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## The Quranic Teachings Concerning Humanities and Social Sciences

Qodratullah Qorbani<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

The Quranic teachings concerning humanities and social sciences have their own applications and significance. In fact, The Qur'an as a divine, revealed and comprehensive book has unique teachings for providing human mundane and spiritual happiness through giving applied and social teachings which are immortal, universal and global. It gives us many transcendent teachings regarding our understanding of ourselves, God, the world, the Day of Judgment and other social facts, and by introducing social laws, shape our social behavior and thinking. The Qur'an shows us the universal laws of happiness and adversity, the result of justice and oppression, developments and decline, victory and fall, and the result of social dealings. In addition, it helps us to recognize the mechanism of social events and the cause of social developments.

By rethinking the Quranic teaching pertaining to the social life of human being, in this research, I try to show the importance of social aspects of the Qur'anic teachings and their importance and functions in human's social life, hence we infer some social laws of the Qur'an which help us in

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1. Associate Professor of Philosophy, Kharazmi University, Tehran, Iran.  
qodratullahqorbani@khu.ac.ir

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developing social sciences and humanities. In fact, this research indicates the importance of understanding and using social teachings of the Qur'an in human life and related sciences in order to help social researchers to use them in their social investigations.

**Keywords**

the Qur'anic Social Teachings, Human, Universal Laws, Social Sciences, Humanities, Divine Traditions.



## Introduction

Humanities and social sciences have tried to get some universal and global rules and laws by studying humans' dealings in the structure of society, through which one can understand, explain, anticipate and control humans' social behaviors. In fact, discovering social laws of humans' life is one of the important aims in social sciences and humanities, laws which have more universality and constancy and are able to explain humans' universal behaviors. Hence, by studying social laws we are able to discover universal and global laws and traditions which constitute social structures (Aqaei, 2009, PP. 17-18; Eraqi, 2009, p. 24). Fulfilling this, in modern social sciences, is tried to investigate the human, his/her worldview and community as the main foundations of social studying, namely, anthropology, metaphysics, cosmology and worldview, which are among the fundamental doctrines of social investigations. They show social researchers are in need of human's universal cognition, the world and metaphysics, since they determine human's attitudes to himself/herself, the world, God and religion, and define universal structures of social viewpoints. This is while empirical studies try to make bases and presuppositions of social sciences by helping of empirical and humanistic approaches towards human, God and the world, which the result is forming temporal and relative laws and theories about human and social life that are subjected to change by modifying environmental circumstances and humans' tendencies. On the contrary, by using social teachings of the Qur'an, it is possible to rethink and reform most of functional presuppositions, laws and theories of social sciences, and give them required universality and constancy.

It seems, due to the need of humanities and social sciences to universal and fundamental theories and doctrines, like metaphysics, worldview and anthropology, it is impossible to actualize comprehensive

social laws without using mentioned teachings while considering their basic virtues. It means, it is impossible to get some universal social laws without using anthropological, metaphysical and religious principles, and it may be that we are subjected to relativism and can't understand and explain human's dealings correctly. By paying attention to this problem, it is a fundamental need to use the principles that give human universal and global insight which modern philosophies and schools are unable to do. But referring to religious teachings, in particular Islamic ones as the final, immortal and comprehensive religion, is one of the best solutions. In this case, referring to unique virtues of the Qur'an is pretense to be considered and utilized, since it is a book for human's salvation. Fulfilling this presents for humans most of required mundane and spiritual, individual and social, scientific and philosophical teachings, as we read in two Surahs of the Qur'an: *we have sent down to you the book making everything clear* (Qur'an, 16: 89); and: *It is He who gave everything its creation and then guided it* (Qur'an, 20: 50). In fact, the Qur'an is a comprehensive book for explaining human universal requirements in order to provide intellectual, and lawfulness teachings in mundane universe and spiritual happiness in the Day of Judgment (Tabatabaei, 2007, P 23-32).

By considering the infallibility of the Qur'anic teachings, utilizing them can help us in reforming social attitudes, making universal and global social laws which are applicable in social sciences, and in reforming human mistakes in social theorizing and explanation and in controlling social dealings.

Therefore, in order to show the place of social and functional teachings of the Qur'an, first, it studies basic principles of social sciences, including religious worldview, human and community; and

then, it tries to clear universal aspects of social teachings of the Qur'an, and their virtues as social traditions, so that, we can determine their functions in human social life. In fact our main question is as follows: "What are the Quranic social teachings that can be applied to human beings' social life and social sciences?"

### **1. The Qur'an and the Place of Human and Religious Worldview**

In order to rethink the social teachings of the Qur'an correctly, first, we should pay attention to how the Qur'an considers human and his/her religious attitude. There are some verses in the Qur'an which indicate the prominent place of human in the whole system of being. God considers him/her as an existent in him/ her He blew of His spirit, and says: "Then He created him and (caused the angel to) breathe into Him His (created) spirit" (Qur'an, 32:9). And God bestowed him the place of vicegerent of Allah so far as all angles bowed down before him/her. Hence God says: "We created you then We shaped you, then We said to the angels: prostrate yourselves before Adam" (Qur'an, 7:11). And Allah gave him/her a special position by granting intellect, freedom and knowledge, then says: "Say: are the blind and the seeing alike? Will you not think?" (Qur'an, 6:50). The Qur'an, in addition, mentions that human is an existent having divine proper nature and innate that has confidence only with the remembrance of Allah and citing divinity, then God says: "Those who believe, and whose hearts find comfort in the remembrance of Allah. Is it not with the remembrance of Allah that hearts are satisfied" (Qur'an, 13:28). Since human is the only existent in the world that was created in the godly manner and His divine virtues, hence, human's authentic attention is towards this divine origin (Nasri, 2000, P. 131-140; Vaezi, 2009, P. 7-12). Such descriptions of human in the Qur'an indicate that its basic effort is to show the human's high place and way of his/her real happiness done

by sending the prophets and divine books, like Prophet Muhammad and the Qur'an. Therefore, in some verses of the Qur'an, by paying attention to human's worshiping tendency which is innate, they present some teachings about the necessity of religion, the role of religion in taking human's happiness and the way of its application in individual and social life. In this case, the Qur'an speaks about immortality of religion and its great role in the whole of human life. Note a verse like: *Say*: "O, people of the book! let us come to a common word between us and you that we will worship none except Allah, that we will associate none with Him, and that none of us take others for lords besides Allah" (Qur'an, 3, 64). And the verse: "Therefore set your face to the religion purely, the upright creation upon which He originated people. There is no change in the creation of Allah. This is a valuable religion, although most people do not know" (Qur'an, 30:30) can show this fact. In fact, the Qur'an argues that not only is divine religion necessary for knowing and worshiping God and reaching truth, but also it is possible through this way that humans can take a real worldview in order to think about all facts of the whole system of being. In the other words, every human's worldview shows the way of his/her opinion to the whole system of being, including God, human, the world and community. If such a worldview has divine approach, it can have a big role in recognizing them and taking human's real social happiness (Motahhari, 1998, vol. 2, p. 83).

## **2. The Qur'an and the Place of Society**

To accurately recognize social teachings of the Qur'an, it is necessary to review the place of society and social life in the Qur'anic perspective. In the Qur'an, there are several and different phrases related to the society, like People (*nās*), Nation (*millah*), Village (*qaryah*), Muslim Nation (*ummah*), tribe and branch each of which

shows some aspects of the society. For example, the word *ummah* means the people who have a common religion, religious leader and attitudes; and the word *millah* indicates the people who have a common history, traditions and cultures. God, for example, says: “Abraham was (equal to) a nation, obedient to Allah, of pure faith and was not among the idolaters” (Qur’an, 16: 120), and also says: “Follow the creed of Abraham, he was of pure faith” (Qur’an, 3: 95). These verses show the different meanings of society in the Qur’an, according to which, the society is consisted as many people who live based on their common thoughts, cultures, histories, races, customs, norms and reciprocal requirements and have common aims. The Qur’an pays complete attention to the objective fact of human social life and its necessity for taking real happiness, and even considers the role of racial, linguistic, geographic and historic differences for continuing human social life. God, in this case, says: “O, people! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes that you might know one another. The noblest of you before Allah is the most righteous of you” (Qur’an, 49: 13). This verse shows that social living is necessary for human complete perfection, since it is impossible to get spiritual perfection without encountering social problems and challenges. However, the community itself is not the aim, but is the necessary background of actualizing human’s real perfection. Hence, in some verses of the Qur’an the very aspects of social life are explained, including private relations, social relations, social morality, social justice and rights (Javadi Amoli, 2010, pp. 31-46).

### **3. The Qur’an and Its Social Teachings**

Social teachings of the Qur’an have an extensive realm. Here, we concentrate on those teachings that are called as social traditions, in order to clarify how they can be used in managing human social life

and as universal, constancy and global laws of social sciences and humanities, since universality and certainty of social teachings and traditions of the Qur'an can help us to utilize them in our social life. Researchers of the Qur'anic sciences consider some definitions and virtues for traditions of the Qur'an. Some scholars define tradition as a process which is constituted in the whole system of being according to God's divine commands; that is, it is some part of divine managing and organizing in the world that has universality, necessity and constancy. So, social traditions of the Qur'an are processes and laws indicating how social events are linked to human dealings, and present the relations between God, human and social events. Social traditions, from one hand, are ascribed to God, and show divine constituted system in social life, and from the other hand, present human's freely acts, and also indicate certain results of human's efforts (Kosha, 2010, P 38-40). Social traditions have several aspects, sometimes they are in regard to the natural world, sometimes to humans and sometimes to social living. Then it is necessary to try to recognize social aspects of divine traditions, since they have both divine and humanly properties. Another virtue of the abovementioned traditions is their role in clarifying causal relations between God and the world, God and humans, and humans' actions (Qur'an, 17: 77 & 16, 13: 11, 30: 41; Sadr, 1988, pp.. 141-145).

#### **4. The Qur'an and the Virtues of its Social Traditions**

Plurality of social traditions of the Qur'an allow us to divide them to some kinds from methodological perspective. For example, we can divide them into primary and secondary ones, which are very important to know their virtues. Some traditions that are used by verses of the Qur'an, with respect to their subjects, are divided into

two kinds: the subject of the first group is social and historical events and their proper or general results, but the subject of the second group is the divine tradition itself. Some verses of the Qur'an indicate these kinds of traditions. For example, some verses argue that purity caused to increase beneficences and descending earthly and heavenly blessings. Hence, God say: "Had the people of the villages believed and been cautious, we would have opened upon them the blessings from heaven and earth" (Qur'an, 7: 96). And in another verse, it is indicated that reality and right is firm, and untrue and null will perish (Qur'an, 11: 52); namely, there is a direct relation between repentance before God and increasing divine beneficences. And in this verse, we read: "But whosoever turns away from my remembrance, his life shall be narrow" (Qur'an, 20: 124). It means infidelity of divine beneficences leads to social poverty and problems.

In the abovementioned verses, the aim is to explain logical relations between two related issues with humans social life, although there are some notes about some virtues of divine traditions. For example, the verse: "Allah wishes to make this clear to you and to guide you along the ways of those who have gone before you" (Qur'an, 4: 26) indicates the actualization of such tradition in the past, and the verse: "Such was our way with those whom we sent before you. You shall find no change in our way" (Qur'an, 17: 77) argues the universality and comprehensiveness of divine social traditions. Also the verse: "Such is the way of Allah in days gone by, and you shall find no change in the ways of Allah" (Qur'an, 48: 23) speaks of changelessness of such traditions. In fact, the comprehensiveness and universality of divine social traditions is itself of divine traditions which explains lawfulness of the divine traditions. So, social traditions of the Qur'an, in respect to their realms, are divided into two general groups: (1) Traditions concerning totality of community and its structures;

(2) Traditions related to proper events (Sadr, 1988, pp. 141-146; Moradkhani, 2007, pp. 112-118). Here, we explained them in more detail:

**4.1.** Universality and extensiveness of social traditions of the Qur'an means that they do not represent accidental and non-causal relations; rather, they explain necessary and causal ones. Then they are constant and unchangeable laws of God. The Holy Qur'an, with more emphasis on their universality and extensiveness, tries to give them rational and scientific virtues, and invite people with deep insight to reflect on their historical and social issues by using such traditions. Hence, it says: "Such was our way with those whom we sent before you. You shall find no change in Our way" (Qur'an, 17: 77); and says: "You shall never find any change in the way of Allah" (Qur'an, 35: 43).

**4.2.** Social laws of the Qur'an are compatible with human's freedom. The Qur'an emphasizes the fact that the subject and center of social events and changing is human's will; then, it says: "And those villages! when they became evil, We destroyed them and appointed a meeting for their destruction" (Qur'an, 18: 59); and say: "Allah does not change what is in a nation unless they change what is in themselves" (Qur'an, 13:11); that is, people of every nation are free to build or destroy their life and civilizations, and determine their happiness or affliction. In fact, these verses show that oppression and justice are based on human's free will, each of which each has its own result; and that God does not oppress anybody (Sadr, 1988, p. 147).

**4.3.** Divinity of social traditions of the Qur'an is of lawfulness of community in the light of the Qur'anic teachings; namely, all social laws are ascribed to God and also to human. Hence, there are several instances in the Qur'an that divine traditions either are ascribed to God directly, or are ascribed to Him indirectly (Qur'an, 33: 38 & 62; 40: 85; 48: 23; Karami Fereydoni, 1989, pp. 10-20; Mesbah Yazdi, 2000, p. 426; Sadr, 1988, p. 141).



## **5. The Aspects and Applications if the Qur’anic Social Traditions**

The Qur’an, due to its divine origination, ascends from empirical facts familiar to us with their secret aspects as divine traditions which are universal and unchangeable. The importance of such laws is that they can reform insights of researchers of social sciences and humanities, and rebuild their presuppositions and give them functional universal laws by which they can study, understand and explain social facts, and anticipate and control them. Before assessing some of these functional traditions, it is necessary to notice that they are built on some fundamental principles like Divine Unity, Prophecy, Resurrection, human’s free will and Reason, that they build theistic approach of Islam (Amziyan, 2001, pp. 281-283; Javadi Amoli, 2010, pp. 219-252).

### **5.1. The Tradition of Connections between Obedience and Victory, Disobedience and Destruction**

One of the fundamental principles of Islam is divine unity; that is, Islam is founded on accepting it and submitting before God and Prophet's commands. Hence, teachings of the Qur’an repeatedly tell Muslims that their real happiness is depended on their belief in divine unity, obeying God and the Prophet, and they should avoid disobeying divine commands. In fact, teachings of the Qur’an, which are related to social life, explain two important principles as follow: (1) the result of obedience to God and the Prophet is victory; (2) destruction and failure is the consequence of disobedience to God and the Prophet. The Qur’an explains many instances of past nations, like Children of Israel, whose temporal obeying of divine commands led to victory and salvation, and also cites several cases of past nations, such as Children of Israel, Samud and Lut, that their disobedience led to destroying and perishing, and says the end of earth is for God's servants. For example, in the verse: “Obey Allah and His messenger, if you are believers”

(Qur'an, 8: 1), the Qur'an makes an essential relation between believing in God and the Prophet and obeying them. And in the verse: "Obey Allah and His messenger and do not dispute with one another lest you should lose courage and your resolve weaken, have patience. Allah is with those who are patient" (Qur'an, 8: 103), it explains that obedience to God and the Prophet's commands and avoiding social conflicts leads to victory. In the verse: "Indeed, we have guided him to the path, he is either grateful or ungrateful" (Qur'an, 76: 3), it says God willed that we are guided through His obedience, although we are free to choose the way of obeying and salvation or disobeying and perishing. The verse: "We sent a messenger to every nation, saying: worship Allah and avoid the idols, amongst them were some whom Allah guided, and some justly disposed to error" (Qur'an, 16: 36) shows that there is a logical connection between sending prophets and obedience to them for achieving divine salvation. So, the Qur'an invites humans to study the stories of past nations in order to take a lesson. In the verse: "Had the people of the villages believed and been cautious, we would have opened upon them the blessings from heaven and earth. But they belied, and we seized them for what they earned" (Qur'an, 7: 46), it is indicated that there is a close relation between believing in God, obeying His commands and sending heavenly beneficences, from one hand, and disbelieving in God, disobeying Him and His prophets and perishing, on the other hand. In the verse: "This is because Allah would never change His favor that He bestowed upon a nation until they change what is in their hearts" (Qur'an, 8: 53), the Qur'an clarifies that the process of sending beneficences and victory to a nation continues until they are in the divine path and God's servitude. And if they change their attitude to Godly manner, God involves them in destroying and failure. These two verses: "Whosoever disobeys Allah and His messenger strays into clear error (Qur'an, 33: 36), and: And whoever disobeys Allah and His messenger and transgresses His

bounds, he will admit him to a fire and shall live in it forever. For him, there is a humiliating punishment” (Qur’an, 4: 14) manifest that those who disobey God and His prophet's commands are in clear aberration, and there will be a terrible torment for them. The verse: “The earth belongs to Allah; He gives it as a heritage to whom He chooses amongst His worshipers. The outcome is for the cautious” (Qur’an, 7: 128) emphasizes that the final victory and the government of the earth is for God’s pure servants, since they, due to obeying divine commands, have gotten real victory and are to establish divine government on the earth (Javadi Amoli, 2010, pp. 218- 236).

These verses, which are considered as instances, explain many aspects of divine lawfulness in community. They, first, show the priority of believing in God, then the necessity of His obedience and servitude based on pure faith, which lead to victory and salvation as their consequences, and failure and destruction is the result of disbelieving and disobedience. These verses are exactly related to human social life at all times, and give insight to social researchers in recognizing functional causes and origins of nations' victories and failures.

