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The Range of Religious Sciences in Islamic Thinking

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Abstract: The investigation of subject of relation between science and the world is still one of the major issues of religious philosophy which engage the minds of scientists. Meanwhile, some of them have stepped toward the idea of conflict between science and religion and seen these two precious things stood against each other but others have welcomed the more gently idea of separation. But Islamic teachings and thought accept neither the idea of conflict nor the idea of separation, rather considering the definitions of science and religion, two ideas can be given: in first idea there is acooperative and evolutionary relation between science and religion; since in this relation religion deepens science and sciences strengthen religion. But in the second idea, science is the effect of religion and religion is considered its origin because human or experimental sciences either spring from traditional propositions (outer messenger) or traditional propositions (inner messenger) both of which are religious and divine sources. Therefore, science production in the area of human and experimental sciences springs from the heart of religious sources. The present article tries to explain this subject and to process potential problems.

Key words: Science, religion, interaction of science and religion, religious science, human sciences

INTRODUCTION

Perhaps no subject has occupied the minds of contemporary scientists as more as the quality and type of interaction of science and religion. Historical background of this subject itself deserves contemplation. After renaissance and astonishing development of experimental sciences, the new science did not follow the old one. In middle ages science, religion and philosophy had common fate and this is very important. The old science fell over and the new one was born. The new science had the semen of conflict with religion inside it; therefore, it raised a subject known as conflict between science and religion. Later this conflict turned gradually into a theological subject and religious philosophers studied this subject as the relationship between science and religion. A question raised early about the science and religion is that: what is the relationship between science and religion? Is there really any conflict between them? Or no, there is not any conflict between them but each will go their own ways? Or maybe there is an agreement, interaction and dealing between science and religion and not only one is not needless of the other but they are supplement for each other? (Tahour encyclopedia). Providing a new exposition in answer to this old question is the major subject of this study.

The investigation of subject of relation between science and the world from different aspects is still one of the major issues of religious philosophy. Theologians and religious philosophers discuss about agreement and disagreement of religious content with scientific achievements. Their epidemiological relation which is therelation between religious knowledge and experimental knowledge is also examined or the structure of scientific rules is compared with religious propositions. The answers to these questions can be naturally applicable and influential in religious philosophy, theology (kalam), sociology, psychology and other sciences especially human sciences.

But in answer to the same question, historians and sociologists discuss about opportunities and difficulties made by religion or religious institutes for the emergence and development of science throughout the history.

Anyway, verities of answers have been given to this question. Some have voted for the conflict between science and religion. This is a conflict between human's understanding of nature, i.e., his scientific knowledge and his understanding of religion, i.e., religious knowledge. In another word, some believe that there is a fundamental gap between scientific mentality and religious mentality such that by raising one the other is rejected and vice versa. Obviously, this conflict occurs when it is

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considered that the subjects, goals and the methods of these two issues are the same. In this case, science and religion will stand against each other in a single stage as two rivals. Based on this approach, science and religion because of common claims have fundamental conflicts which make their compromise impossible (Nejad and Hossein, 2006). Of course this conflict might occur in two ways; real conflict and superficial conflict.

In addition, some raise the idea of separation of science and religion; to put it another way, religion deals with spirituality, in contrast, science seeks to understand material world and therefore both of them have different areas and they have not any overlapping points and common territory. Even some, in spite of having religious beliefs, consider them completely different subjects in their researches and see no relation between them. Paul Davis says, "most of the people who deal with science are religious people too… In most cases, they keep these two aspects of life separated as if science is dominated 6 days of the week and religion is dominated Sundays".

In this approach, science and religion belong to completely two separate areas and therefore it is false and baseless to assume any agreement or disagreement between them; since the position of any dispute when evaluating is either within the territory of science or the territory of religion. For this reason, none of them can help the other they also can not have any dispute with each other. What is important in theology is not important in science and vice versa.

They agree about the lack of attendant metaphysics in scientific theories. They also unanimously approve that science only obtains affirmative and of course falsifiable experimental propositions as well as technical knowledge from natural phenomena and their rules and it should not be expected to provide the philosophy of life or a series of ethical norms. They are disagreement with the attempts of believers and disbelievers of God to use science for strengthening their theological and philosophical positions. In their opinions, experimental scientists and theologians should do their own business and should not intervene in other activities.

