual and doctrinal crises, and conflicts between cultures and civilizations, countless questions and doubts arose and targeted the hearts and minds of new believers. Questions pertaining to God's existence, justice, judgment and destiny, resurrection, prophethood and Imamate - which in their essence are aimed at weakening and damaging faith and religious beliefs.

It was with these questions in mind that theology developed as it passed through various phases among the Sunnīs and Shīʿīs, and as a result different schools of thought were formed. Rational theology (the basis of philosophical theology and its fundamental feature), which was irrigated by the fountain of philosophical intellection and based its theoretical principles and foundations upon the latter's conclusions and discoveries, sought to consolidate and attain specific goals pertaining to the preservation of the eternal teachings of revelation and the elimination of doubts from it. This novel approach had the following important features:

1. Establishing an epistemological framework independent of commonly accepted beliefs and preconceived notions of subjectivity;

2. Changing the method of reasoning (which constitutes an essential part of the epistemological framework) from the accepted religious tenets and popular, widespread concepts among the general Muslims to rational axioms and established facts;

3. Belief and reliance upon independent intellectual precepts (theorems that imply the independent perception of reason and its power to understand the truth of things);

4. Utilizing the results and discoveries of rational, philosophical arguments in the scholarly explanation of religious principles and praxis;

5. The efficacy of the deductive method in the reformation and guidance of believers and the elimination of doubts raised by the opponents or cynics, and as the approach best suited for those seeking answers to their questions;

6. Since this approach is founded on basic humanity, it is flexible in the face of changing conditions and the emergence of new scientific and philosophical outlooks. However, despite all its features and merits, it has been exposed to many challenges (Masoudi and Ostadi 2004, 43).

3. Rationalism in Jurisprudence

Reason in Shīʿī jurisprudence, and political jurisprudence, refers to "practical reason" which is essentially based on rationally determined good and evil and its inseparable connection to the legal (*sharʿī*) rulings, since jurisprudence deals with the actions of the obligated (*mukallafīn*). Sheikh Muḥammad Riḍā Muẓaffar, a contemporary Shīʿī thinker, also introduces rational evidence as the rule of reason that leads to certitude regarding religious law. Therefore, the connotation of reason (*ʿaql*) according to Sheikh Muẓaffar is practical reason, as opposed to theoretical reason,

Rationalism and Scripturalism in Shīʿī Islam:
A Comparative Study of the Views of al-
Shaykh al-Ṣadūq and al-Shaykh al-Mufīd

Abdul Majid Hakim Elahi

which relies on the rational basis of good and evil and independently or co-dependently produces religious rulings in matters pertaining to civil and Shīʿī political life.

When we discuss reason as an independent source, along with the three other sources in general jurisprudence, the discussion essentially covers three important aspects: (a) Reason under the rubric of the Sharīʿah itself (evidence); (b) Reason as a tool used to arrive at the Sharīʿah; (c) The place of reason in the absence of a revealed ruling (*manṭaqah al-farāgh*).

Matters of legal theory pertaining to reason are of two kinds: (1) Criteria and rationale for rulings (philosophy behind rulings); (2) Corollaries of rulings. In order to explain the criteria for religious rulings and laws it must be said that one of the universally accepted Islamic principles is that the rules of the Sharīʿah are dependent and originate from a series of real benefits and harms. These rationales are such that if the human intellect becomes aware of them, it will do the same thing that the Sharīʿah has decreed. If we assume that we have not been given any Sharīʿah ruling on a particular case through narration, but the intellect realizes with certainty that there is a specific wisdom for it among other rationales, it will thereby discover what the Lawgiver's ruling is. It is noteworthy that in some cases the intellect does not attain these criteria for rulings but sees that the Lawgiver has a specific ruling here, and thus it realizes that ruling is definitely in its best interest otherwise the Lawgiver would not have made it a law (Abbasi Tabar Firuz Jah 2006, 34-32).

In short, what is mentioned in Shīʿī legal theory about reason being one of the sources of Sharīʿah pertains not to theoretical reason but practical reason. The meaning of reason in this case is mostly rational reasoning and not the intellect itself. This is why most of the jurists who propounded the issue of the intellect did not define it and instead focused on the question of rational reasoning. This is because the intellect, as the instrument of

comprehension, cannot itself be the source of a legal ruling; rather, through its findings and realization, it is propounded as an evidence and source of the legal rulings (Ghomashi 2005, 38, 39).

What is important in this article is that in jurisprudence, it is this very same rational reasoning which has been frowned upon by the Akhbārī scholars like Mulla Muḥammad Amīn Astarābādī while other Akhbārī scholars, such as Sheikh Ḥurr ʿĀmilī, accepted the definitive rulings of reason but believed that deriving the rules of religious law from intellectual induction does not afford certainty. Some of them even went as far as to question the authority of such legal rulings that are based solely on rational reasoning (Shafiʿi 2008, 13).

