


Assessment and Critique of Islamic Knowledge & Science as Formulated by Ayatollah Javadi Amoli

Qodratullah Qorbani¹

Professor of Philosophy, Kharazmi University, Tehran, Iran.

Article Info	Abstract
<p>Article type: Research Article</p> <p>Article history: Received 18 February 2023 Received in revised from 4 April 2023 Accepted 12 July 2023 Published online 28 January 2024</p> <p>Keywords: creation, Islam, Islamic knowledge, nature, reason, religion, textual evidence</p>	<p>Contemplating and discussing the functions of religion is one of the crucial problems in an Islamic society. In this regard, defending and articulating the epistemological functions of Islam proves both vital and challenging. Ayatollah Javadi Amoli granting the perfect nature of Islam as a comprehensive system of faith in meeting the material and spiritual needs of humans highlights such a need. He offers precise accounts of religion, reason and knowledge, articulates various aspects of reason and identifies the borderlines. He goes on to highlight the limitations of reason, and distinctions between heavenly revelation and textual evidence and accounts for the functions of religion in providing the foundations and some data of science. By laying emphasis on the status of human beings as a subject in the epistemological processes like secular knowledge and authenticity of Islamic knowledge, Ayatollah Amoli examines the roots of western empirical traditions of secularizing human thought. Conceding the originality of knowledge in Islam, the solutions for the development of Islamic knowledge are offered. To this latter end, the changes in views and attitudes gain importance where naturalistic and secular philosophies need to be deemphasized at the cost of adopting religious and particularly Islamic worldview that can ensure islamicizing knowledge. Eventually, the divine origin and revelation-based source prescribes philosophy as an advantage since it is deemed a facilitating tool for achieving such goals.</p>
<p>Cite this article: Qorbani, Q. (2024). Assessment and Critique of Islamic Knowledge & Science as Formulated by Ayatollah Javadi Amoli, <i>Journal of Contemporary Studies on Religion and Science</i>, 0(1), 33-49.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">  Publisher: Research Institute of Science and Strategic Evolution </p>	

¹ **Email:** qodratullahqorbani@khu.ac.ir

Introduction

Ayatollah Abdollah Javadi Amoli, a renowned pillar of contemporary Shia theologians, has a rich background of philosophical, dialectical and theological contemplations that need to be complemented by reflection, and fundamental frameworks for scholarly endeavors. These views span over a wide range of epistemological issues and themes including knowledge and religious faith in general, and Islamic knowledge in particular the latter of which is duly represented in his two books, namely ‘Sharia through the Mirror of Epistemes and Status’, ‘Reason in the Geometry of Religious Epistemology’, alongside some other manuscripts. It must be noted that he has authored many books and articles that deal with these issues implicitly; however, the direct and straightforward line of thinking offered in the two books have been the major sources of citation on developing Islamic knowledge and Islamicizing universities.

He is primarily recognized as a leading jurisprudent, philosopher, theologian, and a religious scholar. Thanks to a good command of religious knowledge as rooted in Quran, Hadith, logic-based and text-based scholarship, his views tend to be so comprehensive and all-embracing that they contribute to his outstanding role in theorizing new frameworks. In other words, he examines and explores new themes and issues from multiple perspectives within which his unique attitudes are evident with regard to human knowledge in general and especially religious knowledge. To put it differently, his approach to knowledge involves an innovative method of interpretation in the light of religious insight with all the related doctrines and principles, which render his method a distinguished quality from others. To explore his views, we will go through his accounts of knowledge, religion, the relationship between the two, their features, human reason as distinctly identified from heavenly revelation, the features of Islamic knowledge, the ways of Islamicizing scholarship and ultimately the outward features of Islamicized universities.

1. Religious Faith, Knowledge and Reason

In Ayatollah’s terms, religious faith is composed of belief, morals, and jurisprudence which are usually emphasized in Islamic theology. On this very basis, the assumption is that religion is the artefact of the Deity such that the source of law-making in terms of justification and content is the Almighty just as the moral content and what of principles of belief are all determined in the same way by the divine source¹.

Correspondingly, it would be possible to describe the features of reason and knowledge. In Ayatollah’s view, knowledge or knowledge-based satisfaction is the type of knowledge which originates from a pure empirical premise, a pure abstract one, or a combination of the two. This

¹ Abdollah, Javadi Amoli, *Shokufayi Aql dar Partow-e Nahzat-e Hosseini* [The Flourishing of Reason in the Light of the Hussaini Movement]. 4th ed (Qom: Markaz-e Nashr-e Esra', 2007), 19.