### **5.2. The Tradition of Logical Relation between Oppression and Perishing**

The Qur’an, due to its divine origin, explains the close relation between oppression and perishing in some verses, without any exception. It says, as far as oppression is opposite to divine wisdom, and humans' common sense distinguishes that justice is a being for the whole system of being, every oppressive act rationally leads to perishing and destruction. Hence, we see many verses that reject oppression as considered unjust in any sense and form either by God or human. They emphasize the centrality of justice in the divine

system and social life, and consider terrible results for oppressive dealings. For example, the verse: “Allah does not guide the harm doers” (Qur’an, 3: 86) indicates that divine guidance doesn't include oppressive humans. The verse: “But Allah revealed to them: we shall destroy the harm doers” (Qur’an, 14: 13) argues that perishing is the consequence of oppressive acts. In the verse: “Your Lord would never destroy the villages unjustly, whilst their people were reforming” (Qur’an, 11: 117), God mentions that those who act justly and peacefully, God never perish them and their social life. In the verse: “Have they never journeyed in the land and seen, what was the end of those before them? They were stronger in might than themselves, and they plowed the land and cultivated it more than they themselves have cultivated it. And to them, their messengers came with clear signs, and Allah did not wrong them, but they wronged themselves” (Qur’an, 30: 9), the Qur’an says the perishing of past nations was the result of their oppressive acts, not God's will to do oppression and perish them.

These verses clarify that according to divine tradition in human social life, there is a logical relation between oppression and perishing. Namely, if there is a kind of unjust and oppression among people of every society or governors, there is no consequence except perishing, and that this tradition has no exception, as it is cleared by studying of past nations stories.

### **5.3. The Rule of Link between Immorality and Rejecting Realities and Perishing**

This law indicates the importance of nations' morality and moral dealings in their exaltation and corruption. It is according to this divine tradition that exaltation of moral virtues leads to human happiness, and extension of immorality leads to corruption. In fact, extension of immorality darkens human spirit, and makes it

impossible to accept authentic realities. Then it leads to perish humans and communities. In this case, there are several verses in the Qur'an. In the verse: "You are the best nation ever to be brought forth for people. You order honor and forbid dishonor, and you believe in Allah" (Qur'an, 3: 110), God praises Muslims due to their ideal morality, since promotion of good and prevention of evil is of their primary tasks; that is, in every community recommending moral virtues and prohibiting unlawful acts leads that society to exaltation or corruption. In the verse: "And who is greater in evil than he who forges a lie against Allah? Those, they shall be brought before their Lord, and witnesses will say: those are they who lied against their Lord. Indeed, the curse of Allah shall fall upon the evildoers" (Qur'an, 11: 18), the Qur'an indicates that falsehood is one of the greatest sins and immoralities that some people use repeatedly and they are placed as oppressors subjected to God's execution. The verse: "As for those who break the covenant of Allah after accepting it, who part what he has commanded to be united and work corruption in the land, a curse shall be laid on them, and they shall have an evil abode" (Qur'an, 13: 25) emphasizes that perjury is of the greatest sins and immoralities whose consequence is corruption and terrible torment of the hell. In the verse: "O believers, abstain from most suspicion, some suspicion is a sin. Neither spy nor backbite one another. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? Surely, you would loathe it. Fear Allah, without doubt Allah turns (in mercy) and He is the merciful" (Qur'an, 49: 12), God indicates those immoralities that have unpleasant social aspects, such as suspicion, spying and backbiting all of which are of the most important cases of immoralities in social life which their ugliness is clear for everybody and that they cause to change human's virtues and faith. In the verse: "Satan seeks to stir up enmity and hatred among you by means of wine and gambling, and to bar you from the remembrance of Allah and from praying" (Qur'an, 5: 91), it is

mentioned that some of immoralities are consequences of Satan's temptations, since, by decorating such immoral acts, he persuades humans to do them, and destroys humanly community.

These verses point out the importance of morality in social life for taking human's happiness and affliction. They, in particular, emphasize how extension of immoralities lead to gradual extension of corruption and heresy in all aspects. Consequently, this social and divine tradition can be applied in social investigations in order to find the causes and origins of societies' corruptions by paying more attention to the role of social morality and moral virtues.

#### **5.4. The Tradition of Logical Relation between Extension of Social Disagreements and Destroying Social Authority**

Another social tradition of the Qur'an is about negative functions of social disagreements. It is opposite to social agreement. Social agreement consists of collective unity in beliefs and common values. Social correlation and coherence is a kind of order that is ruled on by some groups because of their members' coherences. Those people who are concerned with social disagreements, gaps, values and aims and try to challenge each other are involved in social conflicts. The members of such community don't undertake towards those tasks which their society left to them, and social forces are used in order to compel opponents for accepting their claims (Rajabi, 2011, No. 7, pp. 111-117). In this case, it also can be used in the social traditions of the Qur'an. For example, in the verse: "And hold fast to the bond of Allah, together, and do not scatter" (Qur'an, 3: 103), the Qur'an, for taking social happiness, emphasizes the principle of social coherence and avoiding secondary disagreements. The verse: "Do not dispute with one another lest you should lose courage and your resolve weaken" (Qur'an, 8: 46) mentions two negative outcomes of social

disagreements and making quarrels. First, their psychological result is social weakness, unwillingness and non-responsibility towards achievement of social duties and playing social roles. The second is destroying social authority, since corruption of social coherence causes unreliable common values, and weakens social control. In such situations, the structure of the community is destroyed and social life is perished. In the verse: “Do not follow the example of those who became divided and differed with one another after clear proofs had come to them, for those, there is a great punishment” (Qur’an, 3: 105), God first prohibits people of making social conflicts and differences, then, mentions that the terrible torment is its unpleasant outcome.

Cited verses show that social agreement based on common values and traditions is a divine principle that takes mundane and spiritual happiness of communities, and teaches humans how to coexist with others; meanwhile, there are some differences among them. While, selfishness, pride and causing disunion lead to corrupt social coherence, weakness of society constitution and finally its destruction.

#### **5.5. The Tradition of the Result of Generality of Majority’s Acts**

One of the social traditions is that whenever all or most people of a community act on something, its good or bad results encompass all members of that society. The Qur’an, in this verse: “And be cautious against a sedition that will not smite the harm doers alone” (Qur’an, 8: 25), points out this tradition and says if majority of people do some disallowed things without opposition of the others, their acts lead to destruction of all people of such community. In the verse: “Had the people of the villages believed and been cautious, we would have opened upon them the blessings from heaven and earth” (Qur’an, 7: 96), it is pointed out that if most people of a society are of pure and

faithful believers, God sends for them His heavenly and earthly beneficences like rain, increasing farming and animal husbandry productions, repelling calamities, healthy, psychological peace and social security. This tradition, which indicates a real and original relation between existents, is of laws not allocated to a particular group, tribe, nation or community, but it is general without any exception.

#### **5.6. The Tradition of Examination, Divine Deception, Trial and Punishment**

Some of the divine traditions for making relation between results of humans' actions in this world and hereafter are divine punishment, trial, deception and examination all of which are compatible with divine wisdom and justice. The tradition of punishment indicates the law of abandonment and perishing disbelievers and oppressors, and argues that all people who are opposed to divine will and justice, will finally be perished. These people perform their oppressive and unjust acts through ways like denial of prophets, oppression to people and themselves, assisting in disbelieving, general immorality, social relation based on oppression, trespass in mundane living, denial of God and hereafter, forgetfulness of divine teachings and so on (Hamed Moqaddam, 1986, pp. 36-40). However, all punishments of disbelievers and oppressors are not the same, but God extends time for some people to sin increasingly. He is involved in a special examination. Some are subjected to gradual beneficences and torments. So, there are some verses in the Qur'an indicating these traditions and how they work. For example, some of them are universal and explain the divine general tradition for perishing disbelief and oppressor communities. In the verse: "How many harm doing villages have we shattered and replaced them with another



nation” (Qur’an, 21: 11), God points out the abovementioned note. The verse: “As for those who believe our verses, we will draw them on little by little, from where they cannot tell” (Qur’an, 7: 182) speaks of divine deception tradition, and shows the direct results of denying divine signs without them understanding how they perished and tasted terrible torment. This tradition means God increases His beneficences for disbelievers gradually so that they, due to enjoyments of such things, forget God’s remembrance and increase their sins and continue deviations.

Meanwhile, one of the divine traditions for torturing and perishing disbelievers is to extend their punishment until a certain time; that is, God does not destroy oppressive communities immediately, but gives them time in order to examine them and by plenty of His beneficences make them forgetful of God’s remembrance, then perishes them ((Hamed Moqaddam, 1986, pp.. 38-40). In the verse: “Your Lord is forgiving, owner of mercy. Had it been His will to take them to task for what they earned, He would have hastened their punishment; but they have an appointed hour from which they will never escape” (Qur’an, 18:58), God first points out His divine mercy, then says that He determines a proper time for oppressive people’s acts that is not changeable and there is no escape from it. In the verse: “As for those who believe Our verses, We will draw them on little by little, from where they cannot tell, and I respite them, My stratagem is firm” (Qur’an, 7: 182-3), God argues that the certain result of denial divine teachings is a terrible torment in a determined time from where they don’t know, but God extends their mundane enjoyments for increasing their sins and receiving that torment.

In addition, we can add the tradition of examination and trial. This tradition, like others, has generality both for believers and disbelievers. Examining of believers is done by distinguishing their

virtues and immoralities, and examining of disbelievers is clarifying their acts' consequences. It is possible to distinguish happy people from unblessed and hypocritical ones, then through this the victory of reality over falsehood can be seen. The cause of this tradition is to manifest people's dealings for getting related divine punishment or rewards. In the verse: "Who created death and life that He might examine which of you is best in deeds" (Qur'an, 67: 2), God explains the philosophy of life and death; that is, they are necessary for examining people about their creeds and acts. So, there is no exception in God's divine traditions. Hence, there are some verses in the Qur'an which speak of achieving such traditions for some Prophets like Abraham, David, Solomon, Moses and Jesus, and also believer and disbeliever nations. There are different means of examinations; some nations are examined by blessings and some by adversities. According to the Qur'an, some examination means include: earth beneficences, the judgments of divine book, adversities and problems, enjoyment and tranquility, getting mundane position, God's mercy, goods and evils, immoralities and disobediences, temptations, delaying of torment, divine restrictions, failure and victory, social disagreements, fear, hungry, Satan temptation and so on (Hamed Moqaddam, 1986, p. 41).

### **5.7. The Tradition of Prohibiting Disbelievers' Authority over Believers**

One of the crucial commands of the Qur'an is the law of prohibiting disbelievers' authority over Muslims; that is, the Qur'an has never wanted to dominate disbelievers on Muslims, and if there is such bad phenomenon in Muslim community, it indicates increasing of immoralities and corrupting their faith. The verse: "Allah will not grant the unbelievers any way over the believers" (Qur'an, 4: 141) shows the universal and constant divine will of Muslims' authority and

rejects any kinds of unbelievers' domination over them. These two verse: "O believers! Do not take the unbelievers for guides instead of the believers" (Qur'an, 4: 144), and: "O believers! If you obey those who disbelieve, they will turn you upon your heels and you will turn to be losers" (Qur'an, 3: 149) command Muslims to avoid taking disbelievers' friends and obeying them, since they cause Muslims to take their virtues go to astray, with unpleasant results. In fact, in the verse: "Indeed, the unbelievers are a clear enemy for you" (Qur'an, 4: 101), God clarifies that disbelievers are the clearest enemies of Muslims.

#### **5.8. The Tradition of Relation Between Wasting and Corruption**

The last social tradition we consider is the essential relation of wasting and corruption. It means humans are not allowed to waste divine beneficences extremely, and if they do this, the famine and corruption is the result of their acts. There are some verses in the Qur'an related to this tradition. For example, the verse: "O believers! Do not forbid the good things that Allah has made lawful to you. Do not transgress; Allah does not love the transgressors" (Qur'an, 5: 87), addresses the way of using divine blessings and consequences of oversteps of divine bounds. In the verse: "Then, We were true to the promise, We saved them together with those whom We willed, and destroyed the transgressors" (Qur'an, 21: 9), it is emphasized that the logical and certain consequences of transgressors' acts are destroying. In the verse: "When We desire to annihilate a village, We command those who live in ease, but they commit evil therein, then the word is realized against it and it is utterly annihilated" (Qur'an, 17: 16), it is indicated that there is a logical relation between social transgression and corruption, since transgression and wasting are caused to provide backgrounds of other immoralities like ingratitude for blessing, obedience, disbelieving and so on, whose natural results is perishing.

## Conclusion

It seems humanities and social sciences have tried to discover the global and universal laws and rules that dominate over human beings' thoughts and behaviors. By applying such laws, they try to anticipate and control social acts and reactions of people in order to get such an orderly community. In this, because of humanly restrictions of humanities and social sciences, these sciences could not have full achievements and sometimes make some big mistakes. The proposed strategy in this case is to refer to revealed and heavenly teachings that were introduced in some holy books like the Qur'an. According to Muslims beliefs, there are many applied and social traditions and laws in the Qur'an that not only can be applied in humans' practical and social life, but also can take and define some presuppositions, laws and theories of humanities and social sciences, and help us to understand, explain, anticipate and control social and humanly events and facts. In fact, some essential teachings of the Qur'anic traditions, such as universality, constancy, being unchangeable and global, being realistic and divine origination, enable social researchers to ascend empirical facts and go to their hidden levels. Such achievements help them to constitute humanities and social sciences on fundamental principles, get universal laws, present realistic theories, and avoid big social mistakes. Consequently, those humanly and social laws are derived from social traditions of the Qur'an that have extensive application and have more continuation based on our human understanding. All these laws and traditions indicate universal and constant lawfulness of social life; that is, manifesting realities and facts is of essential virtues of the Qur'an's laws and traditions which can be utilized by humans in social life and social researchers in social investigations and sciences. In addition, using them has an important role for taking humans' mundane and spiritual happiness, and

inattention to their functions causes human societies to be corrupted. So, it is recommended that Muslim communities and social researchers consider the application of such laws, traditions and teachings in humanities and social sciences.

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## **The Explanation of the Relationship between Religion and Philosophy Based on Concreteness of Absolute Spirit in *The Phenomenology of Spirit***

Mustafa Abedi Jigha<sup>1</sup>

Sajjad Rish-Sefid<sup>2</sup>

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### **Abstract**

According to *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, the religion and philosophy are considered as important stages of the history of consciousness, and the absolute spirit is to become self-conscious of itself, as spirit, in the process of genesis of these two stages. The central issue of the present article is answering the following questions: “What relationship does Hegel establish between delicacies of religion and philosophy?” “Are religion and philosophy considered, in his thought, as double truths for each of which separate realms exist or these two are different stages of one single truth that express the spirit’s self-consciousness of itself in two stages?” To answer these questions, the writer attempts to show, through a descriptive-analytical method, how Hegel offers a theoretical explanation for substituting the image of national and ethnic religion for

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1. PhD of Philosophy, Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Literature, Tabriz, Iran.  
m.abedi2015@yahoo.com

2. MA of Islamic Philosophy and Theology, Minor: Studying Shia.  
s.rishsefid@yahoo.com

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its traditional image by making the absolute affair to the ethnic spirit. Besides, it shows how Hegel – unlike the transcendental philosophy and exalted philosophy – on the one hand turns God and absolute spirit from non-understandable ideas to cognitive and conceptual ones, and on the other hand, removes – in this way – the duality of the realm between religion and philosophy and establishes an internal relationship between them. Through creating a dialectic relationship between religion and philosophy, he finds the possibility to remove the contrast between the myth and the realm of systematic knowledge. And by making it close to the framework of system of knowledge, he introduces the myth not in contrast to rational knowledge, but as the outset of the way whose truth the rational knowledge is going to explain.

**Keywords**

religion, philosophy, ethnic religion, God, double truth.

## Introduction

From his youth, Hegel was thinking of religion and its role in human's life, especially its relationship to philosophy, culture and ethnic spirit. In his view, religion must answer all needs of life and create a harmony among all human spheres, i.e. subject and object, 'I' and 'other', and finally, between human and God. Hegel's image of religion can be investigated in three general periods: (1) the period of Tubingen and Bern (1788-1796) wherein Hegel speaks, under the influence of Greek religion, of 'ethnic religion' instead of celestial religion. (2) Frankfurt period (1796-1800), wherein Hegel is under the influence of Kant's *The Critique of Practical Reason*. It is in that period that he establishes a good relationship with Christianity, and some of the Christian concepts appear in his religious thought. (3) In Jena period (1801-1807), Hegel somehow considers the two previous periods in his complete thought. In *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, for instance, he attempts, on the one hand, to reconcile between national and ethnic spirits and present a theoretical explanation for them. And on the other hand, he attempts to make God and absolute spirit concrete in the human inter-subjectivity (a) to enter – unlike subjective idealism – God and, consequently, religion into the cognitive sphere and the system of knowledge and (b) to pull out – unlike Frankfurt period – philosophy from being subordinate to religion and faith, putting it above religion. The present article tries to explain Hegel's perception of religion, based on *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, as one of the spheres of theoretical cognition, and speak of ethnic and national religions by creating a relationship between God and human community. And then, using this medium, he tries to harmonize religion with philosophy and myth with rationality. It is according to this image that one can explain Hegel's view on negation of double truth and consider philosophy as the essence and truth of religion.

