

# The Main Sources of Proving Validity in 'Ilm'ul Usul

We have come to know that the process of deduction consists of common as well as particular elements, and that *'Ilm'ul Usul* is the science, which deals with the common elements in which elements are studied, defined and systematized.

Since *'Ilm'ul Usul* is the science responsible for the study of these common elements, the basic question naturally arises: What are the sources which *'Ilm'ul Usul* utilizes to prove the validity of al-Khabar or al-Zuhurul'Urfi etc., as proofs, from the common elements in the process of deduction ?

A similar type of question is faced in every branch of knowledge. For instance, in relation to the natural sciences we ask: What are the means of proof which these sciences utilize to discover and establish natural laws? The answer is that the chief source of proof in the natural sciences is experimentation. Or in relation to grammar we ask: What are the means of proof utilized by the grammarian to discover the laws relating to the inflection of a word and to define the conditions in which it is placed in the nominative or the accusative case? The answer is that in grammar the main sources of proof are the quotations from the basic sources of the language and the words originally used. Thus *'Ilm'ul Usul* has necessarily to face this question and to lay down, at the very beginning, the sources of proof, which, it has to utilize to establish and define the common elements.

In this connection we can say that the main methods of proof (or proving validity) which *'Ilm'ul Usul* has to utilize, can be reduced to two categories, viz.,

1. al-Bayan al-Shar'i (The text of Qur'an or the Sunnah).
2. al-Idrak al-'Aqli (Intellectual discernment).

Thus no proposition acquires the mark of a common element in the process of deduction, nor is it permissible to utilize it in this process unless it can be proved by one of these two main methods.

Therefore, if the specialist in *'Ilm'ul Usul* is endeavoring to study, for instance, the validity of al-Khabar (report) as a proof, so that he may utilize it in the process of deduction, if it happens to be valid, he will

ask himself these two questions:

- (a) Is there any al-Bayan al-Shar'i (i.e. text of the Qur'an or the Sunnah) which indicates the validity of al-Khabar as a proof?
- (b) Do we discern with our intellects or not that it is a valid proof that has to be followed?

The specialist in *'Ilm'ul Usul* will endeavour in his study to answer these two questions in accordance with the level of meticulousness and caution. If, therefore, he concludes his study with answers in the negative to both the questions, it means that he possesses no sources of proving the validity of al-Khabar as a proof. Consequently, he would exclude al-Khabar from the scope of deduction. If, however, he is able to answer in the affirmative to either of the two questions, it means that he can prove the validity of al-Khabar as a proof and can include it in the process of deduction as a common element in *'Ilm'ul Usul*. We shall see in the forthcoming discussions that a number of common elements have been proved by the first source (i.e. al-Bayan al-Shar'i or a text of the Qur'an or the Sunnah) while a number of others have been proved by the second (i.e. al-Idrak ul-'Aqli or intellectual discernment). In the first category falls the validity of al-Khabar and al-Zuhurul'Urfi as proofs, while an example of the second type is the law that states "an act cannot be both obligatory and prohibited at the same time".

In the light of the above we come to know that it is essential, before beginning the study of *'Ilm'ul Usul*, to determine the common elements, so that we may study the fundamental sources which this science has to use to prove the validity of those elements, and to define their limitations so that afterwards we can use them in accordance with those limitations.

## Text of the Qur'an or the Sunnah

Al-Bayan al-Shar'i is one of the two fundamental means of proving the validity of the elements that participate in the process of deduction. By al-Bayan al-Shar'i we mean the following:

- (i) The Holy Book, i.e. the Qur'an that was sent down miraculously through revelation of both meaning and words, to the noblest of the Messengers –Muhammad (P).
- (ii) al-Sunnah, i.e. every statement originating from the Messenger or from one of the twelve infallible Imams. The statements originating from them are of three types:
  - (a) al-Bayanul Ijabi al-Qauli, i.e. the words spoken by one of the infallibles.
  - (b) al-Bayanul Ijabi al-Fe'li, i.e. an act done by one of the infallibles.
  - © al-Bayan al-Salbi, i.e. the silence of one of the infallibles about a specific situation in such a way as to reveal his approval of it and its being in conformity with the *Shari'ah*.