4. Rationalism in Shīʿī Ḥadīth Sciences

Though there is no comprehensive definition of reason in Shīʿī ḥadīth sources, unlike non-Imami narrators, Shīʿī tradents do consider the intellect as one of the divinely sanctioned proofs that God has bestowed to man. Firstly, just as Sheikh al-Kulaynī has narrated in the ḥadīth from Hishām, the intellect is the inner proof (ḥujjah) which has been bestowed to human beings and is at par with and concurrent to the prophets and messengers who make up the external proof. Secondly, God will reward or punish people in accordance with the intellect (Kulaynī 1969, 156) and can hold them accountable through it.

5. Scripturalism

"Scripture" (naṣṣ) is a term that has at least two uses: sometimes it is used in contrast to the apparent (ẓāhir) (Ṭurayḥī 1983, 4:184) and sometimes it means narration (naql) and it is used in contrast to reason (ʿaql) (Ṣadr 1974, 10).

The meaning of "scripture" in this article is its second connotation, and refers to quoting any text that is rooted in revelation. In other words,

Rationalism and Scripturalism in Shīʿī Islam:
A Comparative Study of the Views of al-
Shaykh al-Ṣadūq and al-Shaykh al-Mufīd

Abdul Majid Hakim Elahi

quoting revelatory texts which include the Qurʾān and Ḥadīth.

Believers in scripturalism either see no use for reason in understanding and interpreting the Qurʾān or, more often, prioritize narration over reason. This approach encompasses several varying perspectives. Not paying serious attention to reason in exegesis, adhering to the apparent and literal meanings of religious texts and following them without question are not all practiced to an equal degree by every proponent of scripturalism; rather, we may classify the range of views that exist in this group into extremist and moderate tendencies (Arian 2010, 82).

6. Rationalism and Scripturalism in Imāmī Shīʿīsm in the Presence of the Infallibles

Companions of the Imams (a), and especially the companions of Imam al-Bāqir and Imam al-Ṣādiq (a), can be divided into two groups: theologians (*mutakallimīn*) and tradents (*muḥaddithīn*) or jurists. Among the theologians were Hishām ibn Ḥakam, Hisham ibn Sālim, Ḥumrān ibn Aʿyan, Muḥammad ibn Ṭayyār, and Muʾmin Ṭāq, and the tradents or jurists included Muḥammad ibn Muslim, Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Khālid al-Barqī, and Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan al-Ṣaffār. The difference between these two groups was in the manner and extent of their use of reason in religious teachings, and therefore they can be considered the first representatives of rationalism and scripturalism in the Shīʿī world.

Unlike with the Ahl al-Sunnah, until the third century AH there existed hardly any differences among Shīʿī scholars – between the theologians and the tradents. Of course, at times there were debates between theologians and the companions of Imams; however, nothing like the rift between Hanbalis and Muʿtazila that was witnessed during this period was seen between the scripturalists and rationalists among the Shīʿa. The moderation of Shīʿī scholars in employing reason and quoting religious texts should be considered the reason for this. The existence of narrations

of the Ahl al-Bayt (a) and especially the presence of the Imams among the Shīʿa curtailed the emergence of extremes and deviations. Essentially, the method of Shīʿī Imams was such that while they welcomed reason and the presentation of rational issues, they simultaneously restricted the scope of reason and warned believers against drawing the intellect beyond its limits (Shariatmadari 2014, 32-34).

From the third century, which coincides with the era of precautionary dissimulation (*taqiyyah*) and the period of occultation of the Imam (a), these two theological and traditional currents gradually distanced themselves from each other and eventually became two completely different standpoints. Although in the Shīʿī world nothing close to the Ḥanbalī-Muʿtazilī confrontation ever took shape, in the third and fourth centuries, the two currents of rationalism and scripturalism became totally distinct and were on the verge of confrontation. The most prominent theologians at the time were the Nawbakhtī family and later, the Baghdad school led by Sheikh Ṭūsī, while the ḥadīth scholars of Qom and Rayy can be considered the foremost representatives of scripturalism (Shariatmadari 2014, 32-34).