suggests that human reason has a hierarchical nature, the different hierarchies of which can be characterized as follows: 1) pure reason the fruit of which is theoretical Gnosticism, 2) semi-abstract reason the results of which is the mathematically-based knowledge, 3) Empirical reason which results in empirical science, and finally, 4) abstract reason which has given rise to philosophy and rational knowledge¹. Therefore, in such an account, reason and knowledge are not separate phenomena, but they are of the same nature that differ merely in the degree of abstractness. Also, all of them are essentially related to human. One can conclude that rational knowledge is not opposed to empirical knowledge since they are linearly related and their status is a matter of order. On this very basis, reason and knowledge can be held equivalent since in his words, by knowledge we mean ensuring a state of satisfaction that is achieved as a result of applying pure empirical, pure abstract premise or a combination of both. We can accordingly develop an expression of reason in empirical sense that results in the creation of empirical science just as the possibility of a philosophical reason giving rise to philosophy and logical knowledge. This would render the confrontation of philosophy and knowledge absurd since it embraces both philosophical and knowledge-based arenas. In his view, “reason can embrace what is conventionally meant by knowledge and philosophy and distinguishing the two is just a linguistic innovation. Knowledge and science in their absolute sense include both though the reason is the point of departure for initiating the problems”².

What the Ayatollah stresses here is the importance of the relationship between reason and textual evidence and their distinction from revelation. The equality between reason and textual evidence and not between the former and revelation indicates that philosophical knowledge and logical science cannot have the same status. On the other hand, the fields like empirical or logical science can be held similar or identical, which suggests that they can be in a way like philosophical premises or textual appreciation of canonical religious texts. One can propose that it is possible to verify reason through textual evidence and vice versa but revelation is of a different nature and beyond the scope of the two³.

From Ayatollah Amoli’s point of view, “Neither reason nor textual evidence are comparable to revelation that is the most supreme level of knowledge, pure truth and complete intuition; therefore, no knowledge can be at the same level as heavenly revelation and no knowledgeable creature can and will be equal to the perfect humans like infallibles (i.e. prophet and Imans)”⁴.

¹ Javadi Amoli, *Shokufayi*, 19

² Javadi Amoli, *Shokufayi*, 75

³ Javadi Amoli, *Shokufayi*, 36

⁴ Javadi Amoli, *Shokufayi*, 37

2. Functions and Limitations of Reason

Since reason is essentially a human trait and far short of revelation, it has its functions and limitations. Human reason is at the core of his superiority over the other creatures and for this very reason humans are the best of creatures that represent the Almighty on earth. However, it does have its limitations and functions. It is by means of applying the principles and inferences of the reasoning power that humans have the power to choose, and make decisions based on their volition and are endowed with liberty and authority to determine their destiny. On the other hand, humans have inherent limitations as well, and do not boast all the perfect endowments, which is also applicable in the case of reason. Ayatollah Javadi Amoli raises the phenomenological and epistemological aspects of reason in religious faith and demarcates its territory that has its shortcomings. He believes that reason cannot have a significant role in religious epistemology since the only source for that is simply Deity's volition and knowledge the primary and secondary contents of which are determined by the Almighty. In fact, human reason lacks the status to set laws, and express judgmental propositions. The only capacity that is attributable to reason is reporting and cognizing the Deity's laws and regulations¹.

When it comes to epistemology of religion, human reason is different to some extent since it acts as a mediator for exploring, and understanding the laws. Though it cannot be the criterion for religious faith. In other words, despite the fact that human reason is the key to appreciating, understanding and identifying the propositions in religion, it cannot serve as a judgement source that can set criteria for religious propositions. As Ayatollah puts it, "reason can contribute to understanding religion and extracting laws therein; nevertheless, it concedes that it has many shortages. It comprehends it can be present in some aspects but not in others. Also, the reason finds the realization of Deity's existence as a no-entry zone as non-created entity. Since his attributes and essence are one and the same, identifying and characterizing the Deity's attributes is another no-entry zone for the human reason. Yet another limitation for the reason is that it cannot interfere in minute details of religious affairs.

Such distinctions, however, do not suggest that they are opposed to each other; on the contrary, they tend to complement. According to Ayatollah Javadi Amoli, lack of incongruence between revelation and reason does not amount to the claim that the former is neutral or unresponsive towards the rational principles of religion or it is incapable of offering views.

¹ Javadi Amoli, *Shokufayi*, 39

Rather, what revelation expresses is the same body of knowledge deposited in the human being's reason.¹

Reason and revelation are related and overlapping, but the latter has territories that are not accessible to the former. It can be argued that the enlightening nature of reason makes sense with reference to the inherent facts and achievements of Sharia, but rationality and reason lead their way into the everlasting process of prophethood like a torch in the beam of which Sharia laws become distinct and definite.² The role of reason in realizing Sharia laws is of two types: First, the scholarly attempt to discover and understand the content of Sharia as a body of knowledge drawing upon logical reasons and premises. Second, in this way, rational origins and means to reach the laws becomes feasible, which is a function typical of Quran and Sunnah.

