

وظيفة العقل

The Role of Reason

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سلسلة إملاء الخاطر | Imlā al-Khāṭir Series



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جميع الحقوق محفوظة

Imlā al-Khāṭir Series

In this series, which he names *Imlā al-Khāṭir* (literally, “dictation of thoughts”), Dr Mohammad Akram Nadwi follows in the tradition of the Ḥanbalī scholar Ibn al-Jawzī’s *Ṣayd al-Khāṭir* and shares with the world his reflections on a variety of topics ranging from theology to law, history to heart softeners, philosophy, education and more. Composed in a casual, conversational style consisting of questions followed by their brief answers (each portion predicated by *qālū/qultu*, “they said”/“I responded”), he utilizes therein the highest level of Arabic, reflecting his love of the language and his extensive expertise in Arabic grammar and rhetoric. These short but poignant reflections are part of the *balāghah* genre and tradition of Arabic literature. It should be noted that these translations, done by his senior students, serve as a guide and can never fully match the style, tone and eloquence of the original Arabic. Also note that Dr Akram does not necessarily review each translation and is not responsible for any errors, improper word choices, or the likes, that are an inevitable part of the translation process.

Dr. Mohammad Akram Nadwi

Dr. Mohammad Akram Nadwi is a world-renowned scholar of Indian origin who has resided in England for an extensive time. After receiving in-depth training to an advanced level in the traditional Islamic disciplines at the famous Nadwat al-Ulama seminary in Lucknow, India, and receiving a PhD in Arabic literature from Lucknow University, he became a research fellow at the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, where he conducted research for a number of years on a variety of topics, including Ḥadīth and Sufi orders in India. He has published widely in Urdu, Persian, Arabic and English, including translations (like his work on Shāh Waliullah, *Bustan al-Muhaddithin*), editions of Arabic texts (such as a renowned critical edition of *Usul al-Shāshī* in Ḥanafī jurisprudence), and original monographs on Islamic law, female ḥadīth narrators and such figures as Abū Ḥanīfah and Sayyid Abul Ḥasan ‘Alī Nadwi. His groundbreaking work, yet to be published, is an encyclopedic 40-volume documentation of the legacy of female scholarship in the Islamic tradition. He co-founded the Al-Salam Institute in 2006 where he continues to serve as Principal and Senior Lecturer.

Introduction

The exact role and function of the intellect as a source of knowledge and enlightenment, as well as its relation to revelation, has been a contested issue among philosophers and thinkers for millennia. In this reflection, Dr Akram Nadwi addresses this issue head on by pointing out the error of some philosophers who have considered it a source of knowledge and by clarifying its functions in the progress of human knowledge. He also elucidates the true sources of knowledge.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

وظيفة العقل

بقلم: محمد أكرم الندوي

أو كسفورد

قالوا: الفلاسفة من أهل العقل والنظر وأولي الحِصافة والنُّهى، فَمِمَّ تضارُّهم في الأقوال وتبايُهم في الآراء؟ ولمَّ تنازعوا بينهم هذا التنازع المَشِين الذي لم يُسمع بمثله في طائفة من طوائف العلم ولا فئة من فئاته؟ قلت: لأنهم غلطوا في مصادر العلم وعوَّلوا على الخرص والظن، فضلوا وأضلوا. قالوا: فما هي مصادر العلم؟ قلت: الفطرة، والحواس الخمس، والوحي. قالوا: كيف حسبت الفطرة مصدرا للعلم، وقد قال الله تعالى: "والله أخرجكم من بطون أمهاتكم لا تعلمون شيئا، وجعل لكم السمع والأبصار والأفئدة لعلكم تشكرون"؟ قلت: المراد بالآية العلم الخارجي الذي يكسبه الإنسان بجواسه، ولم أقصده، وإنما قصدت العلم الجذري المودع في الخلق، فالإنسان مفضول على معرفة ربه والتبتل إليه والتميز بين الحسن والقبح، والالتذاذ بالخير، والتألم بالشر، قال تعالى: "فأقم

وجمك للدين حنيفا فطرة الله التي فطر الناس عليها "وقال": ونفس وما سواها فألهمها فجورها وتقواها."