It is incumbent that we take all forms of Bayan Shar'i into consideration. Thus if anyone form, demonstrates the validity of a common element in the process of deduction then that common element is proved and acquires the stamp of legality in the *Shari'ah*.

In this connection there are a number of points to be discussed, but we shall leave these for the forthcoming discussions.

## Intellectual Discernment

*Al-Idrakul 'Aqli* is the second fundamental source used in the researches of *'Ilm'ul Usul* to prove the validity of the common elements in the process of deduction. A common element in the process of deduction is that which we discern with our intellect without the necessity of recourse to al-Bayan al-Shar'i to prove its validity. *Al-Idrakul 'Aqli* is of the nature of the law that "an act cannot be both prohibited and obligatory at the same time". We are not in need of any al-Bayan al-Shar'i, consisting of the form of laws of this type in order to prove the validity of this law. It is proved through reason because the intellect discerns that obligation and prohibition are two contradictory qualities and that a single entity cannot simultaneously have two contradictory qualities. So just as a body cannot have the qualities of both motion and rest at the same time, similarly an act cannot both be obligatory and forbidden.

*Al-Idrakul 'Aqli* has various sources and different degrees. As far as sources go, *Al-Idrakul 'Aqli* includes the following.

- (a) Intellectual discernment based on sense-experience and experimentation. An example of this is our discernment that water boils if its temperature reaches 1000 C. and that placing water on fire for a long time will cause it to boil.
- (b) Intellectual discernment based on self-evident truths. Examples of this are the discernments of all of us that one is half of two or that two contradictories cannot coexist in one entity and that the whole is greater than the part. These facts are self-evident and reason is naturally impelled to (accept) them without any effort or hesitation.
- (c) Intellectual discernment based on theoretical speculation. An example of this is our discernment that the effect will cease once the cause ceases. This fact is not self-evident and reason is not naturally impelled to accept it. But it is discerned through speculation based on proofs and arguments.

The different degrees in which *Al-Idrakul 'Aqli* is divided include the following:

- (i) Complete, definite discernment: This is the type of intellectual discernment of a fact in which there can be no error or doubt, e.g. our discernment that the sum of the angles of a triangle is equal to two right angles, or that two contradictories cannot simultaneously coexist in the same entity, or that the earth is spherical or that water becomes heated when placed on fire.
- (ii) Imperfect intellectual discernment: This is the inclination of the mind to consider a thing likely without complete certainty owing to the possibility of error, e.g. our discernment that the horse which won previous races will win next time also, or that the medicines which succeeded in curing specific diseases will succeed in curing diseases with similar symptoms, or that an act, which resembles a prohibited act, in most cases, shares the quality of prohibition also.

The basic question, in this study is: What are the limitations of reason or of intellectual discernment that function as a fundamental means of proving the validity of the common elements in the process of deduction? Thus is it possible to use intellectual discernment as a means of proving validity regardless of its source or reliability or is it not permissible to use it to establish validity except within fixed limits as regards its source or reliability?

Concerning this point, this study is directed more to the treatment of the question of reliability than to the treatment of the question of source. The researches of *'Ilm'ul Usul* concerning the limitations of reason from the point of view of reliability have become extensive. The views concerning the scope of reason and its limitations also differ vis-à-vis using it as a fundamental means for proving validity. Thus the question arises as to whether imperfect intellectual discernment (which leads only to probability and likelihood) can be included, or whether it should be restricted to complete definite intellectual discernment (which gives certainty).

Thus, the history of this study is extensive in the field of *'Ilm'ul Usul* and in the field of the history of legal thinking as well, as we shall see later.

## **Contradictory Tendencies Regarding Al-Idrakul 'Aqli**

The history of legal thinking reveals two completely contradictory tendencies regarding this point. One tendency calls for the use of reason in its extensive sphere including the imperfect intellectual discernments as a fundamental source for establishing validity in the different fields studied by the specialists in *'Ilm'ul Usul* and *'Ilm'ul Fiqh*. The other tendency sharply criticizes reason and divests it of its being a fundamental means of proving validity. This second tendency considers al-Bayan al-Shar'i as the sole means that can be used in the process of deduction.