7. The Epistemological Crises of the Shīʿī Community after the Commencement of the Era of the Occultation of the Infallible (a)

After the commencement of the era of occultation of the twelfth Imam (a), Shīʿī communities faced an epistemological crisis. Al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq, who wrote his famous work *Kamāl al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Niʿmah* between the years 355 and 367 AH, refers to the Shīʿī community of Nayshapur in this regard and says that during his stay there, he saw that most of the Shīʿīs who visited him were perplexed by the occultation (Ṣadūq 2016, 2:2). This perplexity only increased with the intensification of theological debates. The Imāmī scholar Najm al-Dīn Abū Saʿīd Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī ibn Ṣalt al-Qummī, who had settled in Bukhara, reported to al-

Rationalism and Scripturalism in Shīʿī Islam:
A Comparative Study of the Views of al-
Shaykh al-Ṣadūq and al-Shaykh al-Mufīd

Abdul Majid Hakim Elahi

Shaykh al-Ṣadūq in Qom regarding the dispute that had arisen between himself and one of the philosophers and logicians in Bukhara, which had cast doubts in his mind on the matter of the occultation. Following this confession of doubt, al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq was able to remove his uncertainties by quoting the narrations and reports about the occultation, and after this incident al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq wrote the book *Kamal al-Din* (Ṣadūq 2016, 1:2-3). A similar discussion took place between al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq and an individual in Baghdad. What had been emphasized in their conversation was that the protracted occultation of the Imam had led some people to turn away from the Imāmī creed (Ṣadūq 2016, 1:16-17). Rayy and Baghdad were among the important Shīʿī centres of learning in this period. In these two cities, Buwayhid Zaydī scholars and a company of accomplished Muʿtazila scholars in Baghdad wrote works criticizing Imāmī views and beliefs. Only a little is known about the Muʿtazila of Baghdad as per what is found in Khazzāz Qummī's book *Kifāyat al-Athar*; however, regarding the attacks of the Zaydiyya, al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq has related their criticisms in detail (Rahmati 2005; Judaki 2006).

8. The School of Qom and al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq

The jurists and tradents of Qom often used the method of the Ahl al-Ḥadīth in analysing and studying religious and theological issues, and they were generally content with following the text of narrations. However, the employment of rational proofs in their works demonstrates that they also used logical reasoning in some of their theological and juristic discussions. Even though al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq is a representative of the scripturalist school, the presence of rational and lexical discussions that he quotes to arrive at an understanding of the narrations (Tustarī 1937, 210) is evidence of his use of rational reasoning in interpreting religious teachings albeit to a lower degree. At the same time, there were individuals in Qom who used reason to a greater extent in their scholarly discussions. This method can be considered a middle ground between the scripturalism of the ḥadīth

scholars and rationalists of Baghdad, as evinced by the debates of Saʿd ibn ʿAbdillah al-Ashʿarī with his opponents (Ṣadūq 2016, 462) and also the debates of ʿAlī ibn Bābawayh Qummī, both of which can be considered an instance of this (Ṣadūq 2016, 16).

What can be mentioned as one of the strengths of the scripturalist school of Qom is their special attention to the reports and narrations which were able to bring the Shīʿī community out of the crisis at the beginning of the period of occultation. During this period, Shīʿī communities were being attacked by the Muʿtazila, the Zaydiyya, as well as other sects, and it is referred to as the age of perplexity (ḥayrah). The most important contribution of school of Qom can be considered assisting in the transition of the Shīʿī community from the age of perplexity with the help of the traditions of the Infallibles (a) and, as mentioned above, their foremost leading figure was al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq. Yet moving beyond this period required some innovation, and al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq was able to employ the approach of rational reasoning in the study of ḥadīth thereby overcoming the complex issues that arose after the commencement of the age of occultation.

9. Reason in al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq's Intellectual System

Though al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq narrates many traditions related to reason and intellect in his ḥadīth works, in none of them does he mention a chapter or section titled *Kitāb al-ʿAql* and he has not dealt with the subject of reason independently. He rejects disputation and condemns it, and even narrates traditions from the Imams in this regard. He quotes a ḥadīth from Imam al-Ṣādiq (a) in which the Imam forbade disputation about God [and his attributes] and said that those theologians who engage in it are doomed (Ṣadūq 2001, 74).

Ṣadūq believes that in order to prove religious propositions, one should seek the help of the Qurʾān and the narrations of the Ahl al-Bayt (a),

Rationalism and Scripturalism in Shīʿī Islam:
A Comparative Study of the Views of al-
Shaykh al-Ṣadūq and al-Shaykh al-Mufīd

Abdul Majid Hakim Elahi

and when debating with opponents, one should likewise use these two revelatory sources. In other words, he believes that the only source of knowledge and the only source of evidence for proving religious issues is revelation. Al-Ṣadūq's evidence for the claim that the intellect cannot be an independent source of religious rulings is that if the intellect were a source for the understanding of such rulings, there would be no need for revelation (Ṣadūq 2001, 42).

Not only does al-Ṣadūq believe that reason has no place in jurisprudential rulings, he also opposes the use of rational arguments in matters of belief and the principles of religion (Ṣadūq 2001, 42). In order to prove the existence of God, al-Ṣadūq makes use of scripture and to this end, he narrates verses of the Qurʾān and traditions (Ṣadūq 2001, 45). Al-Ṣadūq's view regarding attaining knowledge of God Almighty is clarified in the book *al-Tawḥīd*. In the chapter titled "The Almighty is not known but through Himself" he says the correct way is that we should know God through God, not based on our own conceptions. Even if we know him through the intellect, that too has been given to us by God. He is not even known through the prophets [independently], since it is God who sent them to us, and if we know Him through our soul [or intuition], again, God is the one who created it (Ṣadūq 1977, 450).