3. Functions and Territories of Religion

In Ayatollah Javadi Amoli's view religion, which denotes Islam, concerns with all aspects of human life. This is stated in the definition of religion regarding beliefs, laws, and morals. Therefore, religious faith worldview, manners in personal and social spheres, and makes use of laws to ensure prosperity and happiness³. He maintains that the only true path that leads to prosperity, and spiritual elevation is through Sharia and religion, and adhering to reason and knowledge and their application in life cannot bring such a capacity. To quote Ayatollah Javadi Amoli, "the same rational premise which proves the existence of religion, the eventuality of Mohammad's prophethood and perfectness of his mission. Religion based on the same premise meet humans' being's needs for laws that lead him on the path to celestial prosperity which is approved by textual evidence is not divorced from natural and material life of humans"⁴

Along these lines, one can say that religion is present in all material and spiritual spheres of life and sets the route for the perfection of human beings. Of course, there are priorities for religion and its functions the topmost of which is spiritual elevation for the humankind.

Additionally, religion relies on prophets as externalized and human reason as internalized justifications. Since worldly and heavenly instructions are of epistemological and edifying quality, religious doctrines contain tangible degrees of the presence of knowledge. By this token, Ayatollah Javadi Amoli adopts an encyclopedic attitude to the body of religious faith delineating that "religion not only initiates motivating the humans to gain knowledge and encourages them to learn and achieve scientific erudition, while also providing the general framework for many

¹ Abdollah, Javadi Amoli, *Shari'at dar Ayeneh Ma'rifat* [The Shari'a in the Mirror of Knowledge]. (Qom: Markaz-e Farhangi-ye Raja', 1993), 204.

² Javadi Amoli, *Shari'at dar*, 205

³ Javadi Amoli, *Shari'at dar*, 113- 119.

⁴ Javadi Amoli, *Shari'at dar*, 211

fields of knowledge and science and even determines the foundations of empirical, industrial fields, and the like”.¹ In other words, this points to the conviction that religion is a body of obligations, principles, and practical considerations that embrace the values and knowledges needed by humans and bears the maximal burden of the message, and the human beings are supposed to inspect and inquire into the scientific, philosophical, moral and religious knowledge to make necessary inferences. Also, in his line of thinking, the religion that has these features must have the dynamicity and the capacity to meet the needs of human beings at different times. Therefore, from Ayatollah’s point of view, religion is not a passive and external observer that has to can turn into concept and discourse in the light of other aspects of human knowledge. Rather, religion, by itself is a system of interrelated concepts and discourses that serves as a general criterion for weighing up all human knowledge alongside enlightening the path of property and good destiny. It is for this very reason that are put to the touchstone of religion following which they are either approved or discarded.² Therefore, religion functions not only as a context for offering the general frameworks of human and heavenly knowledge but also as standards for determining their value, legitimacy (or sacred as opposed to secular). Therefore, Ayatollah Javadi Amoli continues to argue that “Religious knowledge fields are in fact the stable laws and traditions that the other fields of study are trying to find, so these laws can be used as a definite criterion to evaluate their prominence and assign their accuracy or fallacy”.³

4. Interconnections among Religion, Reason and Knowledge

Concerning the relationship among religion, reason and knowledge opposing stances are witnessed. Some scholars believe in the contradiction between religion and knowledge while some others lay emphasis on their unity. Appealing to Ayatollah Javadi Amoli is such an interrelation that he raises the issue of the so-called contradictory nature of reason and textual evidence. It must, however, be remembered that textual evidence is not necessarily equivalent to revelation. Reason in his views, can be valid only as a background context to support textual evidence and accommodates the epistemological dimension of religion under the overarching phenomena of revelation. There are, in fact, pieces of evidence in support of correspondence and equivalence between textual evidence and human reason. In fact, he supports juxtaposing reason in its broad sense as a religious premise with valid textual evidence and goes on to argue that “the main goal of accommodating the element of reason within the body of religious knowledge is that true understanding of religion will be achieved if all sources of knowledge

¹ Javadi Amoli, *Shari'at dar*, 78

² Javadi Amoli, *Shari'at dar*, 130

³ Javadi Amoli, *Shari'at dar*, 160

are taken into account and included in our approach. Therefore, no one is authorized to base his/her interpretation on the purported understanding of the entire Quran, let alone justify his/her claims by citing or referring to one or two verses”¹ (Javadi Amoli, 2007). Such a method of course may witness a contradiction of the two that can be resolved in different ways, but this shall not be taken as reason which defies textual evidence of canonical texts or vice versa. Ayatollah Javadi Amoli delineates that in cases of lack of correspondence, it is imperative that the paradox be appreciated in full. For instance, if a verse or a hadith quoted of an infallible does not comply with reason, one may choose to interpret it in a way that it is consistent with reason and logic and if there is no context, one can usually interpret it in a way that it defies the definite rational position. Paradoxes or confrontations are the outcomes of not the nature of knowledge but the westernized thought which grows out of western philosophers’ attitude to the phenomena like knowledge, reason and religion. Their first assumption, according to Ayatollah Javadi, is that it impossible to locate the three in a linear relation and they have hierarchically equal status. In other words, fields of empirical knowledge and the philosophical approaches that grow out of them are just reduced into empiricism with skeptic and materialistic configurations and representations; therefore, they see themselves as opposed to religious faith. As Ayatollah Javadi proposes, “the views and theories nurtured in empirical grounds deem religious truth as mythical and mesmerizing or optimistically useful imaginations and illusions that are developed by virtue of worldly functions or disappear”². As a result, in modern science, attributes such as acting causality, ultimate causality, revelation-based origin, religious affairs and metaphysical issues have lost their real status.