قالوا: فأين يقع العقل من هذه المصادر؟ قلت: ليس العقل مصدرا للعلم خلافاً للفلاسفة ومن تبعهم من المتكلمين الذين كلفوه ما لا طاقة له به، وهذا هو أش ضلالتهم وجملمهم ومنع تبيهم وسفههم، فالعقل لا يؤد علماً ولا يُنتج معرفة، فمثلاً إذا كان الإنسان لم ير التاج محل ولم يسمع به، فإنه لا يهتدي إليه بعقله بل ولا يسبح له ولا يخطر بباله، وإذا وُضع بين يديه طعام فإنه لن يجد إلى لذته بعقله سبيلاً، وكذلك الروائح لا تُشمُّ والملموسات لا تُلمَس بالعقول، وما أعجز العقل وأعياه أن يُلاحق ما وراء الحواس أو يتوهمه توهاً.

قالوا: فما هي وظيفة العقل إذاً؟ قلت: إن للعقل أربع وظائف 1- يحفظ المعلومات المكتسبة من مصادرها، 2- وينتق بينها ويوفق توفيقاً، 3- ثم يطورها ويثمها، 4- ويعجم عودها ويختبرها اختباراً، فمثلاً إذا استفاد الإنسان أن "أ" تساوي "ب" وأن "ب" تساوي "ج" حفظ العقل كلتا القضيتين، ونسق بينهما تنسيقاً يطورها إلى قضية ثالثة، وهي أن "أ" تساوي "ج"، ولو أن امرئاً جعل القضية الثالثة: "أ" تساوي "د" بين العقل خطأها.

قالوا: دع التجريد، وشرح أدوار العقل الأربعة بمثال حقيقي، قلت: قال الله تعالى "محمد رسول الله"، وقال تعالى: "وما أرسلنا من رسول إلا

ليطاع بإذن الله "حفظ العقل القولين، ونسّق بينهما، ثم طورهما إلى قول ثالث": لم يرسل محمد إلا ليطاع بإذن الله"، فإذا عصاه مؤمن بتبّه العقل على خطئه وردّه إلى الطاعة.

قالوا: بصّرنا بغلط الفلاسفة وأذيالهم من المتكلمين في وعي وظيفه العقل .
قلت: ينحصر غلطهم في ثلاث نقاط:

الأولى: ظنوه مصدرا للعلم، وهل يتوارى عن أحد فشل العقل ووهي أسبابه وضعف قواعده في إدراك ما تدركه الحواس؟ وأنى للعقل أن يبصر أو يسمع أو يدوق أو يشم أو يلمس؟ وأنى له أن يتسرب إلى مكامن العلم الفطري، أو يسمّع إلى الوحي الإلهي؟

الثانية: أنهم لم يعرفوا حد العقل، -1 الذي يطوّر المعلوم ويتوصل به إلى المجهول، غير متمكن من أن يُنشئ تحصيل المجهول وتطويره، -2 والذي يطوّر المعلوم ويختبره منحصرًا في دائرة معينة ومقتصرًا عليها غير متجاوز عنها، مجانسًا للحواس الخمس الظاهرة وموازيًا لها، والتي لا تحترق حدودها ولا تتعداها.

الثالثة: أنهم خلطوا بين العقل الشخصي والعقل العلمي.

قالوا: ماذا أردت بالعقل الشخصي والعقل العلمي؟ قلت: العقل الشخصي الذي يصدر عن عادة شخص أو قوم وميولهم واتجاهاتهم ورسومهم وحضاراتهم، والعقل العلمي هو الذي يستقي مواده من مصادر

العلم، الأول هوى، والثاني هو العقل السليم، فمثلا كل إنسان يُفَضِّل طعام قومه الذي نشأ عليه ملتذا به، فهذا خنوع للهوى واستخذاء له، وإذا فَضَّل شخص طعامًا لأنه أوفقُ لجسده صحة وقوة، فهذا اتباع للعقل السليم، وإن أغلب ترجيحات الفلاسفة والمتكلمين وتفضيلاتهم شرقًا وغربًا، وقديمًا وحديثًا من زمرة الاستسلام للأهواء وإعطائها القيادة.