Al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq posits a hypothetical case of a child who is abandoned in the desert and does not meet anyone and no one guides him, if he later arrives at knowledge of the existence of a Creator through reason, al-Ṣadūq says that this would not be possible and if it happens, such a person is the proof (*ḥujjah*) of God and that was the case with Ibrāhīm (a). If the human intellect was sufficient to know God, God would not have said: *Know that there is no god except Allah* (Qurʾān 47:19). He even considers the proofs of Prophet Ibrāhīm (a) as divine inspirations (Ṣadūq 1977, 451).

Contrary to the title of the book, al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq only quotes ḥadīth in his work *ʿIlal al-Sharāiʿ*, and even though reason is one of the ways of knowing the philosophy and secrets of religious injunctions, he has not dealt with rational issues in this book. He accepts solitary reports (*akhbār āḥād*) not only in jurisprudential matters, but even in many creedal issues he bases religious teachings on such singular narrations. This matter is so noticeable that Sheikh Anṣārī introduces him as one of the Akhbārī scholars. In his explanation of ʿAllāmah's statement in *Al-Nihāyah*,[1] Sheikh Anṣārī says: "What ʿAllāmah means by the Akhbārīs might be the likes of al-Ṣadūq and his teacher, may their souls be blessed" (Anṣārī 2007, 154).

In the introduction to *Man Lā Yaḥḍuruhu al-Faqīh*, al-Ṣadūq writes that he narrates only those traditions based upon which he gives religious edicts (*fatwa*) and considers to be valid proof between himself and his God. This claim is made despite the fact that al-Ṣadūq narrates ḥadīth from individuals whose reliability has not been established (Ṣadūq 1983, Introduction). Furthermore, in the appendix of sources (*mashyakhah*) of his book *Man Lā Yaḥḍur* we come across narrators whose reliability has not been proven, but since their traditions are found in reliable works, they are deemed acceptable by al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq.

At the same time, it should be noted that al-Ṣadūq does not reject the use of reason in general, and in his books, discussions pertaining interpretation and exegesis that are based on reason are widely seen. What is important is the level of credibility given to reason and narration, and which one is given preference over the other in case of conflict between the two. Despite what is known about al-Ṣadūq and his scripturalist tendencies, it is clear from the study of his works that he chose the moderate and judicious method, neither the intractability of the Ahl al-Ḥadīth nor the intellectual

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1. "The Akhbārīs among them did not take recourse in the fundamentals of religion and its practical injunctions with anything other than solitary reports."

Rationalism and Scripturalism in Shīʿī Islam:
A Comparative Study of the Views of al-
Shaykh al-Ṣadūq and al-Shaykh al-Mufīd

Abdul Majid Hakim Elahi

extremism of the Muʿtazila.

Al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq divides the fields of knowledge into three categories. In the first category, al-Ṣadūq forbids the understanding and admission of reason, such as in the explanation of the verse: *And He taught Adam the Names, all of them* (Qurʾān 2:31), where he says that the wisdom behind God teaching Adam the names is that it is not possible to achieve knowledge of some things except through narration (Ṣadūq 2016, 16). In the second category, he considers some fields of knowledge such as prophecy as the appropriate place of reason. In this regard, he says: "If God did not introduce the Prophet (s) as the Seal of the Prophets, the intellect would rule that in all ages there should be a Prophet from God [to guide the people]." The third category includes issues that al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq considers common between reason and narration, just as sometimes narrated proofs contain rational arguments (Ṣadūq 2016, 16).

Therefore, though al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq does not accept reason as an independent source of knowledge and cites in this regard narrations that forbid disputation, he nevertheless does not completely reject the rational method and use of reason; rather, he explicates it through narrations and verses (cf. Berenjkar and Mousavi 2010).

10. The School of Baghdad and al-Shaykh al-Mufīd

In their argumentation, explication and interpretation of religious teachings, the scholars of Baghdad employed more rational methods and as a result, the theological school of Baghdad became known as the rationalist school. The most important factors that caused the growth and development of the rational tendency among this group of scholars include the teachings of the Qurʾān that praise intellection and encourage the application of reason using various terms such as 'thinking', 'reflection', 'pondering', 'learning', 'insight', 'wisdom', 'remembrance', etc. The Qurʾān itself employs rational proofs in establishing Islamic teachings

(Qurʾān 21:22, 23:91), seeks rational evidence from opponents (Qurʾān 2:111) and demonstrates their errors in judgment (Qurʾān 17:36, 2:170, 33:67, 53:23) which all confirm its probity and validity. The emphasis of the Imams on the use of reason, which has been mentioned in countless narrations of the Ahl al-Bayt (a), and the practice of the infallible Imams in training their students to employ reason constitutes another proof for the rationalists.