“Knowledge in modern age just like that in the old times takes account of cause-and-effect relations” believes he, “but the problem is that such a knowledge has drifted away from theological and heavenly conceptualizations and is not concerned with acting creator and the ultimate cause, it finds itself trapped in the constraining enclosures of sense and experience”³. In fact, modern knowledge turns a blind eye towards the fundamental theological origins, and intends to reconstruct itself as an ideology alongside religion and reason. Therefore, the origin of the illusion of religion and knowledge paradoxical relation is the fallacy that the former is attributed to just textual evidence and the mind is on the other hand stripped of religious framework. The consequence is that the textual evidence is limited to religious understanding and what is obtained though sense and experience or abstract reason is separately accorded with

¹ Abdollah, Javadi Amoli, *Shokufayi Aql dar Partow-e Nahzat-e Hosseini* [The Flourishing of Reason in the Light of the Hussaini Movement]. 4th ed (Qom: Markaz-e Nashr-e Esra', 2007).

² Abdollah, Javadi Amoli, *Manzelat-e Aql dar Hendeseh-ye Ma'refat-e Dini* [The Status of Reason in the Structure of Religious Knowledge]. (Qom: Markaz-e Nashr-e Esra', 2007), 23.

³ Javadi Amoli, *Shokufayi*, 108.

knowledge-based epistemology. We cannot lose sight of the fact that knowledge is one aspect or dimension of reason and is deemed valid only in its light. Also, reason is a religious premise to go from propositions to conclusions and a source of understanding religious faith, so the two cannot be opposing and paradoxical. One can state that in reaching a state of certainty or rational satisfaction, reason is never incongruent with religious faith though it may run counter to textual evidence.¹

5. Features of Knowledge as Compared to Religion

As stated earlier, regarding Ayatollah Javadi Amoli's standpoint, different dimensions of reason constitute the fields of human knowledge. Among the features of empirical reason are empirical knowledge, and abstract reason that contribute to the development of philosophy and logical one. Therefore, fields of knowledge are rigorously interconnected with human reason. The first thing to consider in such a relationship is to determine the extent to which knowledge theories are argumentatively sound and valid. Ayatollah Javadi Amoli defines validity and argumentative soundness as the capacity of being extracted from a real occurrence that are possible through deductive and inductive reasonings and exemplification. Though of course, the first two have to satisfy some criteria to be acceptable. He lays emphasis on the premise since in his views premise never fails to explore the reality because the relationship between a premise and a representation of reality and its exploration is fully established².

Knowledge-based propositions within the empirical science in this view lacks an adequate logical basis, which suggests that their validity hinge upon the arena of practice, compliance with theoretical foundations and agreement with argumentative soundness in jurisprudence. Therefore, he believes that despite unfruitfulness of all propositions of empirical knowledge, most in a way deal with the domain of liable individuals' practice. For instance, if findings and discoveries in medical fields and pharmaceuticals are significantly beyond uncertainty and meet a high degree of confidence, it would be obligatory to comply with them from the perspective of Sharia. This amounts to the claim that if an individual doesn't follow these obligatory findings and recommendations and endangers his or other people's lives, he or she would bear responsibility and guilt, and therefore will not be forgivable before the Almighty³. Premise-based and definitive nature of the findings by the empirical knowledge and science can bring practical and real-life confidence as to acting in a particular way, but they cannot serve the need and purpose of argumentative validity and so cannot be comprehensive and generalizable. This is because the realm of inferencing for empirical knowledge and science is limited to senses and

¹ Javadi Amoli, *Shokufayi*, 111

² Javadi Amoli, *Shokufayi*, 113

³ Javadi Amoli, *Shokufayi*, 116

experiences that are open to fallacy or erroneous, ungeneralizable results. For instance, Ayatollah Javadi Amoli states that a material experience cannot account for the influence of praying, charity donation, and strengthening social bonds, and their mechanisms of impacting since they are beyond experience¹.