But Shi'a accepts neither the theory of conflict nor the theory of separation. In another word, science neither has any conflict with religion nor it is separated from religion, rather science and religion have two different interactions.

Its root should be sought in the view and definition of science and religion in Islam. In Shi'a thought science might be considered religious for different reasons, i.e., the absolute science, whether experimental or non-experimental may be religious because of its source and application. When it is said that a science is religious it means that knowledge is either derived from wisdom which is a divine proof in Islam or from tradition (Naghl) which is derived from the teachings of Divine Book and holy Imams.

Since, all human and experimental sciences can be derived from wisdom and Naghland serve religion, then they can be religious both by source and application.

To explain and exposit the subject it is first necessary to provide a definition of science and religion based on which the domain and aspects of interaction of science and religion are determined.

THE CONCEPT OF SCIENCE (ARABIC ELM) AND RELIGION

Elm (English = Science) is an Arabic word derived from its root alima. Literally it meanscertainty, knowledge and perception (Dehkhoda, 1966; Moein, 1975, under the word elm). In its technical meaning elm is applied for the knowledge of everything one achieves, whether himself or the environment around him. Needless to say, it is clear that the value of scientific propositions is not equal and the more the person knows, the more knowledgeable and learned he is.

Some scholars have brought the science out of its restricted and absolute meaning and have assigned two different meaning to it and added that not differentiating these two meanings will create great mistakes. In one meaning, it is experimental science which is exclusively applied to the knowledge obtained through direct sensitive experiment. Here, knowledge is not against ignorance, it is against all kinds of learning which are not obtained directly from experimental tests. Ethics (the knowledge ofthe good and the bad), metaphysics and philosophy (the knowledge of rules and consequences of the absolute being), gnosis (inner and personal experiments), logic (a device for intellectual guidance), jurisprudence, principles, rhetoric, etc., all are outside the territory of knowledge and have the second meaning; in this meaning none of them is knowledge. The word science is equal to this meaning.

But the second meaning is the absolute knowledge, i.e., knowledge and learning which is against ignorance. This meaning is applied to all sciences, apart from there sources. According to this meaning, ethics, mathematics, jurisprudence, religion, grammar, biology and astronomy all are sciences and anyone who knows one or more disciplines is considered scientists.The word knowledge is equal to this meaning (Kaboli, under the word elm).

Since, different words (meanings) have been used for the essence and nature of science when providing a definition of that it should be made clear that which meaning it is meant to express:

- The absolute perception, whether imagination or affirmation, certain or uncertain; this is a definition given by philosophers
- The absolute affirmation; whether certain or uncertain; it is said that this is the religion of theologians
- Composite perception; whether imagination or affirmation
- Disposition (Habitus) resulted from perception of these things
- It is told by some that knowledge is applied to the perception of the things and the soul of the things and to the disposition resulted from the things and codified sciences is applied to the later meaning (Tahanovi, 1996)

The present article studies knowledge and perception of human about the realities of the world and the later definition has been considered. Of course facing the realities of the world, human perception may sometimes fall into mistakes. Therefore, complete agreement between human perception and existentpercipient might not be possible always.

RELIGION

There is not a single definition for religion. Some have given this definition: religion is the belief to the creature of the world and a series of rules given to human being by Him (Kusha, 1997):

> Allame Tabatabaie has stated in his book (Almizan) that "religion a path by which man can reach real and true prosperity" (Tabatabaei, 1941)

Or it can be defined as (a series of beliefs, ethics, rules and regulation developed for the management of personal and social affairs of humanbeing and their happiness both in this world and the Hereafter) (Amoli, 2002).

From the view point of some Western scientists like Kant religion has a different aspect. He wrote in his book "Religion inside the borders of wisdom":

> Religion is that we can understand our obligations and duties-considering that they are based on divine commands. From the viewpoint of Freud religion is a mental protection against horrible natural phenomena like earthquake, flood, etc. (Hick, 1997)

But the present article provides two definitions for religion based on Islamic principles and teachings each of which has a direct influence on the type of relation with science:

- Religion is a series of knowledge derived from the Book and Sunnah
- Religion is a comprehensive program for the happiness of human both in this and the last world in the light of wisdom and Naghl

Considering the above-mentioned definitions, two ideas can be given about science and religion:

First idea: Human's knowledge of the realities of the world has been defined in this idea and religion is defined as a series of knowledge derived from the Book and Sunna. Accordingly, there is a cooperative and evolutionary relationship between science and religion, since religion, in this kind of relation, deepens knowledge and knowledge strengthens religion. In another word, science and religion provide the situation for strengthening and enrichment of each other.