Numerous articles have been written on Hegel's image of religion. For instance, the article entitled "The Relationship between Religion and the State in Hegel's Philosophical System" written by Hassan Mehrnia was published in Journal of Wisdom and Philosophy in 1390 SH. In that article, religion has not been researched as an independent subject, and the writer tries to analyze the relationship between religion and the state in Hegel's thought. From the same writer, we see an article, published in the Journal of New Religious Thought in 1391 SH, entitled "Explanation and Critique of Hegel's Religious Thought". A large part of the article deals with an explanation of the historical change in Hegel's view in his various works regarding religion, and finally, it criticizes his view about Islam. An article written by Ali Asghar Mosleh, entitled "The Historical View of Religion in Hegel's Thought", was published in the Journal of Inquiries of Philosophy of Religion in 1391 SH. In that article, the main axis is the book entitled *Lectures on Philosophy of Religion*, and the writer attempts to study Hegel's historical view on historical genesis of religion and the process of historical evolution of religion from the primitive religions to absolute religion. In the present study, neither we study religion in view of its relationship to [another] religion, nor do we aim at studying the historical change of religion and critique of Hegel's view on Islam. Rather, what the writer attempts to explain is the situation of religion in *The Phenomenology of Spirit* and the logic of genesis of the absolute religion in the system of phenomenology, and how this religion is developed.

### **1. God's Concreteness in the Ethnic Spirit and Negation of a Transcendental image of God**

To make religion in Hegel's view explainable, we must reveal Hegel's concept of God, because in Hegel's thought, religion is conceived as a

system of beliefs appeared through the manifestation of spirit for itself. Thus, to present a right image of Hegelian religion, we must be familiar with the concept of God and the concrete absolute spirit Hegel presents. To explain his idea of concrete divinity, he goes to Christianity. According to Hegel's interpretation, to reach from an abstract transcendental God to a concrete God, the doctrine of incarnation will be a key component. He believes that in Christianity the Exalted God relinquishes His abstract essence and non-actuality through incarnation (Hegel, 1807, p. 516) and enters the real world and history. But Hegel believes that the mere Christian image of God, incarnated in a certain person, is still abstract, with no unity with this worldly life. Thus, for removing the abstractness from the divine essence, it is essential for the incarnated God to die and breath, instead of getting life within the person of the Christ, this time in the Christian community and in every Christian individual, connecting his life from a certain person to the whole Christian community.<sup>1</sup> "Death turns from the meaning it directly conveys, from not being an individual affair, to the generality of a spirit living in his nation" (Hegel, 1807, p. 521). After the death of the incarnated God, the self-consciousness of the father god turns into the general self-consciousness or the community of worshippers. For God to be able to incarnated, instead of an individual man like the Christ, in humanity, "must die as an image to be qualified to appear in the form of a thought that is considered as united with the deepest human thought" (Hegel, 1807, p. 521). Hegel believes that God's incarnation in the Christ as the only

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1. The human's promotion towards God is done through religion, which is done – indeed – by Christianity, and its complete relationship necessitates worldly communities with inner and secular freedoms. Thus, religion as 'merely' a spiritual community necessitates its completion by the state as the earthly divinity (Desmond, 2003, p. 167).

example of the absolute essence, must die to become something that other human beings can have a share in it. In this way, for the clear religion, this divine re-rising after the Christ's death requires our activity. When the man gains such a situation in the system of phenomenology, God turns into the inhibiting spirit guiding us. He is not just the God who died once, but the spirit inhibiting in His society, "dies everyday in this nation and rises" (Hegel, 1807, p. 521).<sup>1</sup> And as Desmond says, this concreteness of God in another [person] is considered inner and essential for God (Desmond, 2003, p. 167).

It is important to pay attention to the point that, by making divinity concrete as the essence of religion, Hegel does not intend to eliminate divinity and lead *The Phenomenology of Spirit* to end in negating divinity. Rather, what he has in mind is to promote the exalted and ineffective divinity and the Christian monastic religion – which is above the everyday life – into the quite objective and effective divinity in the history of consciousness. In a complicated form, Hegel is going to revive spirit in the concrete realm that can be effectively revived in life. Accordingly, Kojdve's assumption that "The whole evolution of the Christian world is nothing except progress towards atheistic consciousness" (Kojdve, 1980, p. 57) is wrong,<sup>2</sup> because God's death in Christianity does not mean the dissolution of the concept of God. Consciousness, according to the interpretation of it offered by Hegel, is not in a way that it leads to atheism in the end of history. Rather, with the interpretation Hegel offers from God and – meanwhile – from the Christian God, it becomes clear that the

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1. As Ruckmore says, "For Hegel, the men are spirits that one can... perceive as reason in the social-historical framework." (Ruckmore, 1997, p. 205).

2. Our presence in the world as a free man is not possible only if we accept the idea of death and, consequently, Godlessness (Kojdve, 1980, p. 57).

Christian God appears in a new guise; and it is not the case that God is lost completely from the realm of the modern philosophy. In this way, after dying in the world, the incarnated God of the clear religion as the essence of religion, i.e. the community of the believers, becomes alive (Hegel, 1807, p. 519).<sup>1</sup> Although Hegel emphasizes that ‘for the clear religion, the Christ’s death is not just a historical death, but the death of God Himself’, this death is itself the zenith of the process through which God becomes alive as spirit in institutional arrangements and human community. In this way, the Christ’s death is a way through which God comes out of the abstract state.<sup>2</sup> And, due to being placed inside the human arrangements and ethnic spirit, the spirit becomes self-conscious and Kant’s transcendental religion and the exalted religion of Christianity turns into the living spirited religion that is effective in social arrangements and manages the humans’ social life.

## **2. Genesis of Ethnic and National Religion, with God’s Concreteness in Ethnic Spirit**

With this explanation, it becomes clear that religion must not be imagined as an exalted and transcendental affair from the ethnic spirit; rather, as Hegel describes religion, it is the very relationship between subjective consciousness and God. As Hegel frequently refers to it in

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1. As Houlgate says, God’s death is not the dissolution of the divine concept; rather, it is constructive of the divine life as well. (Houlgate, 2013, p. 183).
  2. Our manipulation of God’s incarnation and death is nothing except our permission for God to become spirit inside us. God’s spiritual uprising in us necessitates that we be open to His sacrifice (Houlgate, 2013, p. 184). In this way, God and spirit cannot be reduced to humanity. The spirit is something that manifests itself inside us. Although spirit as the essence is not something detached from us as phenomena, what logically exists and must be noted is that the essence is the foundation of phenomena and is logically prior.

*The Phenomenology of Spirit*, the component inside religion that makes it valuable as religion is not presenting an image of God as a being above the ethnic spirit. In his view, religion is the experience of union of the ethnic spirit with God and ‘rising’ of the ethnic spirit to the position of divinity. All the manners, symbols and representations present in the religious rites are the service of creating and embodiment of such an experience. Accordingly, as Chiereghin offers in his interpretation of *The Phenomenology of Spirit* regarding Hegel’s image of the essence of religion, he believes that “religion originates from the community of the believers” (Chiereghin, 2009, p. 66).<sup>1</sup> It is due to origination of religion from the ethnic spirit that religion shifts from a personal affair towards a concrete and social truth. Religion in Hegel’s view is not such that deals, like traditional religion, with abstract discussions. What Hegel expects from religion is to explain the relationship that God establishes, in becoming concrete, with the man; that is, to report the very relationship of God in becoming spirit, which is knowing Himself in His coming out of self. Accordingly, in *The Phenomenology*, the dialectic unity of the absolute spirit with intersubjectivity and the human’s community is introduced as the simple content of the absolute religion (Hegel, 1807, p. 505).<sup>2</sup> In fact, the absolute spirit as the essence of religion is nothing except the formation of the ethnic spirit, and the process of formation of the national and ethnic spirit displays the essential aspect of religion (ibid, 517). As Kain rightly declares in this regard, “Transition of consciousness into ‘religion’ is not an effort for going beyond the culture and entering the ontological

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1. The genesis of religion has no exalted status in the religious community and it is not the case that it establishes relations with the religious community in an authoritative way (Desmond, 2003, p. 167).

2. As Stern explains, Hegel, on the minute of religion, adopts our position as the phenomenological supervisor (Stern, 2002, p. 151).

metaphysical sphere; rather, it is returning to its inner side, moving towards more cultural depths and finding a deeper truth” (Kain, 2005, p. 199). In *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, he explains the absolute religion as the very God’s consciousness and that of the absolute spirit about themselves (Hegel, 1807, p. 505). On the other hand, in *The Phenomenology* and his other works, including the “Philosophy of Spirit” in *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, when explaining the religion of revelation, he claims that God as the foundation of the religion of revelation is God up to the point that He achieves self-consciousness of Himself between the man and the men’s consciousness of it (Hegel, 1817, p. 473). In this way, God’s consciousness as the essence of religion is possible just when God makes Himself concrete in the human terms and actualizes Himself inside the ethnic spirit. The spirit, whom we have called divine spirit up to now, is not a spirit beyond the stars or the universe, for God is present everywhere and is present in the spirit quite like spirit. God is a living God who is effective, active and present in the spirit (Hegel, 1895, p. 33). Due to this perception of God and ethnic religion in Hegel’s view, Znoj maintains, in his book entitle *Mlady Hegel Naprahu Moderny*, that before Hegel, religion was not an effective and living element in human society, and God and religion were doctrinal teachings just in the individuals’ minds, with no positive effect in objective terms. He maintains “It was Hegel who was seeking for a living religion, a religion that was more powerful, more institutional and more internal that can affect people’s daily life” (Znoj, 1990, p. 27). Of course, we must note that Hegel does not intend to reduce religion into human atoms by making it concrete in ethnic spirit and lower it in the spiritless human terms. Rather, he maintains that religion is not the product of human innovation, but the product of the divine spirit, the effect of the divine affair, and can be explained as suggestive of fruitful rising of the divine affair inside the human (Hegel, 1895, p. 33).



Due to the objective image of religion, Hegel puts his position in contrast to Kant's opinion.<sup>1</sup> Kant, due to appropriating the sphere of faith to the realm of reason and negating desire and feeling from it, creates a gap between specifying religious faith and human's social life, and emphasizes the subjective reason just by negating human's desires and motivations. Accordingly, faith cannot explain the subject-object relationship and merely turns into something that is unable to resolve the individual moral issues. But Hegel does not consider religion as something individual and believes that religion is explicable outside the individual subject and in the objective world. Hegel stands against this Kant's assumption and declares that religion does not include just the realm of the subjective reason; rather, the true religion affects our heart, feeling and will as well (Hegel, 1793, p. 5). Of course, Hegel seriously criticizes the subjective image of reason in *The Phenomenology* and believes that reason is something social in essence and can be specified inside social and intersubjective institutions (see Hegel, 1807, pp. 404-406). In this way, if we rightly understand the Hegelian image of reason, then religion will be conforming to the rationality that is essentially social and conventional. Accordingly, religion – in addition to being related to the realm of subject by emphasizing Kantian subjective practical reason, is passive due to being rooted in the human's heart and feeling, and considers the objective aspect in itself as well. In this way, religion turns from an individual affair into a social affair

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1. Kant considered religion and God as facts that are objectified in the pure reason of the individual subject. In that view, religion is considered as a completely mental component that lacks objective bases. In describing the framework of faith, he believes that faith is valid and sufficient just from the subjective viewpoint, and is invalid from the objective viewpoint (Pasternack, 2011, p. 296). In his thought, the 'purely practical reason' is the only realm wherein religion is discussed (Kant, 2004, p. 207).

crystalized in the faithful community. Belief in national<sup>1</sup> and civil religion preoccupied Hegel's mind before Jena period when he wrote *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. The major issue for Hegel in Tubingen and Bern period was how to formulate the typical principles of the modern civil religion (Beiser, 2005, p. 230).

It is due to such a perception of religion that regarding faith, Hegel tends to the belief that he must go away from faith in the individual state running between the individual man and his God, searching for it in human community. Faith is an element that appears in the inter-subjectivity of religious community, i.e. in *Ummah*. In this regard, he writes:

“The absolute essence of faith is not essentially an abstract essence placed beyond the faithful consciousness. Rather, it is the spirit of the believers' community... for this essence to be the spirit of the *Ummah* in this state, the action of the *Ummah* is essentially minute. This essence can only be created through the consciousness of this spirit of the *Ummah*” (Hegel, 1807, 381).

Here, Hegel refers more rigorously and more explicitly to the ethnicity of religious faith that essentially contains ethnicity of religion as well. In this section of the text, he believes that religious faith is not an abstract essence with a community beyond the subject's consciousness, in a way that it can be considered as explicable just in an exalted state. Rather, for Hegel, the religious faith is an essentially

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1. In Germany, Christianity – with religious reformation – made somehow a synthesis with nationalist aspects of the Germans, and the Protestants was understood as the national religion in Germany. Thus, the main goal and the philosophy of enlightenment, especially its German branch, is not dissolution of religion. Rather, the philosophy of enlightenment attempts with all power to establish and deepen religion as a sublime meaning (Cassirer, 1932, p. 236).

social affair generated inside the religious community (*Ummah*), and this structure of the religious community strengthens the essence of faith and objectifies it.

### **3. Promotion of Religion from a Doctrinal Matter into a Cognitive Matter in Hegel's Thought**

Before Jena period, Hegel showed less interest in religious beliefs and decided to accept Kant's thought about the practical faith. His little interest in religious teachings was not related to the meaning, truth and cognitive aspect of religion. Rather, it originated from the credit and value of those teachings for the society and the state. This is while in Jena period, Hegel considers the main concern of the chapter on religion in *The Phenomenology* to be 'knowing God and absolute spirit', and pursues the theoretical aspect in the chapter on religion. Accordingly, he deals with religion in the section on 'reason' and tries to present in this way the theoretical foundations of absolute cognition in religion and philosophy. Hegel introduces *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, of which the religion is also a minute, as emergence of knowledge in general or in science (Hegel, 1807, p. 54). Hegel considers religion as realized in the light of embodiment of absolute spirit in human community and believes that God initially turns into 'actualized self-consciousness' only through embodiment in the religious society (Siep, 2014, p. 223) and in this way, He achieves His highest essence for the first time. Thus, God's embodiment in the religious community is described as knowledge that is considered the cognitive order of reality and – at the same time – “pure thought and, thus, the pure individuality of the spirit” (ibid). This assumption of Hegel is in contrast to that of Kant and Descartes. Unlike Kant, Hegel limits consciousness to make room for faith. He expands consciousness to the extent that it also contains faith and, by entering

faith inside himself, he enters it into the system of knowledge, introducing faith as a stage of consciousness. Thus, Kant enters reason into his limits to save faith from harms by limiting it in its own framework.<sup>1</sup> The common point between Hegel and Kant is that both consider faith as a rational matter and enter it in their system as an essential stage of rationality. However, it is necessary to note that Hegel is considerably different from Kant.

Descartes and Kant both consider faith as outside the realm of knowledge, for it is out of the empirical world. In Kant's view, the concepts outside the experience, like those concepts related to the sphere of faith, become much ambiguous due to losing their relationship with the time and place (Pasternack, 2011, p. 519). Since faith is an ambiguous matter, Descartes sends it out of the realm of knowledge and Kant places faith in the realm of practical reason, instead of theoretical reason, because the faith is something out of the phenomenal sphere and in the realm of numen. Hegel's critique of persons such as Descartes, who had driven faith out of the domain of knowledge due to its being ambiguous, is that we cannot drive faith out of the system of knowledge just because it deals with ambiguous and mysterious affairs. He believes that although the faith deals with imaginal matters, this does not show that we must place them out of the system of knowledge. In Hegel's view, "the religious faith is not in general stone or the like; rather, what is within the religious faith is exclusively the essence of pure thinking" (Hegel, 1807, p. 384). In this way,

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1. In this regard, Kant writes in *Critique of Pure Reason*, "I had to deny knowledge to make room for the faith." In explaining this point, he says, "The dogmatism of metaphysics, i.e. the pre-judgement that one can go forth in metaphysics without critique of reason, is the true source for any disbelief, and such a disbelief is always very dogmatic" (Kant, 1785, p. 56).

Hegel criticizes the image beyond the cognitive system of religion and the related matters. He even goes further and declares that religion, after philosophy, is something through which consciousness can face the absolute and seek to understand it rationally. The religious faith “in its certitude is a simple relationship with its absolute equivalent, the knowledge that does not mix things such as letters, paper and copiers with its consciousness of the absolute essence, and does not place such things between that absolute essence and itself” (Hegel, 1807, p. 385). Accordingly, it becomes clear that Hegel intends to promote the religious faith into the position of concept, not to deny it or drive it out of the circle of knowledge.

With this explanation, Hegel goes to the critique of Enlightenment. Enlightenment drives religious doctrines out of the realm of knowledge and considers them as superstitious and non-scientific matters that never can be understood with the logic of science. The thought of Enlightenment considers religion as something founded on historical and random truths. For instance, “Enlightenment feeds on wrong accounts and interpretations. The religious faith attempts to base its foundations on certain matters, and when it feels weak in facing the Enlightenment, it turns to historical instances.” (Hegel, 1807, p. 384). Enlightenment intends to generalize the pure insight. In other words, Enlightenment is seeking to understand all realities on the basis of general objectifications, i.e. concepts; and anything that eludes the conceptual arrangements cannot, in Enlightenment’s view, have a place in the system of knowledge. This very unilateral focus causes Hegel to consider the principle of enlightenment as pure insight. “The pure insight considers faith as something in contrast with that pure insight, i.e. with reason and truth” (Hegel, 1807, p. 375). Hegel is seeking to criticize the Enlightenment’s assumption that just what is inserted in the domain of subjective and

mental concepts can have scientific value. He maintains that the scientific value of any element is not dependent on the fact that it is included in the conceptual terms of the individual subject and, as Hegel says, in the pure insight. Rather, the structure of knowledge is beyond the structure of individual mind. The structure of knowledge is considered as a whole, and the structure of individual mind is just imaginable as one minute of it (see: Hegel, 1807, p. 73). And there are some matters such as art, religion, morality, law and politics that, despite their relation with the realm of knowledge, do not fit in this structure of individual mind, and we cannot explain them on the basis of the logic of individual mind. The basic drawback of Enlightenment, in Hegel's view, is that it explains just some part of the 'whole' system of knowledge, i.e. the finite subject, while the subjective reason is just one aspect of the arrangements of knowledge in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, and the Enlightenment ignores that non-subjective aspects of the system of knowledge whom religion explain.