Another issue is that in empirical methods, no exclusive inferencing is conceivable such that if experience leads to discovering the relationship between two phenomena, this cannot necessarily mean that the other ways and methods or inferencing are not valid or applicable. This is because empirical generalizations are restricted to and conditionally dependent on particular situations of occurrence. One can therefore conclude that experience at its climactic point of achievements would at best be able to offer convictions and interpretations merely within the limited circle of phenomena that can be experienced. From his perspective, such a system cannot accept the heavy burden of an absolute philosophical reasoning and provide an adequately comprehensive worldview and ontology. Otherwise, the entire creatures in the world would have to be restricted to the material world where abstract entities and supernatural and immaterial existence would not make sense. ²On this very basis, the naturality of the mere experience renders it ineffective in accounting for a religious or even secular orientations. It is rather the subject that imparts the experience a religious or a secular quality. As Ayatollah Javadi Amoli argues, “empirical science is not inherently atheistic, but there are atheists who resort to the shortcomings of empirical science and develop the body of knowledge into ingredients of atheism and materialism.”³

6. Developing Islamic Knowledge and University

Developing Islamic knowledge as a system necessitates particular views on knowledge, its essence and nature and then a proper understanding of the status of knowledge in the modern world. Ayatollah Javadi Amoli characterizes knowledge in the light of empirical science and knowledge while highlighting their role and function. His distinction is based on an understanding of knowledge with an Islamic identity as distinct from a useful secular one which is in turn distinct from a useless knowledge. Such a distinction suggests that a useful knowledge contributes to the development of identity, perfection of humans and enhancement and naturally it becomes a necessity. Conversely, a useless knowledge corrupts identities and degrades the humankind. The latter one, according to Ayatollah Javadi Amoli, is the striking feature of the modern secular science. Such a view supports the practical utility of any knowledge. This in turn requires motivation which is within the scope of practical reason or act that is guided by

¹ Javadi Amoli, *Shokufayi*, 119

² Javadi Amoli, *Shokufayi*, 122

³ Javadi Amoli, *Shokufayi*, 123

rational thought¹ Since the practical utility is understandable with reference to the outcome, it is the reality that shapes prosperity, spiritual elevation and happiness. Spiritually oriented knowledge and system of reasoning is expected to lead to pure life while the secular one, which is useless, ends the humanity in the unfertile grounds of alienation, and atheistic wilderness that does not promise anything and even robs the humans out of their identity.

In Ayatollah's opinion, the main feature of the empirical science and knowledge is being immersed deep in atheistic pluralism, which has resulted in their ineffectiveness. The society that bases all the findings and perceptions on senses and experiences and calls it scientific would inevitably dismiss anything beyond senses and tangible existence and consequently be swallowed by heavy tides of chaotic understandings and pluralist worldviews none of which can ensure any safe haven. All fields of knowledge are now dissected and atomized and the bond that existed in the Islamic heritage that could have united them are now broken up²

Therefore, in his view, the main problem of the modern westernized science and fields of academia are incapable of profiting humans, offering an identity, and meeting material and spiritual needs for them. Nowadays, there is not much need to change the nature and methods of application and come up with a new pattern called Islamic knowledge or science. The main problems that the existing fields have encountered and are grappling with are detachment from a clear understanding of the source of creation and how the Almighty conducts the phenomena that have to be accounted for by the scientific fields. The existing empirical knowledge is faulty and inadequate since it progresses horizontally and ignores any origin or beginning nor even an end for the universe. It doesn't see the knowledge as an endowment from a sublime source, either. Such a perspective breaks the existence apart that fails to see the nature as a created entity without any creating agent. The only thing that is of relevance is to study the end-stage status of the nature which is explained by his or her knowledge as a brainchild. Such a system of knowledge produces nothing except a dead body cut off from any source of life or straying away the unity with the source of creation³

Such a system of knowledge or science that has infiltrated the Muslim world indeed needs a revision or revival which from Ayatollah Javadi Amoli's point of view can occur as Islamic scientific development, which of course cannot be a superficial and short-lived venture. If the crisis in modern systems of science and knowledge is deeply rooted in its conceptual

¹ Abdollah, Javadi Amoli, *Elm-e Nafe' va Hoviyat-e Saz* [Beneficial and Identity-Building Knowledge]. Published in *Sonnat, Ideology, va Elm* [Tradition, Ideology, and Science], edited by Hamid Parsania, 345-368. (Qom: Boostan-e Ketab, 2004), 11.

² Javadi Amoli, *Elm-e Nafe' va*, 14-15

³ Javadi Amoli, *Shokufayi*, 135-136.

foundations, the revision or revival must also address the same foundation, a typically perfect model for which is Islam. Therefore, Ayatollah believes that introducing Islamic knowledge depends on a new perspective of nature, knowledge, etc. that can be contained in educational and pedagogic texts with attempts to revisit theological approach. As long as the academia and universities tenaciously adhere to linear progress as the only route and fail to appreciate the potentials of considering sublime goals, any formalistic change will be limited and will fall short of essential improvements.¹

In addition, as mentioned earlier empirical knowledge and science per se is neutral even in the light of revelation, reason or the subject. In other words, knowledge by itself and in its own right is neither theological nor untheological. Even the variables that influence the scientific understanding and inferencing cannot be made theological or religiously oriented, but rather it is the religious approach and congruity with Islamic goals that can impart these qualities.