In fact based on this theory, it seems difficult to have a scientific world-view and full understanding of the world without referring to the Creature and His knowledge. "Those who believe in this idea make sometimes direct theological inferences of science and believe that it can be possible to deduce the existence of God either from natural essential accidents like the existence of a planning orcreation perfection and order or from more specific discoveries like purposeful evolution. Those who believe in this idea do not attempt in some cases to obtain direct theological results from scientific discoveries but try to consider science and religion within a revealed understanding of the world. Emphasis on assistance and cooperation between scientific and religious beliefs emerged often in societies that the new scientific communities had to holdpeaceful face against powerful religious authorities. Albert Einstein believes that science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind." (Savojbolaqi and Savojbolaqi, 2010).

Based on this idea theology, jurisprudence and ethics are driven from the context of religion, since they spring directly from Quranic verses and traditions of Imams and these three sciences constitute basic essence of religion.

But sciences like logic, philosophy, Arabic literature, principles of jurisprudence, etc., serve religion because they provide the necessary ground for better understanding of basic sciences and in fact they pave the way for acquiring essential sciences.

Finally, in the first idea sciences like management, economics, sociology, physics, chemistry, astronomy, agriculture, etc. which constitute a wide range of human and experimental sciences, confirm religious sciences. The findings of these sciences strengthen and confirm religious teachings in the areas of beliefs, jurisprudence and ethics. And if any contradiction is seen between

human sciences and essential sciences it is rooted from human understanding and mistake but not from innate and real contradiction and conflict between them.

According to what has been said above, some scientists consider science and religion two supplementary areas which should be uses together to solve problems and human concerns. As Freeman Dyson says "Science and religion are two windows that people look through, trying to understand the big universe outside, trying to understand why we are here. The two windows give different views but they look out at the same universe. Both views are one-sided, neither is complete. Both leave out essential features of the real world. And both are worthy of respect".

Second idea: Again based on this idea science is defined as the human knowledge and perception of the realities of the world. But religion is defined as a comprehensive program for human prosperity and happiness both in this world and the other in the light of two sources of wisdom and Naghl.

Based on this definition there is a casual relation between science and religion, i.e., religion is the cause and origin of science and the science is the origin of religion. Because sciences are generally human or experimental and they spring either from traditional propositions (outer messenger) or from traditional propositions (inner messenger) both of which have been regarded religious and divine sources in Islamic teachings (Majlesi, 1981).

To illustrate the point, the significant role of wisdom should be referred to in this theory. Most definitions of wisdom seen in Shi'a traditions refer to the effects and functions of wisdom. To put it another way, the infallible Imams have directed us toward the role and importance of using this precious thing more than the nature and reality of wisdom itself.

The holy prophet defines wisdom as a device which harnesses ignorance and if man does not use his intellect, he will wander and go astray. In another tradition Amir al-Mo'menin (AS) describes a wise man as: someone who places everything in its (proper) place (Majlesi, 1981). To place everything in its place means proper and timely act which because of application of tradition, it covers all sayings, acts and behaviors of human being. It is notable in the first tradition that what stands against ignorance is not knowledge but wisdom as it is seen in exacttrend of compart mentalizing his book Kafi, Sheykh Koleini has allocated the first chapter to wisdom and ignorance but not to knowledge and ignorance.

In fact the idea that science springs from religion refer to the function of wisdom, since it is one of the basic sources of Islam which has a great role in knowledge production. Essentially, the process of understanding Naghl; i.e., Quranic verses and traditions are also understood in the light of wisdom. In another word, wisdom is both the source of understanding reality and the origin of science and knowledge andthe processer of Naghl and its interpreter. Understanding Naghl is possible in line with the faculty of intellect and without this faculty man cannot take a step toward understanding and production of science. In the first sermon of Nahjolbalagha, Amir al Mo'menin (AS) has stated that one of the philosophies of prophets' mission is revolution in the area of intellectuality and revival of the faculty of intellect more than before. It is notable that sense and experiment which provide the ground for production of experimental sciences are also capable of working if there exists the faculty of intellect, if not, man cannot make use of faculty of sense and experiment to produce science.