Between these two extremist tendencies, there is a third moderate tendency represented by the majority of the jurists of the school of thought of the Ahl al Bayt. This tendency believes, contrary to the second one mentioned above, that reason or intellectual discernment is a fundamental means of proving validity in addition to al-Bayan al-Shar'i, but not in the unqualified manner propounded by the first tendency and only within the limits wherein man achieves total satisfaction and definite intellectual discernment about which there is no likelihood of error.

Thus every intellectual perception, which falls within this category and conveys complete certainty, is a means for proving validity. However the imperfect intellectual discernments that are based on likelihood, and are not capable of giving the element of certainty, are not valid as means for proving the validity of any of the elements in the process of deduction.

Thus reason, according to this third tendency, is a valid instrument of knowledge and deserves to be relied on and to establish validity, if it leads to the definite discernment of any fact to which no doubt is attached. Thus neither there is rejection of reason as an instrument of knowledge, nor is there exaggeration in relying on it where it does not give a definite and certain discernment.

This moderate tendency, represented by the majority of the jurists of the school of thought of Ahl al Bayt, demanded that those jurists should engage in the combat on two fronts –one against the first tendency which the Ahl al Ra'y (the exponents of the use of individual judgments) adopted under the leadership of a group of eminent scholars from the general public, and the other against the internal movement within the ranks of the Imami jurists, represented by the traditionalists and Akhbaris (the exponents of al-

*Hadith* and al-Khabar) from among the Shi'ah scholars, who sharply criticized reason and claimed that al-Bayan al-Shar'i is the sole means, which can be used to prove validity. Thus we come to know that the first struggle was against the unqualified use of reason and the second in defense of its use in a qualified manner.

## **Struggle Against the Unqualified use of Reason**

During the middle of the second century (A.H.) there arose a school of thought of jurisprudence known as the school of thought of *Ra'y* and *Ijtihad* (with the first meaning of the latter as discussed in Chapter 2). This school propounded the use of reason (in its extensive meaning including probability, conjecture, and individual estimation) as a basic instrument for proving validity in addition to al-Bayan al-Shar'i and as a fundamental source for the jurist in the process of deduction. This process was given the name of *Ijtihad*.

Heading this school or among its leaders was Abu Hanifah (d. 150 A.H.). It has been transmitted from the leading personalities of this school that whenever they did not find any al-Bayan al-Shar'i indicating the law of the *Shari'ah*, on a specific matter, they would study the matter in the light of their individual judgments and of what they perceived about suitability and appropriateness pertaining to their individual thinking and accordingly preferred one stand-point to another. They would then deliver their verdict in accordance with their conjectures and preferences. To this they gave the name *Istihsan* or *Ijtihad*.

It is well known that Abu Hanifah was conspicuous in the exercise of this sphere of jurisprudence. It has been reported from his pupil, Muhammad ibn Hasan that Abu Hanifah used to debate with his colleagues and they would demand justice from him and contradict him until he said, "This is *Istihsan* ", and then no one contradicted him. A statement reported from him, in that he describes his methodology of deduction, says, "I follow the Book of Allah (the Qur'an), if I find any text in it, otherwise I follow the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah. However if I find no text in the Qur'an or in the Sunnah, I follow the statements of others. Thus if the matter ultimately gets to Sha'bi, Muhammad ibn Hasan or Ibn Sirin, then I am entitled to make *Ijtihad* just as they did".

The basic concept leading to the establishment of this school of thought, and to the adoption of unqualified reason as a fundamental means of proving validity and as a source for the deduction of laws, is the idea prevalent in the ranks of that school. It says, "Al-Bayan al-Shar'i, as represented in the Qur'an and the Sunnah, is insufficient and contains the laws on a limited number of propositions only. It is not enough to lay down the laws of the Shari'ah on many propositions and problems".