#### **4. Myth as a Minute of Knowledge**

In this way, Hegel does not consider the language of myth in opposition to the language of science; rather, in his view, the language of myth is a part of the language of science. He maintains that we must not consider the language of myth as a truth opposed to the truth of rational speculation. In his view, the mythical language is a minute of speculative thought and the element of knowledge. In fact, Hegel does not only put the myth in contrast to knowledge and speculative reason, but also he believes that the myth as the language of religion is one of the most important minutes of *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, wherein the element of knowledge and speculative reason expands its truth and becomes conscious of itself as the self-conscious knowledge. Here is where Hegel identifies the intermediated knowledge with the

religious consciousness that manifests itself in the mythical and allegorical language (Hegel, 1807, p. 507). Besides, since on the one hand he identifies the myth with the intermediated knowledge and, on the other hand, links the element of knowledge with concept,<sup>1</sup> relates – with one mediator – the myth with ‘the concept’ as the essence and foundation of the system of knowledge. Hegel’s position is in contrast to Enlightenment thought. The agenda of Enlightenment was disenchantment of the world, dissolution of myths and establishment of knowledge instead of fancying (Adorno, 2002, p. 29).<sup>2</sup> Kant considered myth as the superstition and in opposition to being scientific. In Kant’s view, the mythical doctrines of the historical faith are neither inconsistent with the pure rational doctrines nor are they proper to be considered as mediators for the rational faith. Sometimes, such as the time of victimizing Isaac, inheritance of the first sin, incarnation and atonement, it opposed the historical religion (Pasternack, 2011, p. 526) and negated the historical and mythical rites as being superstitious.

To criticize Kant’s position that the mythical doctrine of religion is superstitious and is never recognizable with the scientific

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1. Knowledge must organize itself just through the special life of concept (Hegel, 1807, p. 71). What is important in acquiring knowledge is taking over the exhausting effort of concept. This exhausting effort calls for paying attention to concept as it is, paying attention to objectifications of being in oneself, being for oneself, being equal to oneself and the like (Hegel, 1807, p. 75).
  2. As Idealists such as Kant and Fichte believed that since religious doctrines are by themselves related to the world and never revealed to the subject as phenomenon, the theoretical reason cannot offer an acquired cognition of these matters. Accordingly, Kant tied up the feet of science to make room for the faith, and the faith appeared where the science was limited, and outside the limits of knowledge, the faith rose.

logic,<sup>1</sup> and to clarify that the myth is not only related to the sphere of cognition but also is beyond it and is – after the philosophical knowledge – the most perfect stage that achieves the scientific cognition free from itself, Hegel maintains that the historical appearances of religious doctrines suggest the cognitive truths presented in the mythical, mysterious and allegorical forms. When there is no territorial difference between the myth and reason and both of them are related to the various stages of the system of knowledge, Hegel can easily describe, in *Lectures on Philosophy of Religion*, the rational philosophy as equal with mythical and religious theology (Hegel, I, 1984, p. 84), which makes – in various stages – the absolute spirit conscious of itself. Besides, to establish an internal relationship between theology and philosophy and to unify the myth with knowledge, he goes further and introduces philosophy as a type of worship. “Philosophy is, indeed, nothing except a form of worship”<sup>2</sup>

1. Kant, pretending to drive out the numenal matters such as faith from the domain of reason, has a wrong perception of reason. This is because what he conceived as reason was more similar to understanding [faculty] than to reason. Accordingly, faith experiences enlightenment as superstition and “as non-reason and evil intention” (Hegel, 1807, p. 379). This feature – the faith’s being outside the realm of knowledge – allowed Enlightenment to accuse the age of faith of following superstition and ignorance. When Enlightenment knows itself as the whole truth and denies the objective content that faith considers as absolute and as the truth of existence, the Enlightenment thought turns into something that – in faith’s view – is something null and useless. Accordingly, “Faith experiences Enlightenment as a discourse that does not know what it says, and when it speaks of the priests’ deceptions, it has no understanding of the subject. The Enlightenment speaks of these as if the tricky priests have introduced – through sorcery – something absolutely strange or different and as the essence of consciousness, and at the same time, it says that it is the essence of consciousness, it says that consciousness believes in it and has trust in it” (Hegel, 1807, p. 381).
2. Philosophy is a form of worship, but a typically different form of worship.



(ibid, p. 153). That is, worship in the language of myth and the truth of philosophical knowledge follows one single truth in various stages. Accordingly, he uses the mythical doctrine of the Christ's incarnation in the chapter on religion and, by creating a logic based on this mysterious and mythical doctrine, explains the process of concreteness of the absolute spirit in the human being. He believes that what Enlightenment does not notice about the age of faith is that the historical affair or the historical event in Christianity has a sense or, in other words, any historical event has a historical philosophy that Enlightenment does not understand (Hegel, 1807, p. 384). That is, the incarnation or the Christ's coming to this world, the fact that God has incarnated Himself in the Jesus Christ, the passions of Jesus Christ and the ensuing evolutions are, for Hegel, historical events. This history, however, is for the Christian believer and the pious person as mysterious and mythical meaning that must be understood. This is while the Enlightenment considers the Christ's coming to this world and his passions as well as his being crossed, his burial and his Ascend to the heavens as mythical and allegorical matters that are in contrast to the realm of the historical knowledge.

### **5. Negation of the Double Truth in Hegelian Thought and Assuming Philosophy as the Truth of Religion**

After clarification of the fact that Hegel considers religion as a cognitive truth and explains it inside the process of the genesis of the system of knowledge, his position on the relationship between religion and philosophy can be guessed. Hegel would not have the problem of those who considered religion and philosophy as double truth and then, when they wanted to explain the relationship between those two, were confused. This is because with his explanation about religion, he eliminates the ground for doubling the truth in his thought and

considers them as a unique truth with no essential difference between them. Of course, before entering Jena, Hegel had a quite different opinion in this regard. He would explain, somehow, the relationship between religion and philosophy in a realm that Kant had created in his critiques. During the years of his settlement in Frankfurt, he offered an opinion quite contrary to the Jena period and placed, in the mysticism of that era, the faith above the reason. In *Fragments of a Philosophical System*, Hegel claimed that:

“Philosophy must be quiet before religion, for it is an intellectual process and, thus, it involves confrontation with non-intellectual processes and also a confrontation between the mind of the thinker and the subject of thought. Philosophy must show the finitude of all finite things and demand their integration through reason. In particular, it must recognize the illusions created by its own infinity and thus leave the true infinity beyond its borders (Hegel, 1907, p. 179).

In *The Young Hegel*, after quoting these statements from Hegel, Lukacs says, “Thus, the task of philosophy is self-falling in favor of religion” (Lukacs, 1977, p. 280). Lukacs continues as follows: “In his book entitled *Der Geist des Christentums und Sein Schicksal*, Hegel stresses on religion as the zenith of philosophy more vigorously” (ibid, p. 275). Accordingly, in *Der Geist des Christentums* and before writing *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel places love above reason and believes what causes the man to infiltrate into the most fundamental realm of existence is the concept of ‘love’, because love makes the foundation of the universe familiar for the man by uniting the man with God. Accordingly, in *Der Geist des Christentums*, Hegel considers the zenith of faith – which he describes as essentially a romantic matter – a minute that makes the circle of the man’s perfection close together. In Hegel’s view, this realm cannot be

assumed as the realm of the relationship between the man's rationalized thought and the universe. Rather, it is a living territory that can be covered by the living love (Hegel, 1907, pp. 129-130).<sup>1</sup>

Hegel's first critique about priority of religion in comparison to philosophy appears in the treatise *Faith and Knowledge* (1802). In that book, he claims that philosophy has made itself the handmaid of a faith once more<sup>2</sup> (Hegel, 1977, p. 55), and goes to the critique of the idea that 'faith is the handmaid' in the Enlightenment thought and Kant's subjective idealism. In his view, not only has the Enlightenment made reason – in a more proper way – superior to religion, but also has been able to propose a new form of anti-rationalism. This is because the superficial critique of Enlightenment leaves faith untouched, in a way that with this critique, the philosophy has inclined towards faith more (ibid, p. 56). This is while philosophy in Hegel's thought is not the handmaid of religious faith and has no duty to put itself at the service of religious faith and conceptualize its internal features. "In a sense, Hegel takes religious faith more seriously than many Enlightenment thinkers, because he considers it the fundamental aspect of deep-thinking consciousness. This is because he thinks that, otherwise, rationalism itself will become unimportant and unilateral" (Stern, 1990, p.

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1. In his early works, there is – most probably – nothing except religion to allow people to reconcile in history with the fate. But upon his entrance to Jena, Hegel gave more importance to philosophy. It is philosophy that allows the absolute reason to be self-conscious. And in any great philosophical system, it seems that in an artistic work, reason has been presented for itself in a complete form (Hyppolite, 1974, p. 59).
  2. Here, Hegel says 'once more, philosophy becomes the handmaid of faith' because earlier, in Middle Ages, other philosophers such as Thomas Aquinas had such an attitude. He had said that we must put other sciences 'obligatorily at the service of theology' (Aquinas, 1947, p. 5), and 'turn the philosophy into the language of religion and the servant and assistant for affairs of faith' (Aquinas, 1947, p. 6).

270). In this way, the Hegelian assumption of the relationship between philosophy and religion is in contrast to the thought of individuals such as Descartes and some other theologians of the Middle Ages, who regarded religion above philosophy and put aside reason in case it was in opposition to religion (Descartes, 1390 SH, p. 302).

To take philosophy out of the position of a handmaid, Hegel first turns the authoritative image of religion – wherein the man was sentenced to have belief in it without having a conceptual knowledge of it – into a flexible image of it, wherein religion has not authoritative state and the essence of religion finds itself in the intersubjective consciousness. In this way, in Hegel's thought, religion is not a mysterious meta-phenomenal matter beyond the speculative knowledge, with no access from reason to it. Rather, religion has turned into an essentially speculative matter and instead of a contrast between its truth and the truth of philosophical knowledge, it becomes a part of the system of knowledge, the zenith of which is considered to be philosophy. With this, Hegel gives a new identity to religion, wherein there is no exalted and despotic relationship. Rather, religion has turned into a theoretical matter that is explicable in the arrangements of the rational concepts. Religion is a method through which all human beings directly become aware of truth (Hegel, 1984, p. 180). In this way, instead of making the philosophical knowledge, as a quite human matter, subordinate to the logic existing in the realm of religion as a divine matter, he enters religion – with a new interpretation of it – into the logic of a realm that is – in principle – related to the realm of consciousness and is a theoretical matter. In this perception, religion is understood as a minute of consciousness in the light of which, the absolute spirit is explicable in a speculative form (Hegel, 1807, p. 507). In this way, religion enters a furnace created by the essence of consciousness and, this time, the heaven of religion

comes down to the features of the earth of consciousness and, consequently, to the features of philosophy, and is understood in a path that ends in the philosophical knowledge as the absolute judge and the highest reconciliation of the spirit (Desmond, 2003, p. 171).<sup>1</sup>

Considering that Hegel introduces philosophy as the zenith of the knowledge in the chapter on religion in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, he discards the image of the philosophy's being handmaid and the priority of religion over philosophy. In such a condition, religion cannot be considered as the leader of the philosophy and it never must be assumed that philosophy seeks to justify the destinations that the religious consciousness is seeking to fix them. This is because in phenomenology, the religious consciousness is considered as the allegorical and esoteric stage of the knowledge of the absolute spirit about its being spirit. For Hegel, the absolute spirit conceptually becomes conscious of its being spirit just in the stage of the philosophical knowledge, and gets clearly and conceptually, in the stage of philosophy, what it had gotten imperfectly and allegorically in the stage of religion. Thus, philosophy is prior to religion, and he explains and reveals the truth and structure of religious consciousness from the conceptual and rational perspectives. Accordingly, he claims

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1. It is essential to note that in the chapter on religion in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel is not seeking to give rational reasons for the Christian doctrines. What makes him interested in religion is the existence of religious conceptual facilities that enable him to realize the ultimate end of *The Phenomenology of Spirit* – i.e. the spirit's self-consciousness of its being spirit. In the chapter on religion, he attempts to make a logic based on faith and, on the basis of the logic originated from religious concepts, make spirit one step closer to self-consciousness. In this way, in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, religion is not discussed for justifying the Christian doctrines; rather, a logical account of the arrangements existing in the ethnic spirit and the national religion in Germany is considered.

that the self-consciousness of the absolute spirit, that the religion and philosophical knowledge pursue, becomes for itself in its ultimate turning point (philosophy) and achieves the knowledge of being inside self. (Hegel, 1807, p. 522). This is while that self-consciousness has not promoted, in the stage of religion, to an inner and clear matter due to being allegorical, and remains as another matter for the consciousness of the worshipper (Hegel, 1807, p. 523). In interpreting this section of the text of *The Phenomenology*, Houlgate says, “It is due to this strangeness that the religious self-consciousness does not feel complete unity and reconciliation with the absolute existence, and the complete reconciliation is expected as something in the far future” (Houlgate, 2013, p. 185).

Accordingly, Hegel believes that in religious consciousness, our knowledge of the thing is not complete yet, because the religion’s encounter with truth does not go beyond the level of stating ethnic religious emotions, and finds out the truth in view of collective fancies. This thing must be known not only in terms of immediacy of existence and in terms of objectification, but also as the essence and inner matter, i.e. as ‘self’ (Hegel, 1807, p. 527). This is while the same unity is known by the philosophy not through religious emotions, but through the knowledge and philosophical thought. The duty of philosophy, in the position of the deeper thinking or self-conscious form of religion, is substituting the concepts for representations. He maintains that the spirit’s becoming self-conscious of its being spirit has already occurred in the clear religion in an initial form, but this time in the stage of philosophical knowledge, it is proposed in a deeper form (Houlgate, 2013, p. 186). And this reconciliation that existed in the clear religion in the form of ‘in itself’ is proposed in the philosophical knowledge somehow ‘for itself’ as well.

This reconciliation of consciousness with self-consciousness

shows itself as something emerged from dual aspects: once in the religious spirit, and once in the self-consciousness as it is. Their distinction from one another is that one, i.e. the religious spirit, is the very reconciliation when it is 'in itself'; but this one, i.e. self-consciousness, is the very reconciliation when it is 'for itself'" (Hegel, 1807, p. 528).

Hegel believes that we must not assume that the philosophical knowledge alters the things that are intuited or felt and chooses the path that is quite opposite to the religious viewpoint. Rather, the only thing done here is that what is initially ambiguous is given explicitness through the philosophical knowledge (Siep, 2014, p. 221). Accordingly, a single mission, i.e. the spirit's self-consciousness of its being spirit, is introduced for religion and philosophy. With this explanation, it becomes clear that we are not facing with two essentially different truths<sup>1</sup> between which we cannot establish relationship. Rather, by turning religion into a cognitive matter, religion and philosophy take on a single truth, because both are related to the realm of cognition and system of knowledge. Accordingly, Pinkard believes that philosophy is not in opposition to religion, but

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1. This image of philosophy and its relationship with religion is in contrast to images such as Thomas Aquinas' thought that considered religion and philosophy as double truths. Hegel, in opposition to Aquinas' image, believes that both religion and reason have one single origin. In his view, religion and reason are the various minutes and stages of an absolute spirit that recognizes itself in the history of consciousness in these two minutes and becomes aware of itself as spirit (see Hegel, 1807, pp. 727-528). Of course, religion and philosophy are not exalted and transcendental ways existing in the Christian philosophy and Kant and Fichte's abstract idealism. Rather, Hegelian religion and philosophy are concrete stages that God, concentered in human, could realize those two stages and become self-conscious in those two.

they are the truth of religion; and what religion seeks is finally attained in philosophy (Pinkard, 2002, p. 453). Hegel maintains that the reason for identity of the truth of religion and philosophy is the unity of their subject, and says since religion and philosophy have the same subject, one cannot consider them as double truths each of which related to separate realms (Hegel, I, 1984, p. 152).

Besides, he sees no difference between philosophy and theology from the viewpoint of subject matter, because he – as published in a short article in the critical magazine – establishes the image of God as the essence of religion on the zenith of philosophy. There, he writes, “God is the container of all matters, and just He is the origin of existence and cognition” (Beiser, 2005, p. 231). Accordingly, Hegel says, “When philosophy understands itself, it understands religion as well. And when it understands religion, it understands itself (Hegel, I, 1984, pp. 152-153).