قالوا: هل ينشئ العقلُ العلمَ بالله إنشاءً؟ قلت: لا، كما لا ينشئ علم المحسوسات، وإنما يكتسب علم كل شيء من مصدره الذي جعله الله له، ثم يقوم العقل بتطوير المعلومات واختبارها، فالعلم بالله تعالى مصدره الفطرة، والعقل يطور هذا العلم ويزيده مستعينًا بأدلة أخرى ومنسقًا بينها وموفقًا، وهذا هو المنهج الذي علمنا الله تعالى في كتابه، حيث ردَّ العلم بنفسه إلى فطرة الناس، وأمدّه بالاستدلال بآياته المشهودة في خلقه، وبآياته المتلوة في كتابه، ولو لم يكن علم الله ثابتًا راسخًا لدى الفطرة لما تحققت دلالة الآيات عليه.

قالوا: أفلم يقرر الفلاسفة والمتكلمون الصانع، وواجب الوجود، وعلّة العلل، والعلّة الأولى، والمحرك الأول بعقولهم؟ قلت: خُدعتم بإطلاقاتهم الزائغة، واغترتم بدلالاتها السمجة، ومعانيها المنكرة، وفي بعضها من الانحراف والضلال ما يفتقر إلى تجلية وبيان، وأردأ من ذلك وأبشع منهجهم في الاستدلال والاحتجاج، والذي إذا دخل الحكمة أفسدها واستجهل موضعها. قالوا: لو رفعت اللثام عن شناعة مقالاتهم وفساد

مسالكهم؟ قلت: أبشروا وقد أعجبني نهمكم للعلم إعجاباً، وأنعموا النظر فيما
فسّرت لكم متقنين له إتقاناً.

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They asked: The philosophers are the people of intellect and worth, and of sense and reason, and so, on what basis do you clash with their statements and depart from their views? And why do they differ so greatly among themselves with these outrageous differences, the likes of which are not found in any other discipline of knowledge nor in any other group?

I replied: Because they were mistaken in the sources of knowledge themselves, relying instead on guessing and conjecture, going astray and leading others to such.

They asked: What are the sources of knowledge then?

I replied: The innate nature (fiṭrah), the five senses and revelation.

They asked: How have you considered the innate nature (fiṭrah) to be a source of knowledge, when God stated, “God has brought you forth from your mothers' wombs when you knew nothing, and then gave you hearing, and sight and thinking hearts so that you may give thanks.”

I replied: The intent of the verse was the external knowledge which a person acquires through his senses—which I was not referring to—but I was intending the primordial knowledge which has been implanted in creation, for the human being has been endowed with the ability to recognize His Sustaining Lord, to devote himself to Him, to distinguish between right and wrong, to enjoy goodness, and to be pained by evil. God stated, “And turn your face single-mindedly to the true Faith and adhere to the true nature on which Allah has created human beings.” And He stated, “And by the soul and by Him Who perfectly proportioned it, and imbued it with (the consciousness of) its evil and its piety.”

They asked: Where then is the intellect placed among these sources of knowledge?

I replied: The intellect is not a source of knowledge, contrary to the view of the philosophers and those that followed them from the scholastic theologians (mutakallimūn)—who entrusted it (the intellect) with that which is not empowered to bear, and this is the root of their deviation and ignorance, and the origin of their straying and folly, because the intellect does not bear knowledge nor produces awareness. As an example, a person who has never seen the Taj Mahal nor has heard of it, will never be guided to its [reality] through his intellect, nor can it ever arise in his mind or thoughts. When food is placed before a person, he can never experience its taste through his intellect alone. Similarly, the experience of smells and touch perception can never be attained through the intellects. How powerless is the intellect and incapable of arriving at what is beyond the senses or even imagining that.