The first criterion for Ayatollah Javadi is argumentative validity in Sharia and the extent to which it helps to discover the applications and its moral nature. Therefore, he states that “the argumentative validity in Sharia lies at the heart of the perfection for all scientific field, that is any issued that is proved for the researcher and is present in the world of creation needs to be followed if it is a faith or a moral requirement. The same science or knowledge that provides the logical basis for argumentative validity and contributes to knowledge and information are the God’s requirements. Therefore, it is obligatory from the viewpoint of revealing the objective truth and also a theological basis even if the scholar in that field is secular. Therefore, knowledge or science is never secular in nature”.² He emphasizes that if we see things in very fundamental ways, all fields of knowledge and science are theological since if knowledge is genuinely knowledge and helps discovering the aspects of creation is based on Islam and divine creation. If otherwise, then it is not knowledge in the real sense and being theological or untheological would be out of question. Along these lines, “there are not such things as Islamic or non-Islamic chemistry or physics. If science is science, it is one dimension of creation and action of the Almighty and ignorance of the subject would not make difference, nor misinterpreting the act of God as a nature’s action³ Ayatollah proceeds to argue that belief or disbelief or even denial of God’s creation will not influence the fact that the creator designed the beginning of everything such that it is a guidance in a way and also sets regulations for perfection of each individual creation and will not distort the Islamic nature of the knowledge in question if the right path and principles of understanding are well-explored.

¹ Javadi Amoli, *Shokufayi*, 136

² Javadi Amoli, *Shokufayi*, 58

³ Javadi Amoli, *Shokufayi*, 164

Such a perspective can have a vast array of effects such as broadening the scope of religious knowledge and just setting two requirements of non-paradoxical nature and congruity with Sharia laws. To see things in general terms, all forms of knowledge and science are of religious origin and nature even though developed in atheistic contexts. Another definite issue is that the religious character of all fields of knowledge due to the fact that their subjects are creatures made by the creator cannot be discredited just because the thinking subject may not believe in God¹.

Since he regards knowledge and science as one dimension of reason, and reason is necessarily a guiding tool at the service of argumentative validity in Sharia laws, he concludes that whatever grows out of knowledge is inevitably and necessarily the result of reason which is a subset of revelation, so it cannot be opposed to religious faith. In this vogue, Ayatollah Javadi Amoli considers the following issues as basic considerations² (Javadi Amoli, 2007, p. 96):

1. Reason, whether empirical or abstract, contributes to discovering God's act or promise.
2. Valid quotation, whether one single intact quote or multiple congruent reports, contributes to discovering God's act or promise.
3. Discoveries through reason or quotes are sometimes mediated and unmediated at other times.
4. The discovered knowledge is sometime solid and sometimes overlapping.
5. Making a reference between overlapping and solid is sometimes based on reason and sometimes through textual evidence.
6. Discovered issues through reason and textual evidence are sometimes identical, sometimes contradicting and sometimes opposing.
7. The difference between discovered issues requires specific solutions.
8. The differences as mentioned about discoveries based on reason and textual evidence can be proposed along with other quoted evidence and is never without a solution.
9. If solution is reached, the criteria for Islamic nature whether in knowledge or practice will be evident and feasible through setting the Islamic criteria for compiling the texts.

Also, Islamicizing is in line with turning academic contexts and universities into centers for religious knowledge. In this process, establishing prayer rooms, libraries and mosques would not suffice. Even including some courses or instructional programs that focus on Islamic lines of thinking and eliminating secular content, though necessary, may not be adequate. He believes that deep changes and revisions in the underlying principles and theoretical views and attitudes.

¹ Javadi Amoli, *Shokufayi*, 123

² Javadi Amoli, *Shokufayi*, 96.

As he puts it, “along with seminaries, Islamic universities can be relevant that will put all their efforts in discovering and understanding the creator’s act and interpreting the entire system of creation. If interpreting the promise of the Almighty provides us with Islamic knowledge, interpreting his act would also be seen as Islamic knowledge. Therefore, having Islamic universities entails access to Islamic knowledge, which becomes possible when knowledge is allowed to the realm of religious system of knowledge and faith, have the knowledge supported by religion, and make a reconciliation and alliance between knowledge of nature and theology. This will be possible if a linear progress is disregarded at the cost of subliminal ventures on the part of the fields and see the pure reason, unadulterated thought, and unmediated rationality as a divine endowment¹. To reach these goals, he enumerates the following outlines²

1. Replacing the concept of nature with creation
2. Including the notion of creator instead of ultimate origin.
3. Considering textual evidence (Quranic verse, hadith, etc.) in valid textual arguments
4. Using contextual support or negative reasoning.
5. Refraining from arrogance in knowledge-based discussions and debates.
6. Seeing the components of creations in the big picture