The propagation of this idea among the jurists of the masses was aided by their inclination toward the Sunni school of thought (Mazhab), wherein they believed that al-Bayan al-Shar'i is represented only in the Qur'an and the Sunnah transmitted from the Messenger. Since these suffice only for partial needs of deduction, they endeavoured to remedy the situation, and to satisfy the other needs, by extending the use of reason and proclaiming the principle of *Ijtihad*. However the jurists of the Imamiyah school of

thought, because of their religious standpoint, held the opposite view, as they believed that al-Bayan al-Shar'i still continued with the existence of the Imams. Thus they found no moral motive for any illegitimate extension in the sphere of reason.

Anyhow the idea of the inadequacy of the Qur'an and the Sunnah to meet the needs of deduction spread, and played a vital role in the intellectual outlook of many of the jurists and in their extremist point of view concerning reason.

This idea developed and became more and more serious gradually, as it changed from imputing to al-Bayan al-Shar'i (i.e. the Qur'an and the Sunnah), deficiency, incompleteness and lack of proof for the laws relating to many propositions, and began to impute to the *Shari'ah* itself, deficiency and inability to deal with the various aspects of life. Thus the question no longer remained one of deficiency in al-Bayan al-Shar'i and in its elucidation, but in the Divine *Shari'ah* itself. Their proof for this alleged deficiency in the *Shari'ah* is that it had not laid down any law for many other matters not known to the Muslims. The *Shari'ah* had set out its laws and proofs through the Qur'an and the Sunnah so that these may be followed and may form a code of life for the ummah (nation). In the minds of the masses the texts of the Qur'an and the Sunnah, did not include the laws on many propositions and problems. It indicates the deficiency and incompleteness of the *Shari'ah* and that Allah had promulgated only a limited number of laws in Islam. These are the laws described in the Qur'an and the Sunnah. As for legislation in other spheres, He left to man, or to the jurists especially, to devise laws on the basis of *Ijtihad* and deduction, on the condition that none of the latter laws will contradict any of the limited laws of the *Shari'ah* laid down in the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Messenger.

We have seen that this extremist tendency regarding reason was the result of the propagation of the concept of imperfection (in the Qur'an and the Sunnah) and the connotations thereof. When this idea of imperfection imputed to al-Bayan al-Shar'i developed to become imperfection imputed to the *Shari'ah* itself, this development was reflected in the field of Sunni thinking. This resulted in the doctrine of *Taswib* (Imputing correctness) in which that extremist tendency regarding reason reached its utmost limit. To elucidate this point it is necessary to explain the doctrine of *Taswib*.

## **The Doctrine of Taswib (Imputing Correctness)**

After the jurists of the school of thought of *Ra'y* and *Ijtihad* had come to regard it as lawful for them to follow probabilities, conjectures and preferences in accordance with the extremist tendency regarding reason, naturally differences arose in the laws that they derived through *Ijtihad*. This was due to the differences in their views, in their ways of thinking and in the kind of preferences to which they attached importance. Thus, one jurist considers that in a certain case prohibition would be preferable because that act involves harm and injury, while another feels that permissiveness would be preferable since it involves expansion of the freedom of the servants of Allah and so on.

At this juncture the following point arose: What is the position of the Mujtahids who differ in arriving at a

correct view in a specific case? Is it to be taken that they are all correct as long as each of them had given judgment according to his individual *Ijtihad*? Or should it be considered that only one of them is correct while the others are all in error?

The view spread among the ranks of the school propounding *Ra'y* and *Ijtihad* that all the differing Mujtahids are correct because Allah has given no confirmed general law in the fields where *Ijtihad* is necessary, i.e., in which the texts of the Qur'an and the Sunnah are not adequate. Thus the pronouncement of the law is related to the estimation of the Mujtahid and what his views and preferences lead to. This is the doctrine of *Taswib* or imputing correctness.