They asked: So what then is the function of the intellect?

I replied: The intellect has four functions:

1. To preserve the acquired information from its sources
2. To arrange that [information] and harmonize it
3. To develop and cultivate it further
4. To put it to the test and investigate it

By way of example, if a person makes use of the fact that the letter alif is equal to ba and the ba is equal to jeem, the intellect preserves these two issues and arranges them to develop a third postulate, that alif is also equal to jeem. So if a person were to create a third postulate that alif is equal to daal, the intellect would reveal the error of that.

They said: Leave that abstraction and explain the four roles of the intellect with real examples.

I said: God stated that “Muḥammad is the Messenger of God” and that “We have not sent a messenger except to be obeyed by the permission of God.” The intellect preserves these two statements and arranges them, such that they lead to a third statement, “Muḥammad was not sent except to be obeyed by the permission of God.” So when a believer disobeys him, the intellect is able to point out his error so that he returns to obedience.

They said: Clarify to us the error of the philosophers and their followers from the scholastic theologians in their comprehension of the intellect's role.

I replied: Their error is contained in three points:

1. They considered it (reason) to be a source of knowledge, and is it a secret to anyone that the intellect can sometimes fail, its causes can be untenable, and its postulates can be weak in attaining that which the senses can comprehend? How then can the intellect see, hear, taste, smell or touch? How then can it penetrate to the recesses of primordial knowledge, or listen to divine revelation?
2. They did not recognize the limits of reason, which, firstly, only develops that which is known and leads it to the unknown without being capable of intrinsically acquiring and developing what is unknown, and secondly, develops and investigates what is known only within the confines of a specific sphere without being able to go beyond that, namely being closely related to the external five senses and equivalent to them, and not being able to pass or exceed their limits.
3. They confounded personal reason with sound reason.

They asked: What do you mean by personal and sound reason?

I replied: Personal reason is that which emanates from the habits of a person or people, as well as their inclinations, opinions, traditions and cultures. Sound reason is that which draws its material from the sources of knowledge. The former is referred to as desires (hawā) while the latter is known as sound reason. As an example, every person generally prefers and enjoys the food of his own people, which he was raised upon. This is subservient to and in line with the desires. When another person, however, prefers food which is more appropriate to his physical body in terms of health and strength, this is following the dictates of sound reason. The fact is that the majority of the views and preferences of the philosophers and scholastic theologians, both eastern and western, ancient and contemporary, belong to the group that follows desires and grants it dominance.

They asked: Can reason originate knowledge of God?

I replied: No, just as it cannot originate knowledge of that which is sensed. Knowledge of anything is only acquired from the sources which God designated for it, and the intellect then comes to develop and investigate that which is already known. The source of the knowledge of God is the innate nature (fiṭrah), and reason develops this further and enhances it relying on other evidences, arranging and harmonizing them. And this is the methodology that God has taught us in His Book, where He referred knowledge of Himself to the innate nature in people, and extended it with evidences through His natural signs witnessed in creation as well as His verses recited in His Book. Had the knowledge of God not been firmly grounded in the innate nature, these signs would not have sufficed as indication and proof of Him.

They asked: Don't the philosophers and scholastic theologians acknowledge the Maker, the Necessary Existent, the Cause of all causes, the First Cause and the Prime Mover through their reason?

I replied: You have been misled by their deviant generalizations and deluded by their loathsome evidences and evil meanings, some of which is deviation and misguidance which demands clarity. And worse than that, and most vile, is their methodology in seeking evidencing and proofs, which, were it to enter wisdom it would corrupt it and make it lose its place.

They asked: Will you lift the cover from the hideousness of their statements and the corruption of their ways?

I said: Rejoice, for I am pleased with your zeal for knowledge, and delight your eyes, with due diligence, in that which I have explained for you.