The encounter of Muslims with other cultures and the proliferation and diversity of doubts coupled with the rational approaches of foreigners and their lack of belief in the Holy Book and prophetic traditions led Muslim scholars to employ rational methods in their debates. The debates of the Infallible Imams (a) and their disciples, such as Hishām ibn Ḥakam and Muʾmin al-Ṭāq, are a clear example of this approach and the use of reason in the face of different cultures in matters of belief. The Nawbakht family, which presented generations of great scholars to the Islamic and Shīʿī world for about three centuries and brought Shīʿī rationalism to its peak, were also instrumental and played a major role in the spread of rationalism in Shīʿī theology. Due to their familiarity with Persian and Greek philosophy, as well as their knowledge of Muʿtazilī theology, they were able to establish a complete system based on rational rules that influenced Shīʿī theology for centuries (Sobhani 1995, 223). The most important work written during this period is *Kitāb al-Yāqūt* which goes so far in terms of rationality that even after two centuries, ʿAllāmah Ḥillī saw this book as being in complete accordance with the philosophical-theological school of Khwājah Ṭūsī and went on to write a commentary on it (Sobhani 1995, 223).

The Status of Reason in the View of al-Shaykh al-Mufīd

Al-Shaykh al-Mufīd neither believed in the lofty and independent position of the intellect in understanding divine teachings like the

Rationalism and Scripturalism in Shīʿī Islam:
A Comparative Study of the Views of al-
Shaykh al-Ṣadūq and al-Shaykh al-Mufīd

Abdul Majid Hakim Elahi

Muʿtazila rationalists, nor did he disregard the position of the intellect as some of the Imāmī ḥadīth scholars had done with regards to this divine proof. Unlike the Muʿtazila of Basra, al-Shaykh al-Mufīd considered the ability and capacity of the inference of reason in comparison to revelation to be minimal and believed that human beings need a messenger from whom to learn what is expected of them and if a messenger is not sent to them, they will not be questionable for anything [such as particular acts of worship etc.]. Human intellect cannot guide a person in this regard, and such individuals will not be punished on the Day of Resurrection (Ṣadūq 2016, 16). In his view, the intellect alone does not comprehend responsibility, although to understand the teachings of religion, one cannot do without reason.

Al-Shaykh al-Mufīd believed that the intellect needs revelation in order to attain knowledge of the divine, but this does not mean that the evidence of the intellect cannot be cited, because any knowledge that is not based on proof and evidence can easily lapse. al-Mufīd believed that every individual should seek the aid of his intellect to prove the existence of God, otherwise he will not be safe from divine punishment (Mufīd 1993c, 2:78). In the discussion on Badà in the beginning of the book *Awāʾil al-Maqālāt*, al-Shaykh al-Mufīd states the following to strengthen the position of narration and text: "That is from the aspect of what is related, without analogy." Additionally, on the subject of God's desire, he states that this is proven by what is narrated. In explaining the divine qualities of 'All-hearing' and 'All-seeing' that are attributed to God, he writes: "The attribution of the Pre-eternal Existent Lord with such qualities is due to what has been narrated, not by analogical reasoning or rational proof" (Mufīd 1993c, 12-13).

While al-Shaykh al-Mufīd believes in the appropriate position of narrations and text, he strongly defends debate and argumentation, and in his book *Taṣḥīḥ al-Iʿtiqād*, he criticizes al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq's views. By

dividing disputation into disputation of truth and fallacious disputation, al-Mufīd argues that God has approved the disputation of truth in the Qurʾān and has commanded His Messenger to argue with the unbelievers: *and dispute with them in a manner that is best* (Qurʾān 16:125). Hence, if all disputations were incorrect, God would not have commanded the disputation. In order to further prove this fact, al-Shaykh al-Mufīd cites narrations that instruct believers to debate and discuss: "Beware of blind following, for indeed one who imitates blindly in religion is destroyed" (Ṣadūq 1960, 72).

Unlike the followers of the scripturalist school of Qom who accepted solitary reports and deemed them valid even in creedal matters, al-Shaykh al-Mufīd rejected solitary reports not only in creedal matters, but also in jurisprudential issues. In *Awāʾil al-Maqālāt*, al-Shaykh al-Mufīd writes:

And I say, neither knowledge nor action is made incumbent by any of the solitary reports, and it is not permissible to believe with certitude, based on a single report, in any religious precept unless it is accompanied by that which clearly proves the veracity of the narration. (Mufīd 1993c, 4:122)

It is for this very reason that al-Mufīd does not accept some of al-Ṣadūq's views in creedal matters and considers them to be based on solitary reports, which in his opinion are not authoritative. Al-Shaykh al-Mufīd believes that in some cases reason can independently comprehend such matters. For instance, on the issue of [the necessity of] infallibility, he considers the intellect to be sufficient (Mufīd 1993c, 4:122).