In this light we can clearly elucidate what we have mentioned above. The doctrine of *Taswib* reflects the development of the idea of deficiency and its transformation into imputing deficiency and incompleteness to the *Shari'ah* directly. It allowed these jurists to deny the existence of a definite law of the *Shari'ah* in the fields dealt with by *Ijtihad* and to consider all the differing Mujtahids as correct.

Thus we come to know that the idea of deficiency in al-Bayan al-Shar'i led to this extremist tendency regarding reason, which acted as a substitute to fill the alleged deficiency. As this idea of deficiency developed into the imputation of deficiency and incompleteness in the *Shari'ah* itself, the doctrine of *Taswib* was brought about by that extremist tendency regarding reason.

Now this development in the concept of deficiency, which led to the imputation of deficiency to the *Shari'ah* and in believing all the differing Mujtahids to be correct, brought about a great change in the understanding of "Reason" and "*Ijtihad*", as envisaged by the exponents of this extremist tendency regarding reason. So far we have been discussing reason and intellectual discernment as a means of proving validity, i.e. of revealing the laws of the *Shari'ah* just as the texts of the Qur'an and the Sunnah reveal such laws. However this concept of deficiency in the *Shari'ah*, on the basis of which rested the doctrine of *Taswib*, transformed the task of the jurist in the spheres of *Ijtihad* into one of legislation and .nor of discovering the law.

Thus "Reason" in its comprehensive meaning and "*Ijtihad*" as used by this extremist tendency regarding reason, were not considered on the basis of the concept of deficiency in the *Shari'ah* as means of discovering the laws of the *Shari'ah*, because there was no definite law of the *Shari'ah* to be discovered by *Ijtihad* within its scope. Instead, reason and *Ijtihad* were the bases of the formulation of new laws by the Mujtahid, in accordance with his individual judgment. In this way, *Ijtihad* became transformed on the basis of the doctrine of *Taswib*, into a, source of legislation, and the jurist became one who legislates in the fields dealing with *Ijtihad*, and who, discovers the law in the fields pertaining to the texts of the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

We do not wish tat his juncture to study the doctrine of *Taswib* and criticize fit. Our only aim is to show the gravity of this extremist tendency regarding reason, and the importance of the struggle waged by the, school of thought of the Ahlal Bayt against it. It was not merely a struggle against a tendency in '*Ilm'ul*

*Usul*, in reality it was a struggle to defend the *Shari'ah* to uphold its completeness and perfection and to demonstrate that it deals with all the different aspects of life. Then the tradition were transmitted from the Imams of the Ahlal Bayt during the period of that struggle, stressing that the *Shari'ah* includes all laws and systematization that humanity stands in need of, in all walks of life. These traditions also emphasized that adequate al-Bayan al-Shar'i is found for everyone about those laws in the Holy Qur'an, the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet and the statements of the Imams.

Here we mention a few of those traditions taken from *Usul'ul Kafi*:

1. It is reported from Imam Sadiq (a): "Allah has revealed in the Qur'an the clear exposition of all things, such that He has not left out anything which His servants may stand in need of; hence no one can say, 'If this had been revealed in the Qur'an ...' because Allah has so revealed that in it."
2. It is also reported from him, "There is nothing which is not included in the text of the Qur'an or the Sunnah".
3. It is reported that Imam Musa Ibn Ja'far (a) was once asked, "Is everything contained in the Qur'an and the Sunnah, or do you add anything to it?" He replied, "Everything is contained in the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Messenger".
4. In a tradition Imam Sadiq (a), is reported to have described "Jame'a" which sums up the laws of the *Shari'ah*. He said, "In it (i.e., the *Shari'ah*) is contained every lawful and unlawful thing and everything that mankind stands in need of, even the penalty for causing injury by scratching".

## Contrary Reactions in Sunni Theology

The waging of this violent struggle by the school of thought of the Ahlal Bayt against the extremist tendency regarding reason does not mean that this tendency was generally acceptable in the sphere of Sunni theology, and that the struggle against it was waged specially in the Jurisprudence of the Imamiyah school of thought. On the contrary this extremist tendency regarding reason met with opposition from some Sunni circles also. There were reactions against it in many fields of thought as well.