### **Conclusion**

From what we said, it is concluded that Hegel, in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, unites the chapter of religion and philosophy, and considers those two chapters of *The Phenomenology* as different stages of the spirit’s self-consciousness of its being spirit and maintains that philosophy is the truth of religion. Following this belief, he inclines to removing the contrast between knowledge and myth, and by entering it into the system of knowledge, instead of placing the myth in contrast to rationality, he introduces it as an important stage of rationality. And through this, in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, he negates the image of the double truth in regard with religion and philosophy. To explain his position regarding the two chapters of religion and philosophy in *The Phenomenology*, he has to firstly substitute the revolutionary and new images of absolute spirit and God



for the traditional image of God and, through this, infiltrate into the issue of the relationship between religion and philosophy and explain their relationship. For this purpose, Hegel establishes an ontological relationship between God and the absolute spirit and the human community; and by establishing an internal relationship between God and human beings, he substitute the ethnic and national religion for the exalted and transcendental religion. Here, Hegel succeeds to enter God in the intersubjective arrangements to enter God and the absolute spirit from the non-cognitive state into the realm of cognition and the system of knowledge, establishing a unity between the realm of religion and philosophy – which was formerly considered in the Christian philosophy of the divine religion and the natural and human philosophies – and establishing an internal relationship between the realms of religion and philosophy.

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## Investigating the Scientific Theology from Nancy Murphy's Viewpoint

Javad Qolipoor<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

The scientific theology is a new branch of contemporary Christian theology that defends the rationality and believability of theology by resorting to science. Nancy Murphy is one of the theologians pioneering in this arena. She has made great efforts to this end and it is advisable to get benefits from the results of such studies. The main issue in this article is to find out the features of the scientific theology in Murphy's view and the critiques one can pose on it. To answer, using a descriptive-analytical method, we will first explain Murphy's approach and, then, evaluate it. By referring to Murphy's works, it is revealed that in offering her model of scientific theology, she has made use of hypothetical-deductive method of science and Lakatos' scientific research program, placing theology in the hierarchy of other sciences. While enjoying some strong points, Murphy's model suffers from serious weaknesses. Some of them are as follows: placing fundamental Christian beliefs in opposition to suppositional theories and hypotheses, temporary nature of theology due

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1. PhD in Islamic Theology, Imam Khomeini Educational and Research Institute.  
Gh.javad1392@gmail.com

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to its reliance on transient methods of science, not offering any reason for using science, relying on philosophy of science instead of science itself, and not following a certain rule of theology implementation of Lakatos' scientific research program.

**Keywords**

scientific theology, Nancy Murphy, Christian theology, science and religion, hypothetical-deductive reasoning.

## Introduction

No doubt, the emergence of science in the West was one of the greatest and the most influential events in the modern age, and considering the privileged and unique position of science in the Western culture, its influence can be observed in numerous points in the Western culture. The researchers have been influenced by science – willingly or unwillingly – and some have attempted to make use of the validity of science in their research filed as most as possible. Meanwhile, the theologians have not missed this movement and their effort for using science led to the creation of a new branch of theology called ‘scientific theology’. Nancy Murphy (1951), the American theologian, philosopher of science and expert in science and religion is among those who have made a very effective contribution to the scientific theology as well as the discussions of science and religion (Ellis, 1999, pp. 601-607; Clyton, p. 1999, pp. 609-618). On the importance of Murphy’s status, it is sufficient to note that some consider Ian Graeme Barbour, the American physicist and theologian, as the founder of the discipline of ‘science and religion’ and Murphy as its builder and among the second-generation researchers (Clyton, 1999, pp. 609-618). Murphy has had extensive studies in sciences from cosmology of quantum theory to evolutionary biology, neurology and social science. Besides, she has an acceptable strategy in recognizing important issues of science and religion and manages numerous institutes dealing with studies on science and theology (Ellis, 1999, pp. 601-607). Considering Murphy’s systematic entrance into the discussion on scientific theology, we will deal with it in this article; and the main issue is what the features of Murphy’s scientific theology are and what critiques can be posed on it. The importance of dealing with such a discussion is that the Christian theology faced, before and more than Muslims’ theology, with new issues and epistemic and theological

crises of the contemporary era, and familiarity and evaluation of the related views prepare a proper ground for right encounter with those issues.

From the search done, no independent work dealing with Murphy's theology could be found, and Just Phillip Clyton, in his article entitled "Sharing the Field of Theology and Science: a Critique of Nancy Murphy", has dealt with discussions of Murphy's science and theology and reviewed them. Even there, Murphy's scientific theology has not been dealt with directly. The present article attempts to answer the main question in two sections: in the first section, by referring to Murphy's works, we will offer an exposition of the scientific theology and its features; and in the second section, we will investigate it.

### **1. The Relationship between Science and Religion in Murphy's View**

The nature and destiny of 'scientific theology' is tied to the relationship between science and religion and, thus, we must be familiar with Murphy's view on the relationship between science and religion. Numerous views have been proposed on the relationship between science and religion (see: Stenmark, 2010, pp. 287-290); and one of the well-known views is that of the conflict between science and religion. According to that view, science and religion are always in conflict and struggle (Barbour, 1990, p. 77). Murphy regards this view as a legendary view offered by two researchers of history of science, i.e. Andrew Dickson White and William Draper. She accepts that a group of Christians opposed some of the scientific theories such as the theory of evolution. However, in her view, these must not be considered as evidence for conflict between science and religion, because another group did not accept the former group's view, and criticized it. By adducing the works written by the historians of science such as David

C. Lindberg and Ronald Leslie Numbers (1942), Murphy regards 'conflict' as a one-dimensional report of the history of science and religion and just as a small part of the story of their complicated relationship. This is because even the Catholic and Protestant churches have supported science ardently (Murphy, 1997, pp. 8-9). The 'two-world' or independence view is another view on the relationship between science and religion that, to avoid their conflict, considers their realm as completely independent (Barbour, 1990, p. 84). According to this view, science and religion have no common point and there will be no conflict between them. From Murphy's view, the origin of this view is probably Galileo's saying that 'The Scriptures shows us the way to reach the heaven, not how it moves' (Murphy, 1997, pp. 7-8). Also in the modern period, the pious people, following Immanuel Kant, tried to protect religion against the attacks from science by redefining religion and separating its realm from science – the view that Murphy does not regard right (*ibid.*), because science and religion must be in a formative interaction; that is, they must assist one another (*ibid.*, p. 12). Accordingly, Murphy places the natural sciences, humanities and theology in a hierarchy with mutual interactions (*ibid.*, p. 36). Based on this interactive view, science and religion compensate their deficiencies with assistance from one another (*ibid.*) and the foundation of Murphy's theology emerges from this interactive relationship.

## **2. The Motivation for Proposing the Scientific Theology**

To discover Murphy's motivation, we must know the status quo of the Christian theology and challenges created for it by the evolutions of the modern age. In the enlightenment period, the Christian theology was relentlessly under attack. The authority of the Scripture was questioned, the miracles were considered as opposing the natural laws, the foundational beliefs such as trinity, redemption and incarnation



were put aside due to being irrational, and the intellect was regarded as unable to prove the beliefs (see: Grenz and Olson, 1992, pp. 62-63; McGrath, 2001, pp. 150-154). Because of such events, some researchers have considered inquiry on possibility of theology as the most important theological issue in the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> century. In other words, considering the widespread invasions on theology, can one still speak of a science called theology? (Murphy, 1993, p. 1) In describing the events of that time, Murphy considers the role of critiques posed by David Hume – accepted by later secular philosophers – as a prominent role. As an example, before Hume, the theologians used rational proofs, revelation and miracles for confirming their beliefs. That is, theology used both rational authority and revelational authority, but Hume criticized both of them seriously (Murphy, 1993, pp. 9-12).

Ensuing the widespread attacks on Christian theology, the Christian foundational belief lost their credit and the epistemic sources of theology could not produce considerable knowledge as they did before. Therefore, the Christian theology, as an intellectual system whose goal was organizing beliefs and providing rational and cognitive defense for them, faced a great crisis that threatened its identity. Following this, there emerged a serious doubt on the necessity and importance of a science such as theology (Murphy, 1993, p. 1).

The Christian theologians showed a desirable reaction to those invasions and defended the Christian theology. They divided into two group in facing those challenges: one group paid no heed to the critiques and challenges as if nothing had happened, and continued their works as before. Another group looked for a non-epistemic solution to defend religion and theology. Although they considered the critiques posed, their defense of theology was a faithful defense that was valuable just for the believers. Murphy acknowledges that each of

the ways used by the theologians has many difficulties and negative consequences, and we must choose a third way. Unlike the first group, we must note the new critiques and challenges, and theology must not be organized separated from the discussions in other epistemic spheres. And unlike the method used by the second group, defending theology must not lead to rejecting the cognitive nature of the theological propositions. To be able to organize a better method and – accordingly – defend the Christian theology, she used the new epistemic sources, especially ‘science’ (Murphy, 1993, p. 12-13). For her, the only way to defend theology against the new challenges is using the science and its method in theology; and such an action secure the rationality and cognitive nature of the Christian theology. Thus, Murphy’s motivation in proposing the scientific theology is defending the rationality of theology against the challenges created for the Christian theology in the new age; and she defends the Christian theology without ignoring the challenges or offering a faithful defense.

### **3. The Scientific Theology from Nancy Murphy’s Viewpoint**

Murphy has proposed three criteria for scientific theology, which we explain in this section. They are as follows:

- Using hypothetical-deductive reasoning by theology
- Following the scientific research program
- Placing theology in the hierarchy of sciences

#### **3-1. Theology and Hypothetical-Deductive Reasoning**

The first criterion offered by Murphy for scientific theology is using the reasoning favored by science; that is, the hypothetical-deductive reasoning (Murphy, 1997, p. 20). In the beginning of the modern

age, people believed that the method of scientific reasoning is either induction or deduction. However, today, the researchers believe that none of these two methods is applicable in science (Murphy, 1997, p. 20; Peacocke, 2001, pp. 26-27). In the twentieth century, a more complicated view of scientific reasoning was proposed, called hypothetical-deductive model. In this method, instead of induction and gathering more data or inferring through axiomatic principles (deduction), the hypothetical-deductive model is used. For instance, if you encounter an open door or some muddy footprints extending up to the kitchen upon entering your house, you face a series of facts that need explanation. While you have not observed the cause, you guess that children have entered the room, because their existence is the best explanation for the semi-opened door or the footprint like theirs (Murphy, 1997, pp. 20-23). The hypothetical-deductive model is different from induction or deduction. Considering the aforementioned example, the judgement from the inductive reasoning is that there may be footprints in another room as well (extension). On the contrary, however, the hypothetical-deductive reasoning does not seek to prove that the footprints exist in another place as well. Rather, it tries to discover the cause for the footprints and explaining how they have been created (Murphy, 1997, pp. 22-24). However, the difference between deductive reasoning and hypothetical-deductive reasoning is that the former begins its work with *a priori* principles and infers propositions from axiomatic principles. Thus, it pays little attention to observation and experimenting (Murphy, 1997, p. 20). On the other hand, the result of the hypothetical-deductive reasoning, unlike the deductive reasoning, is never certain (Murphy, 1997, pp. 22-24). It is worth noting that the term hypothetical-deductive reasoning has been used in another sense (see: Smith, 2003, pp. 69-70). However, Murphy's intended definition refers to the reasoning considered under various titles including "inference to

the best explanation”, “Abduction” and the like (See: Harman, 1965, p. 89; Atocha, 2008, p. 33).

Considering these preliminary facts, how can we use the hypothetical-deductive reasoning in theology? In answering this question, Murphy shows phenomena that can be explained best only by the doctrines of the church. In her view, the doctrines of the church can be considered as ‘theories’ and explain ‘the realities of the Christian life’. The realities of the Christian life are not so much different from the scientific realities. In the Christian society, we encounter phenomena that need explanation: worship, perceivable changes in one’s mood, people’s feelings, and in general, religious experiences, church practices, historical events, and singing religious hymns. Considering the fact that these items need to be explained, it is possible to propose two hypotheses in explaining them. Those who have had such experiences offer one of them. They consider the Holy Spirit involved in their origination. And the other explanation is proposed by the psychologists. By stressing on psychological suggestions, they regard them as causes for those phenomena (Murphy, 1997, p. 24). Now, which one can offer a better explanation of the phenomena? There is evidence that makes the role of suggestion improbable in these phenomena. For instance, some of the participants claim that before reading the sacred texts or having contribution to religious affairs, they have received some instructions from the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, other evidence shows that psychological factors cannot offer a right explanation for such affairs and just the Christian doctrines can play such a privileged role here to offer a better explanation for phenomena. Therefore, theology also is a science and the Christian doctrines are like scientific theories that can offer right explanations for phenomena that are in need of explanation. In the same framework, the task of theologians is to organize and justify the Christian doctrines (Murphy, 1997, pp. 24-27). Therefore, just as

science presents a theory to explain a phenomenon through hypothetical-deductive reasoning, theology also does the same; thus, theology also is a science.

### **3-2. Theology and Lakatos' scientific research program**

Another criterion Murphy gives for the scientific theology is that theology can make use of the scientific research program offered by Imre Lakatos (1922-1974). Lakatos was the prominent thinker, philosopher and mathematician from Hungary. He began his scientific activities with a critique of the positivists and falsificationists' view. Science develops neither with accumulation of proved knowledge, nor with courageous guesses of falsifying them. Lakatos, along with Thomas Samuel Kuhn (1922-1996), the American philosopher of science, regarded these two views as unacceptable based on the history of science. However, he distinguished naïve falsification proposed by Popper and the sophisticated falsification. He regarded his scientific research program a kind of falsificationism (Lakatos, 1978, pp. 8-10; Lakatos, 1970, pp. 91-94).

Lakatos' scientific research program has both negative and positive heuristics. The former means that the scientific research has a 'hard core' that must not be criticized and falsified by opposing observations and data; rather, a group of auxiliary hypotheses must be created around the hard core to serve as a protective belt in protecting the hard core, repulsing any invasion to it. Thus, the hard core is always fixed and any adjustment and modification, or even any substitution, must be done in the protective belt, not in the central core (Lakatos, 1978, pp. 47-48). The traditional example for a successful scientific research is Newton's theory of gravity. The three laws of mechanics and one law of gravity form the hard core of this theory. When Newton Proposed this theory, a series of anomalies were found

in relation to it. With his genius, Newton – unlike Popper – protected the central core of his theory against falsification by making changes and modifications in the protective belt (Lakatos, 1978, p. 48). In addition to negative heuristic, Lakatos' scientific research program has a positive heuristic as well. This includes a series of suggestions that manage the changes or expansions of the 'falsifiable variables' in the research program. In other words, the positive heuristic clarifies the quality of modification and expansion of the protective belt that is continuously changing (Lakatos, 1970, p. 135).



**Figure 1: The scientific research program of Imre Lakatos**

This program was attractive for many thinkers including Murphy; accordingly, she tried to found her scientific theology on this basis. She says we need two steps to prove the usefulness of this program for theology. First, we must show that Lakatos' description of the structure of science is applicable to theology, and that there is a

coherent collection of theories in theology with the formal features of the program. Second, we need to prove that the programs of theological research are empirically progressive (Murphy, 1993, p. 86). This is because to become scientific, theology cannot rely merely on revelational data; rather, it must consider the empirical data as well (Murphy, 1993, p. 87). The model Murphy offered in theology following the scientific research program is as follows:

- A. The hard core: the Christian theology is a Christ-centered theology, and the core of a Christ-centered theology must be related to the Christ. Of course, the minimum doctrines about God, including God's trinity nature, God's sacredness, and God's manifestation in Jesus, must be in that hard core (Murphy, 1993, p. 184).
- B. Negative heuristic: the hard core of theology must be falsified by the two following propositions: (1) sexual discrimination is sinful; and (2) there is evidence in the Old Testament regarding Jesus discrimination on women, because none of the twelve apostles was a woman. Thus, if the Christ committed sexual discrimination, either God is not sacred or the Christ is not the true sample of God. According to the negative heuristic, we must change or modify these two conclusions in a way that hinders the falsification of the hard core. One of the methods of preventing the falsification of the hard core is to seek for hypotheses that deviate the falsification of the central theory. For example, we can propose the hypothesis that the writers of the Scripture were under the influence of the culture of their age and claimed that Jesus had committed sexual discrimination, while that was not the reality. Or we have to prove, like Elizabeth Fiorenza, the German famous feminist, that Jesus' movement was not – in principle – a feminine movement and women could

not take part in it; so, Jesus did not commit sexual discrimination (Murphy, 1993, p. 184).

- C. Positive heuristic: the Christian doctrines – appeared in the Christian sources – must serve as positive heuristic for theologians and they must pay attention to them for expanding the theological program and creating modifications in the protective belt (Murphy, 1993, p. 185).
- D. Auxiliary hypotheses: these hypotheses have two important roles in theology: explaining the meaning of the hard core and establishing relationship between God's abstract view and proper types of data. Murphy believes that to create a systemic theology, the two following hypotheses are necessary: (a) the signs of the influence of Holy Spirit in the society are valid. (b) Based on the Apostle Paul's view, the theory of revelation is among the blessings of the Holy Spirit and, accordingly, the early church considered some of the writings as the gifts of the Holy Spirit and God's word (Murphy, 1993, pp. 186-187).
- E. Data: the sacred texts and results of the Christian discernment are among the important theological sources of cognition (Murphy, 1993, p. 188). For Murphy, no description of theology will be complete without considering the Scripture (Nasiri, 1382 SH, p. 127). On the other hand, the Christian society – due to the presence of the Holy Spirit – enjoys an internal witness and is able to judge whether practices, teachings and predictions belong to Jesus or not (Nasiri, 1382 SH, p. 130). Such discernments give an immediate knowledge of divine actions and prepare proper data for theology (Nasiri, 1382 SH, p.163).