Professor Javadi Amoli states that "It can be concluded from what has been said earlier that it is not reasonable to talk about conflict between wisdom and religion as no word should be said about conflict between Naghl and religion, since both of them are covered by religion. But, there may be sometimes a conflict between wisdom and Naghl which should be taken into consideration. Science is the product of wisdom and intellect. If nothing can be said about conflict between wisdom and religion, nothing should be said about conflict between science and religion as well". The hallucination of opposition of science and religion results from separation of the area of wisdom and revelation. If we consider wisdom within the domain of religion, no space will remain for such an opposition and conflict. (Amoli, 2007).

Here we do not speak about accompanying and approving science and religion but we see a unity of science and religion and we see that science springs out of the heart of religion. But we should accept that most of religious propositions refer to theology (beliefs), ethics (moralities) and jurisprudence (rules); since the holy Quran and the Household of Prophet (AS) has considered priorities in providing Islamic teachings and knowledge and if they did not provide these teachings and knowledge, man would not be able to acquire them correctly and properly and as a result he would step behind the path of prosperity and to gain access to God. Moreover, these three sciences including beliefs, ethics and rules are based on fundamental insights, values and methods of life and are dominated over the other sciences because from monotheistic perspective, there is no problem if a specialist in one science is not expert in

another but he should be expert in these three sciences. To put it another word an engineer might not be a physician and a physician might not be an engineer but both of them should be expert in beliefs, ethics and rules. Today, human sciences like psychology and sociology should be established based on this macro idea and a considerable part of changes in human sciences should be sought in the reform of fundamental ideas in another word, a scientist in the area of human sciences should know that his scientific productions, both considering their source and their functions, might be religious. Now, if he uses methodological, ethical and scientific obligations to use wisdom and Naghl, he will be successful in his work, otherwise, his scientific discoveries will fall apart from reality and will be just a dozen of meaningless nouns.

Anyway, if we see wisdom and religion within religion, then their conflict with religion will be meaningless. There may be a conflict between abstractive and experimental wisdom and Naghl as there might be a conflict between two Naghl (sayings) which should be removed properly according to what has been stated in exegetics and principles of jurisprudence. If there is a real conflict, then the most strongest argument should be taken into consideration and if it is solvable they should be accepted based on a validated method (Amoli, 2007).

CONCLUSION

Considering the above-mentioned definitions of science and religion two ideas can be suggested about the contraction of science and religion.

In the first idea, only sciences like theology, jurisprudence and ethics are considered religious sciences because they constitute the basis and essence of religion. Sciences like logic, philosophy, Arabic literature, principles of jurisprudence, etc. are not religious sciences but they serve religious sciences and finally, sciences like management, economics, sociology, physics, chemistry, astronomy, agriculture, etc., confirm religious sciences which strengthen and stable religion. Based on this theory, popular human and experimental sciences are not religious science they are outside the domain of religion but confirm and it.

But in the second idea, science is the effect of religion and religion is the origin of science. Because, human or experimental sciences either spring from traditional propositions (inner messenger) or from intellectual propositions (outer messenger) both of which are religious and divine sources. For this reason, science production in the area of human and experimental sciences spring from the heart of religious sources and therefore they can be regarded religious sciences.

It should be noted that traditional and religious propositions either in the area of human sciences or experimental sciences are absolute reality and they have no expiration date. But they have different degrees of importance and priority which have been considered by holy Imams inproviding Islamic teachings and knowledge. For this reason their teachings in the area of dogmatic theology, ethics and jurisprudence have a wider scope and quantity. Finally, it should be said that not Naghl nor common sensedoes not speak erroneously, rather it is man who may have mistaken in understanding and taking use of Naghl and wisdom. For this reason, what religion wills and what man understands of it are not always completely consistent and some understandings of Naghl and wisdom in two areas of human and experimental sciences might not be decisive. But what is important is systematic effort based on existent rules and evidences.

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