In the field of *Fiqh* the activity of refutation was represented by the establishment of the Zahiri school of thought by Daud ibn Ali ibn Khalf Isfahani during the middle of the third century. This school called for following the literal meanings of the Qur'an and the Sunnah and for remaining confined to al-Bayan al-Shar'i. It also condemned taking recourse to reason.

This act of refutation was reflected by the sphere of 'Aqa'id (beliefs) and *Kalam* (scholastic theology) as represented by the Ash'arite school of thought, which discarded reason and claimed that it lacked the power to issue laws even in the field of 'Aqa'id. It had been commonly accepted by the *Ulema'* that the obligation of coming to know Allah and the *Shari'ah* is not a law of the *Shari'ah* but a law based on reason. This is because the laws of the *Shari'ah* have no power of motivation and influence in the life of man except after he knows his Lord and His *Shari'ah*.

Thus it is essential that the motivating force for knowing Allah and His *Shari'ah* must be of a different nature vis-à-vis the laws of the *Shari'ah*, i.e. it should be of the kind of law which is based on reason. My contention is that while this had been generally accepted by the Mutakallimin (theologians), Ash'ari opposed this and discarded reason for issuing law in any capacity. He stressed that the obligation to come to know Allah is a law of the *Shari'ah* similar to the obligation to fast or to offer prayers.

This act of refutation extended to the sphere of ethics, which at that time formed a part of *'Ilm'ul Kalam* (scholastic theology). The followers of the Ash'arite school of thought denied that reason had the power to distinguish good actions from evil ones even in the most obvious cases. Thus reason cannot distinguish between injustice and justice, but the first became evil and the second good owing to al-Bayan al-Shar'i. Had al-Bayan al-Shar'i deemed injustice good and justice evil, then reason would have had no right to object to that.

These reactions did not consist of less shame and danger than the extremist tendency regarding reason itself. This is because they set out to pass judgment against reason entirely and absolutely, and to strip it of many of its capabilities. Also they set out to stop intellectual development and growth in Islamic thought, because of their complete devotion to the texts of the Almighty Law giver and their zeal to safeguard the Qur'an and the Sunnah. These reactions thus differed fundamentally from the stand-point of the school of thought of the Ahl al Bayt, as the latter, side by side while struggling against the extremist tendency regarding reason, emphasized the importance of reason and the necessity of relying on it within permissible limits and of utilizing it within those limits as a fundamental means of proving validity, in addition to al-Bayan al-Shar'i. The following is the text transmitted from the Ahl al Bayt: "Allah has two authorities over mankind the external and the internal. The external authority consists of the Messengers, the Prophets and the Imams, while the internal is the intellect (of reason)".

This text clearly reiterates the establishment of reason as a fundamental instrument for proving validity, in addition to al-Bayan al-Shar'i.

Thus the school of thought of the Ahl al Bayt combined defending the *Shari'ah* from the concept of deficiency, while defending reason from the attack of those who are impervious to progress.

We shall return to this topic in a comprehensive and academic manner during the forthcoming discussions.

## **The Struggle in Defence of Reason**

As regards the extremist tendency renouncing and condemning reason, found within the sphere of Imami thinking, it came to be represented by a group of our 'ulema who took the name "al-Akhbariyyin wal Muhaddithih" (the scholars of the traditions). They opposed the role of reason in different fields and remained content with al-Bayan al Shar'i alone. This is because reason is prone to error and the history of intellectual thought is full of its errors and mistakes, Thus reason is not fit to be used as an instrument for proving validity in any of the fields of religion.

These Akhbaris are the very group that had launched an attack on *Ijtihad*, as referred to in the previous chapter. The history of this tendency had its origin in the beginning of the eleventh century A.H. It was proclaimed by al-Mirza Muhammad Amin Istirabadi, (d. 1023 A.H:) who was at that time living in Medina. He wrote a book called “al-Fawa'id al Madaniyyah” in which he crystallized this tendency, brought forth proofs and arguments for that and made it into a separate school of thought.