### **3-3. Theology in the Hierarchy of Sciences**

Murphy's other criterion for scientific theology is the criterion



she deals with in the process of reconstructing and presenting a 'comprehensive cosmology'. To arrive at such a comprehensive cosmology, she places all sciences in a state of interaction in a hierarchy. To present the comprehensive cosmology, not only she establishes a relationship between natural sciences and theology, but also between ethics and theology (Murphy & Ellis, 1996, p. 1). She maintains that for recognizing the universe as a whole and presenting a universal worldview, we must inevitably place natural sciences, humanities, theology and ethics in a hierarchy. However, the hierarchy established among sciences is not just an arbitrary classification. Rather, it aims at showing the relationship and interaction among sciences (see: Murphy & Ellis, 1996, p. 1, chapter 4). To reconstruct the hierarchy of sciences, Murphy first criticizes the existing hierarchy of sciences below which is physics and above which are chemistry, biology, psychology, and sociology respectively. The problem with that hierarchy is reductionism that logical positivists eagerly defended and their goal was identification of sciences. According to that view, the behavior of any being in any level is based on the behaviors of its constituents. In other words, it is explained in lower level and, thus, all sciences must be reduced to physics, because everything is explained by the laws of physics (Murphy, 1997, p. 13).

Although Murphy regards reductionism as an important research strategy, she believes that, here, the success of that strategy negates human's will, because if the human's behaviors are explained merely on the basis of physics, freewill will be an illusion and the laws of physics leaves no room for freewill. The American philosopher, Roy Wood Sellars (1973-1880), has proposed a non-reductionist view about the hierarchy of sciences, called 'non-reductive physicalism'. According to that view, in the upper levels of hierarchy of sciences, an emergent property, not existent in lower

levels, comes to scene, with no possibility of explaining in the lower levels. Sellars presents a perception and understanding of nature with non-reductive hierarchy, regarding the various levels of the nature as follows: non-organic, organic, mental, social, moral, religious. She maintains that the nature is a great system that has created levels of complexities in the course of time and one cannot justify and explain those complicated levels just through the simple lower levels. Similarly, she believes that ‘organizations’ and ‘whole’ are really important and they are not merely collections of early particles. Unlike reductionists who regard just matter important, Sellars believes that in addition to matter, energy, real patterns and relationships among things are also important. Thus, in his view, reductionism – wherein the levels of complexities are merely explained through the lower levels – is not right (Murphy, 1997, p. 14; Murphy & Brown, 2007, pp. 52-54). Following Sellars, Murphy also says that for recognizing something, in addition to recognizing its constituents, recognizing the relationship among those particles is also needed for a right understanding of it; and thus, she does not accept the positivist view. Then following Arthur Peacocke, She introduces two types of causality: bottom-up and top-down. The former is the one based on which the behavior of the constituents determines the behavior of the whole, and by explaining the constituents, the whole is also explained. Murphy regards this explanation a partial one and says that we consider the existing holistic features as well; and thus, we need top-down causality. The top-down causality is the one based on which the factors existing in the top levels of complexity influence the constituents and must be considered in explaining them (Murphy & Brown, 2007, p. 54; Murphy, 2006, p. 105).

To organize his cosmology, Murphy employs all sciences and, then, separates three categories of question in sciences: (a) some

questions are answered by referring to the factors in the same level. (b) Some other question are answered by the factors in the lower levels. (c) The third type of questions are answered by the factors in the upper levels, which are called 'boundary questions' (Murphy, 1997, p. 15). Questions like 'why do the universe and natural laws exist?' and 'what is the nature of natural laws?' are boundary questions that science is unable to answer (Murphy & Ellis, 1996, p. 5), and they are answered by theology (Murphy, 1997, p. 36). In this hierarchy of sciences whose goal is to know the universe as a whole, the lower levels of the hierarchy study the most foundational constituents, and as the level of complexity is increased, other sciences come to the scene. Theology sits on the zenith of the hierarchy of sciences and has the duty to answer both the boundary questions and study, in the highest level, the relationship between God and other things. In the lower levels, things are known by other sciences, but their relationship with God is studied by theology (Murphy, 1997, pp. 12-17). Arthur Peacocke, the British theologian and expert in biochemistry has an idea, in this regard, which Murphy confirms. He says that theology – due to its position on the zenith of the hierarchy of sciences – must be known as 'science', for theology deals with studying the most complicated section of system, which is the relationship between God and the whole universe. Murphy also confirms that theology has its own subject and language and discusses the relationship between God and the universe. Thus, theology is a science inside the hierarchy of sciences (Murphy, 1997, p. 17; Murphy & Ellis, 1996, p. 20).

#### **4. Investigating Murphy's Scientific Theology**

The present article focuses, in this section, on showing the weak points of Murphy's scientific theology, but this does not mean that her theology is completely useless. Thus, here, we mention some of its

positive points: (a) instead of faithfully defending theology, or paying no heed to the challenges of the new era on rationality of theology, Murphy tries to offer a cognitive defense of theology based on the new epistemic achievements. That is, she does not fall into the trap of fideism, nor does she ignore the challenges threatening theology. (b) Theologians such as Ian Barbour, John Polkinghorne, and Arthur Peacocke have founded their theology on the scientific findings. Thus, they believe that beliefs of theology must be revised and updated based on those findings. However, Murphy, due to the drawbacks of this approach, has founded her theology on method of science – which does not have the drawbacks of the former approach – instead of transitory results. (c) She opposed the positivists' reductionism based on which they have reduced all sciences to physics, and proposed a new hierarchy of sciences, wherein each science has – in its own level – an independent subject and method. (d) Unlike those who believe in the independence or conflict of religion with science, she has shown that not only are the religion and science not in conflict with one another, but also they can have formative interactions with one another. Despite these positive points, Murphy's scientific theology suffers from drawbacks in numerous aspects. Here, we deal with them.

#### **4-1. Scientific Theories and Christian Beliefs**

The first and the most important drawback of Murphy's scientific theology is that in using the hypothetical-deductive reasoning and the scientific research program, she has placed the Christian foundational beliefs in the same level as hypothesis and theory in science. Indeed, the drawback starts from the point where the history of science has shown that scientific hypotheses and theories are transitory. The theories accepted by a generation

extensively are invalidated in the next generations. Accordingly, Karl Raimund Popper, the English-American philosopher of science, while acknowledging the value of science, considers it transitory (Popper, 2002, p. 420). For Michael Polanyi (1891-1976), the Hungarian-British chemist and philosopher of science, scientists believe in theories in science that they know will be revealed as erroneous (McGrath, 2004, p. 28). Today, the indefiniteness and fluidity of science and its results is something revealed to the scientists and philosophers. Thus, Murphy faces two assumptions: she accepts that the Christian foundational beliefs are transitory just as scientific hypotheses and theories or she does not accept it. If Murphy does not accept alteration in beliefs, her scientific theology whose aims is to defend the rationality of theology will lose its goal, for she has placed theology in a formal framework and is not committed to considering its consequences and implications. But if Murphy believes that the Christian foundational beliefs must evolve like scientific theories and, as a result, it must expire like scientific beliefs, her project will face some greater negative implications. Is it – in principle – possible for an individual to be fond of something and have faith in it while it may change and expire at any moment? Do religious texts tolerate such revisionist interpretations of beliefs? It seems that the answer is no, for from the viewpoint of philosophers of religion, the ultimate attachment to a sacred thing may sometimes manifest in forms such as worship, love, imploration and the like. Accordingly, the goal of attachment (i.e. the thing to which one attaches) must be absolute and unconditional; otherwise, it cannot be the goal of attachment (Wainwright, 2009, pp. 23-24). Now, if the goal of attachment is something completely fluid, can it be attached to or believed in? The way the Catholic Church behaved in reaction to some new-thinking theologians such as Karl Rahner and Hans Kung shows that – in principle – the Christian society, based on its theological foundations and the authority of the Scripture, cannot

tolerate the fluidity in beliefs (see: Grenz & Olson, 1992, chapter 8). On the other hand, the Scripture as the most important source of religious belief is founded – in Christian theology – on divine bases, called ‘divine revelation’ (McGrath, 2001, p. 274). Accordingly, it is nonsense for the belief offered by that text to be expired just like scientific theories. Thus, whether Murphy judges the fluidity and changeability of the Christian beliefs or not, this theological project does not fulfill her goals in defending the Christian theology, and even places it in a frail position.

#### 4-2. Why Science?

In Murphy’s scientific theology, science is used as the associate of theology in achieving the theological goals. However, some questions arise as follows: “Why must we make use of science to defend theological rationality?” “Cannot we defend the theological rationality and its beliefs without using an external source?” “Is the only way to defend that rationality using an external source like science?” “Why can we not make use of theological rationality, just like some schools of Christian theology, without relying on an external source to preserve the independence of theology?” (See: Grenz & Olson, 1992, chapter 3). Now, if we accept that we need an external source for defending theology, which source has such a qualification? What criterion do we have for selecting that source? No doubt, Murphy’s answer is that science can be a proper choice, but does science have such a capacity to support theology in facing with challenges? Even the idea that theology needs an external source for proving its rationality shows that, in Murphy’s view, theology by itself lacks rationality and we must use an external authority for defending it. But why, in Murphy’s view, only and only science can be the authority to prove the rationality of theology? Why can we not use philosophy to

defend theology like those who used Platonic philosophy in the era of fathers of the church or those who used Aristotle's philosophy in the Middle Ages or those who used existentialist philosophy in the modern age? (McGrath, 2001, pp. 7-9) It seems that Murphy, like ordinary people, was under the influence of the dominance of science and felt no need to answer these questions. Therefore, if Murphy seeks to present a progressive and dynamic theology, she has no way except showing that her resort to science has reasonable justifications and she, like ordinary people, has not been scared by the dominance of science, and that her theology has a reliable and stable backrest. On the other hand, considering many differences between science and theology in subject matter, method and goals, paying attention to this point is more essential, for with such differences, if there is no justified reason for resorting to science, Murphy's scientific theology will have no strong foundation.

#### **4-3. The Scientific Theology and Lakatos' Scientific Research Program**

Lakatos' scientific research program has had much attraction for Murphy and her scientific theology owes much to that program. Nevertheless, both in Lakatos' research program and in the way it is implemented, there are some points in theology that suggest the insufficiency and barrenness of Murphy's scientific theology.

Lakatos' view on scientific research program is a relatively ripe view compared to the views of positivists and falsificationists with their superficial and simplistic look at science. Positivists and falsificationists attempted to have a logical view and explain the structures of science without paying attention to the history of science. Accordingly, they summarized the course of science in a linear and simple path formed of observations and theories (See: Smith, 2003, chapter 2-4). In 1962, Thomas Kuhn published *The Structure of Scientific*

*Revolutions* and attempted to criticize those schools and put emphasis on the position of history of science in scientology (Kuhn, 1962, p. 17). With this, he posed a new design in the philosophy of science and his contemporary philosophers of science such as Lakatos, Laudan and Feyerabend followed him and presented their views and critiques of others' views in the same paradigm (Smith, 2003, pp. 102-103). Despite positive points in Lakatos' program, compared to the views of positivists and falsificationists, it also suffers from some drawbacks. The opinions and works of Thomas Kuhn had persuaded Lakatos to the extent that he believed we must take the history of science seriously in scientology, and he went forth to the point that he believed we must evaluate the methodology of science and the theories of philosophy of science according to the history of science (Chalmers, 2003, p. 131). Lakatos' latter claim prepared a foundation for brief evaluation of his program. Will his program pass the test in evaluation based on the history of science? In making use of the history of science, he applied a special method to the effect that we must not use the history just as it has happened; rather we must reconstruct it (Lakatos, 1989, pp. 189-190). This reconstruction must be such that – as far as it is possible – the scientific researches are manifested as rational ones. Thus, we can present a completely arbitrary interpretation of history of science in using it (Smith, 2003, pp. 10-104). In that case, formulation of theories of scientific philosophy are founded on 'distorted' historical evidence, and his scientific program is also the product of such a disordered perception of the history of science. Of course, it is not the case that his program is not applicable to any historical moment. But if it is so in some cases, there will be no problem with it, for we can reconstruct the history. Another important question is whether – as Lakatos has claimed – we observe something named 'hard core' in the history of science. The historical evidence such as Copernicus' theory shows the opposite state, and the theory



that seemed as hard core of his view was put aside. However, in general, Copernicus' view remained there (Chalmers, 2013, p. 132). On the other hand, he does not offer any criterion for placing a theory in the hard core and relegates it to the individual's decision (Lakatos, 1970, p. 133). Does this have historical evidence or is it among Lakatos' assumptions? Anyway, he has not presented any historical evidence (Chalmers, 2013, p. 135).

Even if we ignore the former points, there are models for scientific work alongside the scientific research program, among which we can name Thomas Kuhn's 'scientific revolutions', Larry Laudan's 'research traditions', and Paul Feyerabend's 'against method'. What reason shows that Murphy has preferred using Lakatos' program and why can we not use one of the aforementioned views for the plan of scientific theology? Hans Kung, the theologian from Swiss, used Thomas Kuhn's view and adopted his opinions to introduce the Christian theology in five paradigm (Barbour, 1990, p. 129). It is not clear why Lakatos' scientific research program is important for Murphy's theology. This shows that Murphy's path in scientific theology is arbitrary and without any reason. But the more important point to note is that the scene of the history and philosophy of science has always seen the emergence and decline of numerous methods and approaches in the scientific research. Sometimes, the thinkers and scientologists focused on deductive method (Barbour, 1997, p. 55) and sometimes on induction (Ladyman, 2002, pp. 39-40). Also in recent decades, some believe that science uses 'inference of the best explanation' (McCain, 2017, p. 1; Peacocke, 2001, p. 27; Murphy, 1997, pp. 26-27). Apart from change in scientific methods and approaches, experiences clarify that there is no guarantee for fixing the scientific research program and hypothetical-deductive method. Thus, Murphy's reliance on them in founding theology will be a transitory plan. According to some researchers, Murphy's

plan has no strong foundation and falls down automatically (Nasiri, 1389 SH, p. 170).

Even if we accept that the scientific research program has no drawback and Murphy has used it with a certain criterion, and that this program will always be used in science, there is also drawbacks in implementing Lakatos' scientific research program in theology, for Murphy has followed no specified rule in it and it seems quite arbitrary. This is because she does not explain why a theory or some theories must be placed in the hard core or why a belief must play a role in the protective belt. Of course, it seems that the origin of this ambiguity is Lakatos' program itself, for he has entrusted the selection of the hard core to the individuals' decision, not offering a criterion for it (Lakatos, 1970, p. 133).

Considering the scientific research program, Murphy regards its empirical progression as one of the conditions for success. That is, theology must not merely rely on the Scripture; rather, it must also use empirical data (Murphy, 1993, pp. 86-87). In explaining how this condition must be realized in theology, Murphy resorts to Christian insights or – in other words – religious experience. Evidently, empirical progression in science is a very important and useful condition, because experience is the important source of knowledge in sciences, but experience will not give such a position in theology. Seemingly unable to make empirical progression in theology, Murphy is satisfied with religious experience, and it is clear that empirical progression – which is a public affair – is different from progression with religious experience – which is a personal affair; and Murphy's theology – just like Catholic modernism – is unable to manage it.

The last point is that Murphy believes that the hard core of the theological program is nullified by two propositions: (1) sexual

discrimination is a sin; and (2) there is evidence in New Testament that Jesus committed sexual discrimination against women. Evidently, the central core is falsifiable from numerous perspectives. This core faces some more serious drawbacks; and it has struggled with them throughout the history of Christianity. Anti-rationalism, redemption and incarnation, the opposition of miracles and, in particular, the Christ's resurrection to natural laws, searching for historical Jesus and difference between historical Jesus and that of the Church are among items that create more serious problems for the hard core. However, she has simply referred to the falsifier, a problem that is easily resolved through modifications in the protective belt.

#### **4-4. Science or Philosophy?**

In proposing the scientific theology, Murphy has chosen 'science' as the associate of the scientific theology, but the question arises as follows: "Has he really made science associate to theology or not?" What results from her discussions is that finally what has attracted her attention is "philosophy of science", not science itself. In finding what method science uses, she resorts to philosophy of science and looks at science from the aperture of philosophy of science. No doubt, the 'philosophy of science' is one of the forms of science that attempts to discover the structures of knowledge through rational methods and, perhaps, it can help us in knowing science more than any other knowledge. However, considering the opinions of philosophers of science as the only and the last models of the structure of knowledge is an idealistic look at philosophy of science. To recognize science, we need to use history of science, sociology of science, and psychology of science along with philosophy of science; and sometimes, it is possible to converse with scientists and use their experiences for receiving scientific methods.

## Conclusion

Scientific theology is getting help from science for reinforcing the status of theology; and Nancy Murphy has made special use of hypothetical-deductive method of science and Lakatos' scientific research program, which science follow in his view. Similarly, she regards the mutual collaboration between sciences and theology as another sign of identity of science and theology and, finally, with these three criteria, she judges that theology is a 'science'. Evidently, Murphy goes through this process to defend theology, but it seems that she has had little success in achieving her goal. She reduced the deep gap and long distance between science and theology, but reducing distances does not mean the identification of science with theology. So many dissimilarities between science and theology in subject matter, goal and method cause one not to think of their uniformity. Murphy has placed the Christian foundational beliefs in opposition to scientific transient theories and, besides, his reliance on method and transient program makes her face an instable theology. She has not explained why using science is essential, why one cannot make use of other disciplines such as philosophy, and why one should use scientific research program and not other views. In implementing Lakatos' scientific research program, we should note that, firstly, the program itself suffers from some drawbacks and, considering its serious rivals, using it has no preference. Secondly, no criterion has been offered for placing one belief in the hard core and another one in the protective belt. Thirdly, the empirical progression of theology – which she has to prove through religious experience – is insufficient due to differences between experience in science and religious experience. All these drawbacks suggest that, despite positive step Murphy has taken, her plan needs serious reconstruction to be able to play a more effective role in defending Christianity.