If these requirements are met and satisfied, there will be a connection between natural science and the creator where the origin of creation and its goal and that between creatures and the creators will be sensible. Therefore, the purpose of Islamicizing is not making a science or system of knowledge anew (which is impossible), but the purpose is to redefine the status of empirical science in relation to other more comprehensive fields such as philosophy, theology and also religion. He clearly states that “the goal is not to demolish the empirical knowledge but to improve and modify it by eliminating the shortcomings and introduce adaptations”³ Another issue which is of importance concerning his position in Islamicizing universities is the position that unlike empirical fields Islamic knowledge is of converging identities and well-coordinated. In this way, they are in particular hierarchical and linear relations among various fields that prevent overdiversification, confusion and dispersion. The unity, coherence and integrity of Islamic knowledge is because it is connected to and coordinated with revelation as a divine source. Reaching beyond the borderlines of sense and experience, though they are of value in themselves, Islamic knowledge explores other sources of epistemological understanding that may consolidate the sense and experience as well. Mathematically-based semi-abstract

¹ Javadi Amoli, *Shokufayi*, 130-131.

² Javadi Amoli, *Shokufayi*, 141

³ Javadi Amoli, *Shokufayi*, 143

understanding and fully abstract philosophical and logical knowledge, pure abstract involved in intuition rooted in Gnosticism are all acknowledged, which can enrich both seminaries and universities, uniting fields and branches of knowledge and the human societies will reach harmony.¹

If knowledge is founded upon theological and revelation-based doctrines, the propositions in modern knowledge and science will be embraced by religion, and naturally the assumptions, principles and features will be automatically redefined so that the so-called secular fields of knowledge can have new identities. Islamic knowledge and science with original essence and connected to divinity are characterized by Ayatollah Javadi Amoli as:

1. The formulated principles, and theoretical foundations that improve theoretical body of sense and experience-based knowledge, and constitute the basic ingredients of empirical knowledge are entirely derived from theistic sources.
2. The epistemological foundations of Islamic knowledge cannot be reduced to senses that are derived from imagination and illusion, but are influenced by reason and intuition, which are in turn placed under the overarching phenomenon of revelation.
3. Islamic knowledge does not stop at the here-and-know and consequential relations among creatures; on the contrary, it explores the source and target, agent and the ultimate destiny and hierarchical relationships are taken into account.
4. Islamic knowledge in the light of divine principles is not at all composed of scattered pieces based on unrelated and disintegrated assumptions. On the contrary, the body of Islamic knowledge is of unitary nature and imparts identity to academic thought.
5. Through unity of nature, Islamic knowledge brings unity and integrity to the human society and Muslim Ummah liberating them from disparity, overdiversification, and disconnection promising utopia of divine support and creation.
6. The term 'Islamic' as the adjective for knowledge is not a restricting concept but a descriptive one. In other words, it the expression shows relevance and not a distinction from the so-called non-Islamic counterparts, and knowledge in any form is inevitably Islamic and of divine origin. The knowledge or science that is misrepresented as non-Islamic is just a triviality to spend life like beasts.
7. Revelation is perched at the top of all Islamic knowledge and the holy prophet of Islam who carries the message of revelation is the main gateway to the utopian territory and Vilayat is the core of the prophethood starting with Imam Ali who is honored by the status of Imam carrying the

¹ Abdollah, Javadi Amoli. *Elm-e Nafe' va Hoviyat-e Saz* [Beneficial and Identity-Building Knowledge]. Published in *Sonnat, Ideology, va Elm* [Tradition, Ideology, and Science], edited by Hamid Parsania, 345–368. (Qom: Boostan-e Ketab, 2004), 29.

responsibility of comprehensive governance of humankind's life. This divine duty is devolved upon Imams as infallibles who will perpetuate the mission.

7. Review and Critique of Ayatollah Javadi Amoli's Perspectives

Ayatollah Javadi Amoli in the light of his well-deserved sophistication in theological knowledge and Islamic jurisprudence reflects upon doctrines and propositions in Islam. Here is a list of what he highlights in the formulating the interrelatedness of knowledge, religion and reason:

1. Perfectness of Islam and full dominance of revelation over anything including reason in all aspects and dimensions of life in all places and at all times.
2. Laying emphasis on degrees of reason and its limitations in understanding religion including religious laws.
3. Highlighting the complementary nature of reason and textual evidence, and distinction of reason from revelation.
4. Critique of modern knowledge and science and their inadequacy and lack of utility.
5. Focusing on the inquisitive and exploratory and 'Islamic' nature of the knowledge and science that are useful and serve real human needs.