Al-Shaykh al-Mufīd's efforts were always geared towards taking all aspects of a religious matter into consideration, and to combine rational judgment and religious texts in order to bring different Shīʿī perspectives together as much as possible, and to reduce thereby the intensity of discord between the scripturalists and rationalists among the Shīʿa.

Rationalism and Scripturalism in Shīʿī Islam:
A Comparative Study of the Views of al-
Shaykh al-Ṣadūq and al-Shaykh al-Mufīd

Abdul Majid Hakim Elahi

11. Some Instances of al-Mufīd's Criticism of al-Ṣadūq

Due to his rationalist approach, al-Shaykh al-Mufīd has in some instances criticized the thoughts and ideas of his teacher al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq. Some examples are as follows:

A) Critique of Literalism

Al-Shaykh al-Mufīd strongly criticizes the lack of deliberation on narrations by scripturalists and the Ahl al-Ḥadīth, and he specifically attacks the Ahl al-Ḥadīth in his books in this regard. In his book *Taṣḥīḥ al-Iʿtiqād*, he writes:

The Ahl al-Ḥadīth are well meaning people, but far from deliberation; they pass over the aḥādīth without meticulous consideration and inquiry. They do not reflect upon the chains of transmission and do not separate the false from the true. They know not what grave difficulty shall beset them if they count those aḥādīth to be authentic. (Mufīd 1992, 213).

Al-Shaykh al-Mufīd also criticizes lack of reflection upon the narrations in other places (Ibid. 190-194). He likewise condemns the reliance upon rare (*shādh*) narrations (Mufīd 1992, 178-198).

In the chapter on providence and [divine] will, al-Shaykh al-Mufīd rejects al-Ṣadūq's views and writes:

What Abū Jaʿfar has mentioned in this regard does not yield anything, and its meanings are variant and contradictory. The reason for this is that he has taken the apparent meanings of various aḥādīth and is not among those who looks at them meticulously and distinguishes between what is right and wrong in them before accepting only what is authoritative and correct. Indeed, one who acts upon variant speech in his creed and blindly follows narrators, his state of weakness is just as we have described. (Mufīd 1992, 190-91).

B) A Critique of Blind Following and Imitation in Beliefs

In the scripturalist school, embarking on theological debate and argumentation is forbidden and to be avoided at all cost. In this regard, al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq believes in quoting the verses and narrated traditions from the Prophet (s) and infallible Imams (a) and explaining them (Ṣadūq 1960, 73-74). He also considers disputation about God to be incorrect, based on what has been narrated from Imam al-Ṣādiq (a) (Ṣadūq 1960, 73-74). Elsewhere, al-Ṣadūq states:

As for debating with the opponents using the words of Allah and those of His Messenger (s) and the statements of the Imams (a), or what can be understood from their statements, by one who is able to duly convey the same - that is generally permitted; but for one who cannot do so, it is forbidden and prohibited. (Ṣadūq 1960, 73-74)

In contrast, while defending the use of reason in matters of belief, al-Shaykh al-Mufīd embarks on a critical analysis of the evidence of the Ahl al-Ḥadīth and writes:

The infallible Imams (a) would always debate and argue with the opponents. Their great companions would also follow the Imams (a) in this and would, in every age, employ reasoning and observation. They would engage in the righteous disputation and would annihilate falsehood with proof and evidence. The Imams also used to laud them for this and express gratitude to them, and they voiced their admiration and praise for them (Mufīd 1992, 201).

Al-Shaykh al-Mufīd then quotes narrations about this from *Uṣūl al-Kāfī* (Mufīd 1992, 201). Subsequently, he says:

It is established that the prohibition of theological disputation by the infallible Imams (a) is aimed at those individuals who did not consider theological argumentation to be good and did thus not learn its principles; hence, engaging in theological disputes would lead to the corruption of their faith. The instruction of the Imams (a) to the other group was because

Rationalism and Scripturalism in Shīʿī Islam:
A Comparative Study of the Views of al-
Shaykh al-Ṣadūq and al-Shaykh al-Mufīd

Abdul Majid Hakim Elahi

they considered theological discourse to be good and knew its ways (Mufīd 1992, 202).

Al-Shaykh al-Mufīd, in explaining and analysing the narrations that consider it wrong to speak about God, writes:

As for the prohibition of speaking about God Almighty, it is restricted to the prohibition of likening Him to His creatures and considering Him an oppressor in His judgments; however, speaking about the oneness of God and sanctifying, glorifying and denying any similitude to Him, is actually prescribed and encouraged by Islam (Mufīd 1992, 203).