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## **An Evaluation of William Craig and Armstrong's Debate on the Existence of God**

Taebe Khosravi<sup>1</sup>

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### **Abstract**

William Craig has sought to defend theism by participating in numerous debates. In a debate with the American philosopher Sinnott Armstrong, which is also published in a book entitled "God", Craig in his first reason tries to prove the existence of God by denying "real infinity" and relying on the concept of beginning and "the need of every beginning for a cause". On the other hand, he takes Big Bang as a witness to his claim, but Armstrong rejects Craig's argument by referring to the existence of real infinity in the outside world and the existence of scientific evidence to negate the implication of the Big Bang on the beginning of the world. Based on this, when it is not possible to properly use experimental evidence as a proof of theological reasoning, such methods can put the belief in God in crisis. Therefore, lack of establishing the correct interaction between theology and science can be considered one of the most important weaknesses of Craig's argument on the existence of God. Finally, by introducing a scientific model, it is possible to provide a

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1. PHD in philosophy and theology, university of Qom, Qom, Iran.  
Tasnimkhosravi1400@gmail.com

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solution to establish a correlation between science and theology in such a way that theological evidence matches with experimental evidence and external truth, and no contradiction threatens the belief in God.

**Key words**

William Craig, Sinnott Armstrong, existence of God, Big Bang

## Introduction

One of the methods of communication between theologians and atheist philosophers is to hold live debates so that theologians can answer the important challenges of the current era in a novel way. William Craig is one of the theologians who used the debate method to a great extent. In the debate between Theodore Dering and William Lynn Craig, regarding the existence of God, Craig used these cosmological arguments and cited new scientific findings. But in this research, we are trying to evaluate this debate based on the debate published in the book entitled "God" between William Craig and Armstrong. So even though the discussion of the existence of God has a long history, in recent years, this discussion revolves around the Big Bang cosmological issues and once in a while, scientists present a new theory to confirm or reject it, and consequently the existence of God faces challenges. In case, one should look for a fundamental solution so that scientific advances do not have the power to create doubt in beliefs. What is more important is that man has nothing except outside world in his knowledge. Therefore, it does not matter if a person who seeks to gain knowledge about existence is a philosopher, a scientist, or a theologian. Because what is certain is the sharing of the source of knowledge among theologians and scientists. Therefore, if we are looking for the creator of the world, we cannot reach this goal without knowing the world, with the difference that scientists explain material nature and theology seeks to complete the puzzle of the natural world. Therefore, nature is what they have in common, but the deviation is where we separate them, and this distinction causes science and theology to provide misaligned explanations. So, due to a common subject for scientists, philosophers, and theologians, the methodological boundaries of these sciences should be separated to have a scientific key in debates between scientists, theologians and philosophers.

Belief in the causality of the world is so clear and obvious that the contemporary atheist philosopher, Kai Nielsen, explains this example: "Suppose you suddenly hear a loud noise. You ask me, "What was the cause of this terrible sound?" And I reply: "Nothing, it just happened." "You don't accept that answer. In fact, you find my answer completely unreasonable." (Kai Nielsen, 1971, p.48).

By and large, all layers of scientific groups are faced with this question: "How has created this world?" And it is not exclusive to theologians. In search for this answer, by evaluating the interchange of views between William Craig and Sinnott Armstrong in expressing their arguments, we try to express a practical way of scientific proving of existence of God to make it clear how each science is out of the scientific standard. But since this discussion does not have the capacity to offer all the reasons that have been raised in this debate, we can only briefly evaluate the first reason that was raised by William Craig in proving the existence of God and rejected by Sinnott Armstrong. This is because with William Craig's first argument, we can provide a basic solution for the interaction of science and theology and the best practical solution for the interaction of theology and science.

### **1. Craig's First Reason: God Makes Sense of the Origin of the Universe**

He believes that his reason makes theism more plausible than atheism, and starts with a mathematical reason and the need of every beginning for a cause, and refers to Big Bang as a confirmer and introduces "God" as a beginner and origin of the universe.

He says if the universe never had a beginning, it means that the number of events in the past is infinite. But mathematicians say that the existence of an actually infinite number of things leads to self-contradictions (unless you impose some wholly arbitrary rules to

prevent this). For example, what is infinity minus infinity? Well, mathematically, you get self-contradictory answers. For example, if you subtract all the odd numbers {1, 3, 5, . . .} from all the natural numbers {0, 1, 2, 3, . . .}, how many numbers do you have left? An infinite number. So infinity minus infinity is infinity. But suppose instead you subtract all the numbers greater than 2- how many are left? Three. So infinity minus infinity is 3! It needs to be understood that in both these cases we have subtracted identical quantities from identical quantities and come up with contradictory answers. Actually, you can get any answer from zero to infinity! (Craig & Armstrong, 2004, pp. 3-5).

He refers to David Hilbert that states, “The infinite is nowhere to be found in reality (David Hilbert, 1964, pp. 139-141). Therefore, since past events are not just ideas, but are real, the number of past events must be finite. Therefore, the series of past events can’t go back forever; rather the universe must have begun to exist.

Craig states that this conclusion has been confirmed by discoveries in astronomy and astrophysics. The astrophysical evidence indicates that the universe began to exist in a great explosion called the “Big Bang” around 15 billion years ago. Therefore, as Cambridge astronomer Fred Hoyle points out, the Big Bang theory requires the creation of the universe from nothing. Because, as one goes back in time, one reaches a point at which, in Hoyle’s words, the universe was “shrunk down to nothing at all.” (Hoyle, 1975, p. 658). Thus, according to Big Bang model, the universe began to exist and was created out of nothing.

We can summarize his argument thus far as follows:

1. Whatever begins to exist has a cause.
2. The universe began to exist.
3. Therefore, the universe has a cause.

Craig continues that premise (1) “Whatever begins to exist has a cause “seems true, at least, more so than its denial. However, a number of atheists, in order to avoid the argument’s conclusion, have denied the first premise. It is said that sub-atomic physics furnishes an exception to the first premise, since on the sub-atomic level events are said to be uncaused. In the same way, certain theories of cosmic origins are interpreted as showing that the whole universe could have sprung into being out of the sub-atomic vacuum (Craig & Armstrong, 2004, p. 8).

He believes that this objection is based on misunderstandings. First, not all scientists agree that sub-atomic events are uncaused. Many physicists today are quite dissatisfied with this view (the so-called Copenhagen Interpretation) of sub-atomic physics and are exploring deterministic theories like those of David Bohm.<sup>1</sup> Thus, sub-atomic physics is not a proven exception to the first premise. Second, even on the traditional, in-deterministic interpretation, particles do not come into being out of nothing. They arise as spontaneous fluctuations of the energy contained in the sub-atomic vacuum; not come from nothing.<sup>2</sup>

Third, the same point can be made about theories of the origin of the universe out of a primordial vacuum.<sup>3</sup> So vacuum is not nothing, but is a sea of fluctuating energy endowed with a rich structure under the physical laws. Robert Deltete sums up the situation: “There is no basis in ordinary quantum theory for the claim that the universe itself is uncaused, much less for the claim that it sprang into being uncaused from literally nothing.”<sup>4</sup>

As to this premise, the typical objection that is raised against the philosophical argument for the universe’s beginning is that modern mathematical set theory proves that an actually infinite number of things can exist. For example, there are an actually infinite

number of members in the set  $\{0, 1, 2, 3, \dots\}$ . Therefore, there's no problem in an actually infinite number of past events. But this objection is far too quick. First, not all mathematicians agree that actual infinities exist even in the mathematical realm.<sup>5</sup> They regard series like  $0, 1, 2, 3, \dots$  as merely potentially infinite; that is to say, such series approach infinity as a limit, but they never actually get there. Second, existence in the mathematical realm does not entail existence in the real world. To say that infinite sets exist is only to postulate a realm of discourse, governed by certain axioms and rules that are simply presupposed, in which one can talk about such collections.<sup>6</sup>

Given the axioms and rules, we can discourse consistently about infinite sets. But that's no guarantee that the axioms and rules are true or that an actually infinite number of things can exist in reality. Third, in any case, the real existence of an actually infinite number of things would violate the rules of transfinite arithmetic. As we saw, trying to subtract infinite quantities leads to self-contradictions; therefore, transfinite arithmetic just prohibits such operations to preserve consistency. But in the real world there's nothing to keep us from breaking this arbitrary rule. If I had an actually infinite number of marbles, I could subtract or divide them as I please.

Sometimes it's said that we can find counter-examples to the claim that an actually infinite number of things cannot exist, so that this claim must be false. For instance, isn't every finite distance capable of being divided into  $1/2, 1/4, 1/8$ , on to infinity? Doesn't this prove that there are in any finite distance an actually infinite number of parts? The fallacy of this objection is that it once again confuses a potential infinite with an actual infinite. You can continue to divide any distance for as long as you want, but such a series is merely

potentially infinite, in that infinity serves as a limit that you endlessly approach but never reach. If you assume that any distance is already composed of an actually infinite number of parts, then you're begging the question. Namely that there is a clear counter-example to the claim that an actually infinite number of things cannot exist.

As to confirmation of premise (2), it is true that there are many theories to the Big Bang theory that do not involve a beginning of the world. But while such theories are possible, it has been the overwhelming verdict of the scientific community than none of them is more probable than the Big Bang theory. If you get down to specifics you find that there is no mathematically consistent model that has been so successful in its predictions or as corroborated by the evidence as the traditional Big Bang theory.

He also mentions that Sometimes people will ask, "If the universe must have a cause, then what is God's cause?" But this question reveals an inattentiveness to the formulation of the argument. The first premise does not state whatever exists has a cause, but rather whatever begins to exist has a cause. Since God never began to exist, would not require a cause, for He never came into being. Nor is this special pleading for God, since this is exactly what the atheist has always claimed about the universe: that it is eternal and uncaused. He mentions that the atheist's claim is now rendered untenable in light of the beginning of the universe. In sum, we have a good argument for God's existence based upon the origin of the universe (Craig & Armstrong, 2004, p. 8).

## **2. Armstrong's Reasons Against Craig's First Reason**

Armstrong criticizes Craig's claim that there is no infinity in the real world to deny the necessity of God's existence and states that Craig argues that the universe must have had a beginning, because it cannot

be infinite. Why not? Craig answers, “What is infinity minus infinity? Well, mathematically, you get self-contradictory answers. Infinity minus infinity is infinity and infinity minus infinity is 3! This implies that infinity is just an idea in your mind, not something that exists in reality.” This argument never mentions minds or reality before its conclusion. Its premises refer only to numbers. Consequently, if the argument showed anything about infinity, it would also show that there cannot be an infinite number or an infinite series of numbers. If the number itself or our idea of it implied a contradiction, there could not be any such number or any consistent idea of it. Calculus would be out the window.

Craig derives his contradiction by subtracting infinity from infinity. How do mathematicians avoid this contradiction? They simply limit the operation of subtraction to a certain domain, so that you are not allowed to subtract infinity. Why not? Because it gets you into contradictions! What better reason could you want? There is nothing strange or dubious about this limit on subtraction. Mathematicians also limit the operation of division. You can't divide any number by zero. Why not? Because this would also yield contradictions. That does not show that zero is not a number or is not real. The actual number of pink elephants in this room really is zero, believe me. So the limit on subtraction also does not show that infinity is not a number or is not real or is only in your mind or anything like that. I admit that infinity is puzzling. It seems strange that the number of odd integers is equal to the total number of integers (both odd and even) in the sense that there is a one-to-one correspondence between the members of the sets. That's weird. But it is not contradictory. So this can't show that infinity does not exist in reality (whatever that means) (Craig & Armstrong, 2004, pp. 41-42).

Many people's views on infinity do lead to outright contradictions.



Even some mathematicians bungle it and end up claiming that actual infinities are impossible. Craig quotes David Hilbert, who was a great mathematician, but Craig's appeal takes an authority out of context. Craig's quotation is from a paper published in 1926.<sup>7</sup> Hilbert himself soon recognized that his finitist project was undermined by Gödel's incompleteness theorems in 1931.<sup>8</sup> More importantly, even if Hilbert had not recanted, almost all mathematicians today recognize that infinity can be handled without contradiction.

Craig might admit that infinity is not self-contradictory, but still deny that anything infinite actually exists. However, actual infinities are not hard to find. First, there is an infinite number of real numbers between one and two. Craig cites one mathematician who regards this set as "merely potentially infinite," because "such series approach infinity as a limit, but they never actually get there." This spatial metaphor is misleading. If I count to 10 and then stop, I potentially count to 20, but I do not actually count to 20. That fact does not even begin to show that the number 20 is not real. The number 20 actually exists whether or not my counting actually gets there. Some numbers are so high that nobody has ever counted to them or could ever count to them. Maybe we can "never actually get there," but the number series itself actually exists anyway.<sup>9</sup> The same goes for infinity. If someone asked how many real numbers exist between one and two, the answer would be, "Actually, it's infinite." (Craig & Armstrong, 2004, pp. 42-43).

Next Armstrong point to the Big Bang theory and its lack of validity in citing the beginning of the world. He says; Craig also cites Big Bang theories as empirical evidence for a first moment and, hence, against an infinite past and, eventually, for God. Claims like this have been common since a Big Bang theory was first developed by a priest named Lemaitre. In 1951, Pope Pius XII cited this Big

Bang theory as evidence for God. Lemaitre responded, “As far as I can see, such a theory remains entirely outside any metaphysical or religious question. It leaves the materialist free to deny any transcendental Being. For the believer, it removes any attempt to familiarity with God.”<sup>10</sup> Craig is no more justified than the Pope in inferring God from the Big Bang.

One reason is that Craig’s inference to God depends on a questionable interpretation of the physics of the Big Bang. Craig emphasizes, “Physical space and time were created in that event, as well as all the matter and energy in the universe,” so there was no time or space or matter or energy at all in any form before the Big Bang. Some scientists do talk this way, but none of this speculation is essential to the physics or required by the evidence. That is why contrary hypotheses, such as a non-empty quantum epoch, are still seen as live options that are not ruled out by the evidence.<sup>11</sup> But then why do any scientists deny time before the Big Bang? They are talking about time as we know it. When Hawking is more careful, he says, “the classical concepts of space and time break down as do all known laws of physics.”<sup>12</sup>

We cannot know anything about time before the Big Bang, and no claim about time before the Big Bang is needed or could be used to explain or predict anything that we observe now. Still, none of this implies that there was no time at all in any form before the Big Bang (when was that?). Scientists ignore temporal relations that are needless, useless, and unknowable, but to go further and deny such relations is at best conjecture. It is not required by theory or evidence. We just can’t know one way or the other. When physicists do speculate on such matters, they adopt differing views. Some say that before the Big Bang all space, time, matter, and energy were collapsed into a point called a singularity. This singularity is a unique sort of

reality, but it is still real,<sup>13</sup> if only because it has infinite density. So even this theory does not require creation out of nothing (Craig & Armstrong, 2004, p. 44).

Most physicists today reject the idea of a singularity. One reason is that recent discoveries produce doubts that gravity is always attractive, which is a key assumption in the argument for a singularity. Instead of a singularity, many physicists propose that the classical epoch governed by classical physical laws began with the Big Bang, but before that was a quantum epoch with no beginning. All that existed during this quantum epoch was “a sea of fluctuating energy,” but it was “not nothing.” The Big Bang then arose probabilistically with no determinate cause, in some way analogous to the decay of radioactive atoms according to quantum theory. Hence the name “quantum epoch.”

In response, Craig denies that any event can be uncaused, but this claim is contrary to standard quantum theory. Craig is right that “not all scientists agree that [some] sub-atomic events are uncaused,” but many scientists do agree with this. The lack of universal agreement hardly shows that most scientists are wrong to postulate uncaused events, and the fact that some scientists accept Craig’s premise is hardly enough for a positive argument for God. On the other issue here, Craig is also right that in-deterministic quantum theory does not imply that particles come into existence out of nothing.

However, the quantum epoch’s “sea of fluctuating energy” is also not nothing, even if we cannot know what it is. Thus, the principle that nothing comes from nothing creates no trouble for the hypothesis of a quantum epoch. Anyway, I do not need to claim that there was a quantum epoch. My point is only that we cannot rule out a quantum epoch. It is as likely as other hypotheses. We just don’t know which hypothesis is true.

So many mysteries remain. Maybe no physical theory will ever fully solve it. But God won't solve them either. Here's why: A cause of an event is supposed to explain why that event occurred when it did rather than earlier or later and in the way it did rather than some other way. God cannot explain why the Big Bang occurred 15 billion years ago instead of 5 or 25 billion years ago, because, if the traditional God existed at all, He would exist equally and in exactly the same way as 5, 15, and 25 billion years ago. Furthermore, the hypothesis of God cannot explain why the Big Bang has any of the features it has, since, if the Big Bang had different features, God would be just as good (or bad) at explaining those other features. I will develop these points in Chapter 4, but it should already be clear why an eternal God adds nothing to the scientific explanations. To cite God as the cause of the Big Bang is to explain the obscure by the more obscure, which gets us nowhere.