The importance of his views and especially the epistemological aspects of human reason and eventually dividing it into pure, abstract, semi-abstract and empirical seems quite promising. In addition to indicating the unidirectionality philosophy and knowledge science on the one hand and philosophy on the other, he enumerates the functions of mind from ontological and epistemological perspective. However, it seems that the role of mind as an instrument in human beings' affairs in this world is underestimated. In fact, he expands the scope of human science and knowledge to such an extent that not much space is left for the human reason. It is as if the only duty for the reason is to infer knowledge from revelation and traditions. If included, the functions of religion, and Islam, acknowledges argumentative validity for human reason such that a wide range of material and spiritual needs of humans can be met by recourse to it. It is along these very lines that humans are both free and liable regarding their deeds. Therefore, the view of Ayatollah Javadi Amoli restricts the scope of operation for the humankind's rational actions. To put it differently, the comprehensive nature of religion including Islam need not be overemphasized so that everything about humans shall have been understood in terms of religious texts and interpretations. These attributes that are all assigned to the scope of religion can include the sources of knowledge-like sense, experience, rationality, empirical experience, normal and abnormal behavior, voluntary and involuntary acts, etc.

It goes without saying that there are quite many activities and fields of knowledge that are not concerned with religion, and merely peripherally and with reference to the outcome, one may talk of their relationship with religion.

For instance, exploring themes in empirical science and mathematics is a merely human issue that may have instances or occurrence in religious texts, but cannot be understood or inferred with reference to religious sources. Therefore, focusing on nature and rational exploration and inquiry is of priority and some applications may have religious justifications or relevance. Despite what Ayatollah proposes, one can say what is necessary for developing Islamic science is to consider religious foundations and functions by theorizing and not interfering in every minute detail of scientific fields only to convince the petrochemical engineer that the Almighty has created petroleum¹. The scientific propositions for each expert constitute the underlying assumptions and principles that can impact the nature of his work. Therefore, interpolating religious propositions in the stages of experiment or research could prove problematic. The important issue in Ayatollah Javadi Amoli's perspective is the opposing and paradoxical relationship between religious and Islamic identities of knowledge. He believes that if knowledge is knowledge, then it will contribute to discovery of divine volitional representations and so it is Islamic. He goes on to conclude that atheism or dismissing any divine source would not make sense.

It seems, however, that his view of relationship between humans and knowledge is not very straightforward. Too much emphasis in his arguments on the discovering nature of a divine affaire marginalizes human role or even denies it altogether. With the same reasoning, Ayatollah Javadi Amoli strips discovery property off the so-called western knowledge. But the big question is "how can one refer to western fields of knowledge and science as arenas incapable of discovering the potentials now that they have revolutionized the world and human life to such a great extent?" If they are illusive, how could they have been responsible for such brilliant records of progress with such a difference from the old ways of life? More specifically, how would it be possible to make such huge improvements out of illusion and imagination? In response we may argue that since knowledge hinges solely upon humans, it cannot be Islamic or non-Islamic, but once it is actualized in a creature named human, it may receive ideological or attitudinal labels and subsequently can be called religious or secular.

Overall, the views and perspectives of Ayatollah Javadi Amoli in determining the interrelations between reason, and revelation and textual evidence is of significance in the related literature. Additionally, his pathological perspective addressing the problems of western thought and knowledge influentially highlights the strengths of Islamic knowledge to some

¹ Mohammad, Fanaei Ashkouri. "Jaygah-e Aql va Vahy dar Hendeseh-ye Ma'refat-e Bashari" [The Role of Reason and Revelation in the Structure of Human Knowledge]. *Ma'refat-e Falsafi* [Philosophical Knowledge] 6, no. 4 (2009): 58-59.

extent, especially with regard to reforming western knowledge and science rather than rejecting them altogether and supporting the constructing of a new system of knowledge and science from the very beginning; however, his formulations fail to provide any practical roadmap for such a reform that can prove administratively and functionally efficient.

References

- Javadi Amoli, Abdollah. *Shari'at dar Ayeneh Ma'rifat* [The Shari'a in the Mirror of Knowledge]. Qom: Markaz-e Farhangi-ye Raja', 1993.
- Javadi Amoli, Abdollah. *Shokufayi Aql dar Partow-e Nahzat-e Hosseini* [The Flourishing of Reason in the Light of the Hussaini Movement]. Qom: Markaz-e Nashr-e Esra', 2007, 4th ed.
- Javadi Amoli, Abdollah. *Elm-e Nafe' va Hoviyat-e Saz* [Beneficial and Identity-Building Knowledge]. Published in *Sonnat, Ideology, va Elm* [Tradition, Ideology, and Science], edited by Hamid Parsania, 345–368. Qom: Boostan-e Ketab, 2004.
- Javadi Amoli, Abdollah. *Manzelat-e Aql dar Hendeseh-ye Ma'refat-e Dini* [The Status of Reason in the Structure of Religious Knowledge]. Qom: Markaz-e Nashr-e Esra', 2007.
- Fanaei Ashkouri, Mohammad. "Jaygah-e Aql va Vahy dar Hendeseh-ye Ma'refat-e Bashari" [The Role of Reason and Revelation in the Structure of Human Knowledge]. *Ma'refat-e Falsafi* [Philosophical Knowledge] 6, no. 4 (2009): 37–66.