C) A Critique of the Misinterpretation of *Taqiyyah*

Al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq considered *taqiyyah* necessary for all the Shīʿa during the period of occultation (Ṣadūq 2001, 104). Al-Shaykh al-Mufīd believed that *taqiyyah* is only necessary when a person is certain that if he manifests his faith, it will lead to his destruction (Mufīd 1992, 241). He further considers the discrepancy in al-Ṣadūq's words and writing on the subject of *taqiyyah* to be the result of not deliberating on the meaning of the narrations and not benefiting from the power of reason. He considers the problem of superficiality and a literalist approach to narrations as another danger for the Shīʿī community. About this, al-Shaykh al-Mufīd writes:

Ṣadūq has followed the practice of the Ahl al-Ḥadīth in acting upon the apparent meaning of the ḥadīth and has avoided the path of reflection. This approach to religion harms the person who adheres to it, and remaining on it prevents insight and enlightenment. (Mufīd 1992, 241)

D) A Critique of the Interpretation of 'Soul' and 'Spirit'

After referring to al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq's statements about the soul (*nafs*) and the spirit (*rūḥ*), al-Shaykh al-Mufīd writes:

Abū Jaʿfar's statements in this regard are based on conjecture, not research. If he had sufficed with only mentioning the reports without

getting into their meanings, it would have been better for him than entering the path that is difficult for him to traverse. (Mufīd 1992, 207)

Al-Mufīd considers embarking on intellectual discourses, like those concerned with the soul and spirit, by individuals who are not well versed in theology to be a cause of going astray, and in this regard he strongly criticizes al-Ṣadūq and writes:

This is a belief that no intelligent person would accept. It is inappropriate for a person who is not aware of the facts of the matter to speak about these subjects... What Abū Jaʿfar has specified as the meaning of soul and spirit is the same as the definition given by those who believe in reincarnation (*tanāsukh*), without knowing that he has stated what they actually believe. The consequences of this statement are enormous for himself and for others (Mufīd 1992, 211).

E) The Necessity of Employing Reason in Creedal Matters

Al-Shaykh al-Mufīd is of the opinion that religious beliefs should be based on logic and reasoning, and he strongly criticizes the method of the Ahl al-Ḥadīth in creedal matters, which is based on blind following and imitation. In this regard, al-Mufīd writes in his *Awāʾil al-Maqālāt*:

I say that knowledge of the existence of God must be acquired and so too must knowledge of His Prophets and all that is unseen. Coercion is not permissible in knowing a thing, as we have mentioned, and this is the way of most of the Imāmiyyah and especially the Muʿtazila of Baghdad. But opposed to them stand the Muʿtazila of Basra and the Ḥashawiyyah from the Aṣḥāb al-Ḥadīth (Mufīd 1993c, 66).

Al-Mufīd also writes the following in response to the Ahl al-Ḥadith:

If imitation in beliefs was valid, and argumentation and reflection was invalid, then it would not be limited to one group's imitation of another. Therefore, any misguidance would be excused due to imitation, and those

Rationalism and Scripturalism in Shīʿī Islam:
A Comparative Study of the Views of al-
Shaykh al-Ṣadūq and al-Shaykh al-Mufīd

Abdul Majid Hakim Elahi

who follow the heretics in religion would not be guilty. This is something that no one ascribes to, therefore, argumentation and deliberation is the right way, and disputation based on the truth is also correct (Mufīd 1992, 203).

Al-Shaykh al-Mufīd quotes verses from the Qurʾān and narrations to condemn blind following in the foundational principles of religion and criticizes the Ahl al-Ḥadīth and al-Ṣadūq in this regard:

Beware of blind following, for indeed whoever imitates blindly in religion is destroyed. Allah, the Almighty, says: *They have taken their scribes and their monks as lords besides Allah* (Qurʾān 9:31). By Allah, they did not pray to them or fast; rather, they made permissible for them what was forbidden and forbade for them what was permissible, and they followed them blindly in this so they worshipped them [as lords] without knowing it (Mufīd 1992, 203).

Conclusion

After examining the views of al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq from the scripturalist school of Qom and al-Shaykh al-Mufīd from the rationalist school of Baghdad on the place of reason in the Shīʿī epistemological system, we must carry out a comparative analysis of the views of these two Shīʿī scholars. In the study that has been carried out, the following are the more salient points that deserve attention:

1. The Difference between the Views of al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq and al-Shaykh al-Mufīd on the Place of Reason in Theology: In summary, the difference between the views of al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq and al-Shaykh al-Mufīd can be explained as follows: al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq defines reason based on narrations such as "that by which the Most Merciful is worshipped and Paradise is earned" or in another tradition, "bearing patiently until the opportunity [to act] presents itself" (Ṣadūq 1989, 239). Although this definition is not specific to practical reason, it clearly defines theoretical

reason within the perceptions and ideals of practical reason, and he believes that the intellect mentioned in the Qurʾānic verses and narrations has this specific quality (see Kulaynī 1969, K. al-ʿAql wal-Jahl).