In his book Istirabadi emphasized that the branches of human knowledge are of two kinds – one in which the propositions are derived from sense–experience and the other in which sense–experience is not the basis, nor can the conclusions be verified by it. The author, Muhaddith Istirabadi was of the view that mathematics falls in the first category as it derives its fundamental principles, as he claimed, from sense–experience. As for the second category it is represented by metaphysics that studies prepositions far removed from the reach and limits of sense–experience. Its propositions include the nonmaterial nature of the soul and its continued existence after the body is buried and mortality of the universe.

According to the belief of Muhaddith Istirabadi, the first category of the branches of human knowledge alone deserves full confidence as it relies on sense–experience.

Mathematics, for example, relies, in the final analysis on propositions within the reach of sense–experience, similar to  $2+2 = 4$ . As regards the second category it has no value; and no confidence in reason is possible regarding the conclusions it reaches in this category, because here reason is far removed from sense–experience.

In this way Istirabadi propounded his analysis of knowledge by making sense–experience a fundamental standard for distinguishing the value of knowledge and the scope of the possibility of reliance on it.

In this light we see clearly that this tendency regarding sense–experience in the view of Muhaddith Istirabadi inclines towards the school of thought of sensationalism in the theory of knowledge, which states that sense–experience is the basis of knowledge. Therefore we can term the movement of the Akhbaris in Islamic thought as one of the means in which the tendency regarding sense–experience infiltrated into our intellectual heritage.

The Akhbaris, whatever they represented concerning sense–experience, preceded the philosophical trend of sensationalism that was propounded by John Locke (d. 1704 A.D.) and David Hume (d. 1776 A.D.). The death of Istirabadi preceded Locke's death by about a hundred years. We can call the former a contemporary of Francis Bacon (d. 1626 A.D.), who had paved the way for the trend of sensationalism in European philosophy.

In any case there is a remarkable intellectual unison between the intellectual movement of the Akhbaris and the schools of sensationalism and experimentalism in European philosophy. All of them made a severe attack on reason and nullified the value of all its conclusions that were not derived from sense–experience.

The movement of Muhaddith Istirabadi against knowledge arrived at by reason divorced from sense–

experience, reached the same conclusions as were recorded by the philosophies of sensationalism in the history of European thought, as it found itself ultimately, owing to its erroneous outlook, opposed to every proof arrived at by reason, which the believers use to prove the existence of Allah. This is because all these proofs are included in the sphere of knowledge arrived at by reason divorced from sense-experience.

Thus we find, for instance, a Muhaddith like Sayyid Ni'matullah al-Jaza'iri openly challenging these proofs in accordance with his Akhbari outlook (i.e. of the school of the Akhbaris). This has been transmitted by the jurist Shaykh Yusuf Bahrani in his book "al-Durar al-Najafiyyah". However that did not lead the Akhbari outlook to apostasy as it led the European philosophies of sensationalism. This is due to the difference in circumstances that helped the growth and development of both of them.

The theory of knowledge of the trend of sensationalism and experimentalism were developed at the dawn of the Renaissance owing to the movement of experimentation and the accentuation of its importance. It thus had the susceptibility of rejecting all knowledge derived from reason divorced from sense-experience.

However, the movement of the Akhbaris possessed religious motives. It had discarded reason on account of the *Shari'ah*, not on account of experimentation. Thus it was not possible for its opposition to reason to lead to a denial and rejection of the *Shari'ah* and of religion.

Thus the movement of the Akhbaris suffered from internal self-contradiction, in the view of many of its critics, because, on the one hand, it condemned reason in order to clear the way for al-Bayan al-Shar'i to legislate and promulgate *Fiqh*, while, on the other hand it continued to depend on reason to prove the validity of its religious tenets. This is because the proofs of the existence of the Creator and of the validity of Islam are not possible through al-Bayan al-Shar'i, but have to be grasped through reason.

---

**Source URL:**

<https://www.al-islam.org/short-history-ilm-ul-usul-sayyid-muhammad-baqir-al-sadr/main-sources-proving-validity-ilmul-usul#comment-0>