On the other hand, al-Shaykh al-Mufīd considers knowledge of the principles of religion to be rationally acquired, but at the same time he believes that the path to that knowledge is close by and an individual at any level, even without knowledge of theology or familiarity with the methods of argumentation, can attain knowledge of God through the use his intellect alone (Mufīd 1993b). The point in al-Shaykh al-Mufīd's understanding of reason is that unlike the Muʿtazila, he did not follow the path of extremism in the role of reason. In his treatise *al-Nukat*, al-Shaykh al-Mufīd has defined the intellect in a manner that clearly shows his moderate position: "The intellect is that by which one distinguishes between knowledge that is attained, and it is called reason (*ʿaql*) because it prevents one from that which is abominable" (Mufīd 1993b). This definition reminds us of what al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq also understands from the meaning of reason.

2. The Age of Occultation and Growth of Rationalism: As stated earlier, the occultation of the Twelfth Imam (a) and the perplexity that subsequently pervaded the Shīʿī community influenced the process of the growth of rationalism. The absence of the Imam as the source and pillar of the religion and the authority (*ḥujjah*) of God over the people created doubts in the Shīʿī community. So much so that after the beginning of the occultation, twelve rival groups emerged. This trend continued until the end of the fourth decade of the fourth century AH, which is called the period of perplexity. Perhaps the most important service rendered by the Shīʿī ḥadīth scholars and the scripturalist movement during this period was helping the Shīʿī community to get past the period of perplexity with the help of the traditions [of the infallibles].

It was after this period that Shīʿī scholars were able to gradually regain

Rationalism and Scripturalism in Shī'ī Islam:
A Comparative Study of the Views of al-
Shaykh al-Ṣadūq and al-Shaykh al-Mufīd

Abdul Majid Hakim Elahi

their influence, but the new issues had created a transformation among the scholars. In the meantime, studying the works of al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq as the last ḥadīth-centric thinker, whose works form a major part of the heritage of the Akhbārīs, leads us to the reality that he had a completely reverential approach in the explication of ḥadīth, and thus al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq cannot be deemed to be an anti-rational scripturalist in the strictest sense (Razavi Sofiani and Gozashte 2011, 109-10). The continuation of this process was taken up by al-Shaykh al-Mufīd who reformed the rationalist views of the school of Baghdad and pursued a moderate approach between rationalism and scripturalism (Razavi Sofiani and Gozashte 2011, 109-10; Marashi Shushtari and Asadi Kohbad 2008, 140).

3. The Entry of Rationalism from Theology to Legal Theory: Before the age of al-Shaykh al-Mufīd and his students, Sayyid Murtaḍā and Sheikh Ṭūsī, jurisprudence was based purely on referral to texts, without carrying out deliberation and presenting evidence. However, in this period the groundwork was laid for legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) and the initial movements towards rationalism took place, so much so that these seedlings would later give rise to great changes in the methodology of jurisprudence. Comparing works like Sheikh Ṭūsī's *al-Mabsūṭ* and *al-Khilāf* with his *al-Nihāyah* gives the impression that in the first two books he acts as an *uṣūlī* jurist who, in many issues, employs analogy (*qiyās*) and juristic discretion (*istiḥsān*) and but in *al-Nihāyah*, he follows the path of the Akhbārīs and *al-Nihāyah* is characterized by narration, not legal edicts (*fatwa*). This discrepancy is manifested not only in his jurisprudence, but also in his ḥadīth collections as evinced by his works *al-Istibṣār* and *al-Tahdhīb*. Al-Shaykh al-Mufīd and Sayyid Murtaḍā – each of whom are seen in the study of the role of the theorists of the school of Baghdad to have been teachers of Sheikh Ṭūsī for a period of time – both followed a rational-cum-textual approach and Sheikh Ṭūsī himself later continued in the path of his teachers.

With the efforts of al-Shaykh al-Mufīd, Sayyid Murtaḍā and Sheikh Ṭūsī, reason (ʿaql), along with the three other proofs, became known as the primary sources of Shīʿī jurisprudence. The point to note is that al-Shaykh al-Mufīd, with his moderate approach, placed reason at the same level as the three sources (the Qurʾān, Sunnah, and ijmāʿ or consensus), and this approach was later perfected by al-Shaykh al-Mufīd's students, especially Sayyid Murtaḍā and Sheikh Ṭūsī (cf. Shafiʿi 2009, 10-11).

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Rationalism and Scripturalism in Shīʿī Islam:
A Comparative Study of the Views of al-
Shaykh al-Ṣadūq and al-Shaykh al-Mufīd

Abdul Majid Hakim Elahi

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