### **3. The Basics of Criticism and Evaluation of the Debate**

First, it is necessary that the methodological realm of sciences is noted to explain the realm of interaction between science and theology in order to prevent the non-scientific interventions of these two sciences in each other's methodological realm and base the evaluation of this debate on it. For this reason, it is necessary to emphasize the interaction between experimental and metaphysical sciences and introduce the interactive and inherent relationship of these two sciences as a rational way to create interaction between science and theology. Because theology, in the intellectual method of proving beliefs, only shares a method with metaphysics; therefore, it cannot interact with empirical sciences, which have no commonality in its subject and method. Therefore, by emphasizing the close relationship between science and metaphysics and trying to make metaphysics provable, we can return it to its scientific position and then the

interaction of theology with metaphysics to rationally prove the fundamental religious teachings can be introduced as a scientific and necessary matter. In this way, theologians are not allowed to argue based on empirical findings in defense of beliefs; and as a result, religious teachings are not exposed to uncertainty, damage, and doubt.

Among the best and most practical defenses that have been made in this era for the revival of metaphysics are the efforts of Jonathan Lowe, Morganti and Tahko. These efforts are in a way that consider metaphysics as a provable science related to nature. Lowe distinguishes the method and the subject of metaphysics, while considering them as overlapping sciences, and Morganti and Tahko, in their moderate natural metaphysics plan, have recognized the commonality of the subject and the distinction of the method for these two sciences. Therefore, just as Aristotle put a single subject (existent) as a common source of division for physics and metaphysics, based on the view of Morganti and Tahko, these two branches of philosophy, even though they have a single subject, study the existence with two different methods (Morganti, M., & Tahko, 2017). Thus, two different methods to know two different aspects of a single subject are acceptable.

In order to establish the relationship between science and metaphysics, in the thesis of integration of metaphysics and experimental sciences, while he believes in independent methods and subjects for these two sciences, he considers them to be synergetic. He believes that metaphysics is based on understanding of the nature and is not like logic which is concerned with concepts. He emphasizes the necessity of interaction between science and metaphysics and believes that these two sciences cannot be considered as independent sciences in knowledge giving (enlightenment). According to Lowe, the interaction between science and metaphysics is not optional because

science presupposes metaphysical assumptions. That is, although they are related to two different fields of knowledge, they cannot be considered independent of each other. Lowe claims that metaphysics is both possible and necessary as a form of rational human inquiry. Low sees metaphysical possibility as an inevitable prerequisite for reaching reality. As Lowe argues, this metaphysical possibility must be presupposed before experience because it determines whether the things we examine are real or not. Therefore, in order to know what is real, metaphysical possibility is necessary (Lowe, 1998, p. 21).

Accordingly, although metaphysics is not an a priori science and depends on the nature and understanding of the real relationships of the external world, its method is a priori due to the fact that it studies the relationships of beings in general, and it can explain the real world without a posteriori validation method. In this regard, Lowe believes that metaphysics helps us to distinguish the real possibility from the feasible possibilities. According to Lowe, experience cannot play its role in determining what is real if there is not a prior metaphysical limitation of what is. Although Lowe introduces the subject of metaphysics and science as independent, he considers them to be related and dependent on each other. He says that empirical science deals with what is, not what should or could be. Thus, metaphysics makes us pay attention to these possibilities, but which of the possible structures exists is determined by experience (Lowe, 1998, p. 9). So experience alone cannot determine what is actual in the absence of metaphysics (Lowe, 2009, pp. 7-8).

Based on the statement that was involved in the formation of metaphysics, it is clear that metaphysical propositions are not meaningless and unprovable, but like empirical propositions, they are provable and therefore meaningful. Even the verifiability applies to metaphysical propositions. Lowe does not consider any pure prior

science possible since every previous science has some degree of connection with reality and experience. He clearly rejects this idea that some kind of purely prior knowledge is involved in metaphysical activity and considers it an awkward caricature. Rather, he emphasizes that every prior knowledge is preceded by a type of posterior knowledge (Lowe, 2014, p. 26).

#### **4. Criticism and evaluation of Craig and Armstrong's arguments**

One of the most important metaphysical foundations of experimental sciences is the principle of causality in the world. Thus any transformation in the world of matter takes place as a result of leaving power to action, under the influence of the natural efficient cause. And the understanding of any evolution in the world goes back to this important metaphysical principle. Based on this, the material relations of the world will never face sequence (infinite regression). Therefore, in cosmological proofs such as the proof of occurrence (creation), after proving that every event requires a cause, based on the metaphysical foundations of empirical sciences and the nature of preparatory cause, the existence of God is not proven through the negation of sequence. In this way, the interaction of theology with metaphysics helps it to reach the eternity of the world of matter in order to prove the necessity of the cause of existence by relying on the principle of understanding (the principle of contradiction) and complementing the proof of occurrence with the Siddiqui argument (Javadi-Amuli, 2016, p. 52). That is, in the world of matter, every occurrence needs a cause. Because according to the metaphysical foundations of empirical sciences it is proved that matter in its actuality does not reach the first material cause, because that matter also needs another matter to get actuality (as an actualizer), and because the determination of matter (specification) is possible by forms and the

world is understood through the distinction of forms, there is an inevitable need for a formal cause. This is because the proof of occurrence only describes the causes in the realm of material nature and a transcendental cause is not proven. In fact, occurrence is the description of the material world and creation is not in the events of the world, because they are just a preparer (preparatory cause). So we don't have the past infinite events collectively now. For this reason, infinity is impossible if all its components exist, but nature is constantly happening. Therefore, potential infinity is not impossible, and based on the principle of contradiction, it is obvious that the explanation of the world without a formal cause is incomplete (Vaez-Javadi, 1362, p. 352). Therefore, each actualizer in actualization is independent of other causes. Since preparatory cause does not play a role in existence, a formative cause, beyond the matter, is necessarily needed. Therefore, interaction with metaphysics, according to Jonathan Lowe, first invalidates incorrect ideas in empirical sciences and secondly helps us prove the existence of God (see: Guta, 2021). As the experimental sciences, if they use metaphysics, they can reach correct conclusions about the explanation of the system of existence in confirming or rejecting the scientific theories of this science. For example, in case of using the metaphysical foundations of experimental sciences, it can be concluded that the Big Bang is not the starting point of creation, and based on the foundations of science, for this phenomenon to occur, the material actualization factors are needed before it.

Now Craig's argument can be carefully evaluated. Craig believes that we don't have an actual infinity outside thereby events must have a beginning! While the actual infinity outside does not harm the existence of God. If Craig would not relate the necessity of the cause with a beginning, there is no necessity to negate infinity in



the external world. Because the proof of occurrence, regardless of any proof of the beginning or eternity of the world, is related to the understanding of the occurrence of the universe which find out through understanding the existence, and even without discovering any empirical theory, it is possible to argue for the existence of the universe.

In addition, as Armstrong also points out, the fact that infinity does not have an objective example outside does not mean that it does not exist outside. The outside world is full of infinity. In other words, infinity is outside, but it does not have an objective example, and this human inability to determine an objective example for it has led to the invention of the concept of infinity. Therefore, although his reference to Hilbert is correct about infinity, this is not a proof of the necessity of the beginning of the universe at the point of the Big Bang. And although infinity does not have an objective example in the outside world, it does not mean its absence, like the concept of eternity also implies the same meaning.

Thus, according to the metaphysical foundations of science, the events of the world cannot be considered to have a limit in the forward movement, nor can a beginning be imagined in the backward movement, and the material world has no beginning. Therefore, as today in experimental sciences, models have been presented to negate the implication of the Big Bang on the beginning of the world, although sometimes it is associated with the purpose of confronting theism, these models are not only a negation of the belief in God. However, they are a confirmation of the eternity of the material world; and the eternity of the material world also does not contradict the beginning of a part of the universe in the Big Bang, and Craig need not try to come up with a single "beginning" for the universe. Therefore, his reference to the Big Bang as the beginning is not

correct and it is not even consistent with scientific findings, and as Armstrong also points out, science does not claim creation from nothing. Therefore, contrary to Craig's belief, the eternity models of world are not in favor of atheism. Therefore, reliance on the "beginning" generally collapses the first premise because according to metaphysical foundations of science, the question of this reason continues constantly and non-stop.

Therefore, his second premise, in which the world has a beginning, also collapses with the metaphysical foundations of science, and science does not acknowledge that the material world has a beginning in the Big Bang. Thus, both the introductions of this argument have problems and cannot be used as evidence to prove the existence of God. Thus, even if we consider the Big Bang as the beginning of the evolution of a certain phase of the universe, we cannot accept Craig's claim because what invalidates this argument is his emphasis on God's will to create the world at the moment of the Big Bang, which leaves no room for such justification. And if the beginning means the beginning of God's creation, this argument is baseless and unprovable because the metaphysical foundations of science, which have a rational basis, do not confirm it.

In end of the argument, he re-emphasizes the need for a cause for every beginning, while the question always remains: "Why does God not have a beginning?" And certainly his argument cannot convince an atheist, because he has actually begging the question and presupposed what is expected to be obtained from the argument. So how could it satisfy an atheist? If Craig did not argue about the beginning and its relationship with the need for a cause, and instead justified the necessity for a cause with a certain and undeniable reason, Armstrong would not reject his argument with an acceptable reason, humans may not see or discover many beginnings. This means

that if science did not present the Big Bang as a theory of formation of the universe, how may it prove the necessity of a cause?

Therefore, although infinity does not have an objective example in the outside world, infinity cannot be denied in the world, as it is not possible to determine the exact points as the beginning of the creation of the world. That is, we accept Armstrong's reason in rejecting the first statement. In addition to the fact that Armstrong expresses his reason with experimental evidence, and we see today, quantum cosmology does not believe in the creation of the universe from nothing and presents a sea of fluctuating energies as a model for the time before the Big Bang. Just as the metaphysical foundations of science cannot explain creation from nothing, and regardless of the existence or non-existence of God, creation from nothing without previous matter has no scientific justification or evidence. Leaving aside all Craig's controversial arguments, the question remains: "How did he come to the conclusion that this cause is supernatural?" It is clear that understanding the occurrence and its need for a cause also confirms the continuity of this series. On the other hand, the deterministic chain is formed when the preparatory cause is available and they create the talent of next actuality, because with the absence of efficient cause as an actualizer, the next existence does not get actuality (Sadra, 1981, vol. 3, p. 68). Therefore, the Big Bang, like other natural events, cannot be created without material efficient cause, because nature follows a single law. So Big Bang also relies on a material cause! Therefore, this infinite series that Craig is trying to deny and end with Big Bang continues, because the basis of understanding the world is based on the distinction of forms. Therefore, the cause before the Big Bang is also a distinct and material cause, and as long as these material causes continue, we have

not reached the final cause. Therefore, the existence of the final cause is a rational necessity, because preparatory causes do not play any role in creation. Thus, the existence of God is not only a theological necessity but also a scientific explanation that is investigated in theology. By and large, instead of Craig's first proposition, perception rules the proposition "everything that exists has a cause". That is, the understanding of causality does not relate to the beginning. In this way, the understanding of the occurrence of the universe is associated with the understanding of material causes. As a result, everything that exists has a cause and is created. And naturally, every event has a beginning, but not a beginning that is creation from pure nothingness, but creation from previous nothingness (see: Sadra, 1981, vol. 7, p. 297; Barbour, 1362, p. 415). Based on this, concepts such as the beginning of the universe make sense within the framework of the Big Bang theory and considering its limitations, and do not necessarily represent an objective reality. (Stoeger, 1988, p. 222).

Apparently, Craig committed fallacy in referring to the opinions of scientists about causeless of Big Bang and the subatomic level, because as Armstrong criticizes his opinion, the intention of scientists is not to negate causality, but rather they emphasize the material space before the Big Bang and the limitless of existence. In addition, Craig has imposed his own presuppositions on his argument and this argument. Because the metaphysical foundations of science do not confirm the occurrence of the world in a single moment, but today science knows that the world came into being as a result of an evolutionary and gradual system, and in fact, it is a testimony to the truth of metaphysics on "every occurrence needs a cause"; Therefore, the Big Bang itself is the result of this gradual process.

It is clear that this argument does not follow. So atheists

oppose this statement. Because they do not deny the reason for the existence of the world, they merely deny transcendental being as a creator. Therefore, in the first stage, theology should prove the existence of this being as God, which is necessarily proved; not based on previous beliefs. It means that transcendental being is an intellectual necessity, because the existence of God is not proven from the connection between the beginning and the cause. But rather the existence of God is related with the necessity of created (occurrence) to creator and infinity of this chain. That is, we must prove:

- 1) The world is created. Everything that created has a cause. So the world has a cause.
- 2) If the cause of the world is created, it also needs a cause. Therefore, the cause of the world is not necessarily created or material.

In this way, first we prove that the world needs a cause and then we prove the necessity of immaterial cause. In fact, causality is something that cannot be violated. In this way, the question of the atheists that why God does not have a cause is also clarified:

Something that has a cause is created. God is not created. So he has no cause. That is, with the continuation of the infinite series of events, we must necessarily find the final cause. In this argument, prior beliefs are not used in it. In this case, an atheist can also accept a correct and rational argument. Also, with this argument, beginning is not related to cause. So there is no need to confirm the Big Bang to prove God or reject the Big Bang to deny God, because Big Bang just is a part of creation. And we can consider limitless models as a stronger model to explain the world and existence of God. In other word, the universe is always creating.

## Conclusion

After all, Armstrong's arguments do not lead to the belief in God. He has used certain arguments to refute Craig's argument because Craig's argument is not only a certain argument with correct premises that can reject Armstrong's arguments against it, but Armstrong's arguments, although they do not end to proving the existence of God, can help us to criticize Craig and prove the existence of God. Anyway as a theologian, Craig seeks to prove the existence of God and pursues a valuable goal, but on the other hand, one should pay attention to the method of theology in creating certain and rational beliefs. In this way, the material world does not have a beginning, but it is constantly evolving; and no scientific research will find the ability to disprove theism as a scientific explanation of the world.

### Notes:

1- See James T. Cushing, Arthur Fine, and Sheldon Goldstein, *Bohmian Mechanics and Quantum Theory: An Appraisal in Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science 184* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1996).

2- See John Barrow and Frank Tipler, *The Anthropic Cosmological Principle* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986, 441).

3- See Bernulf Kanitscheider, "Does Physical Cosmology Transcend the Limits of Naturalistic Reasoning?" in *Studies on Mario Bunge's "Treatise,"* ed. P. Weingartner and G. J. W. Dorn (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1990, pp. 346–347).

4- Robert Deltete, *Critical notice of Theism, Atheism, and Big Bang Cosmology*, by William Lane Craig and Quentin Smith, (*Zygon* 30 (1995): p. 656). (N.B. the review was attributed to J. Leslie due to an editorial mistake at Zygon).

5- See, for example, Abraham Robinson, "Metamathematical Problems," (Journal of Symbolic Logic 38 (1973), pp. 500–516).

6- See Alexander Abian, *The Theory of Sets and Transfinite Arithmetic* (Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders, 1965), 68; B. Rotman and G. T. Kneebone, *The Theory of Sets and Transfinite Numbers* (London: Oldbourne, 1966, p. 61).

7- David Hilbert, "Über das Unendliche," *Mathematische Annalen* 95 (Berlin, 1926, pp. 161–90). Craig cites a reprint of a translation.

8- Kurt Gödel, "Über formal unentscheidbare Sätze der Principia Mathematica und verwandter Systeme I," *Monatshefte für Mathematik und Physik* 38 (1931). Thanks to Sam Levey for help on this paragraph and elsewhere.

9- Mathematical constructivists might deny this, but Craig is no constructivist, and it is hard to imagine any good reason to be a constructivist about numbers if you believe in God, since constructivism is motivated by skepticism about entities like gods.

10- Quoted in Marcelo Gleiser, *The Dancing Universe: From Creation Myths to the Big Bang* (New York: Penguin, 1997, p. 287). Thanks to Marcelo Gleiser for help at several points in sections 4.2 and 5.

11- Craig does criticize this theory: "Vacuum Fluctuation Universe theories ... cannot explain why, if the vacuum was eternal, we do not observe an infinitely old universe." (8) However, the universe that we observe is (in a way) infinitely old in this view, even if its classical phase (which is the phase that we observe) is not infinitely old. So it is not clear what Craig's objection is.

12- S. W. Hawking, "Breakdown of Predictability in Gravitational Collapse," (*Physical Review D*14, 1976. 2460) (my emphasis).

13- On the reality of a singularity, (see Quentin Smith in Craig and Smith, *Theism, Atheism, and Big Bang Cosmology*, p. 208).

14- For more detailed criticisms of Craig's scientific arguments, see Quentin Smith, "Atheism, Theism, and Big Bang Cosmology" and "A Defense of the Cosmological Argument for God's Non-existence" in Craig and Smith, *Theism, Atheism, and Big Bang Cosmology* (chaps. VII and IX).



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## **The Lingual Structure of Reality Critical Investigation of Ricard Rorty's View**

**Isa Musazada<sup>1</sup>**

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### **Abstract**

The contemporary world observes an increasing leaning from the thinkers in various intellectual and cultural spheres towards an approach to reality, interpreting reality as something in relationship to human beings and his goals and purposes, not independent of them. Richard Rorty is among the adherents of such a thought. The present article uses an analytical-critical method to show how Rorty has defended this view and to evaluate his view. According to the present study, it is clarified that Rorty adduces the features he considers for language to negate the possibility of accessing pure and naked reality; thus, he considers the available reality as made by ourselves in cooperation with others, which has a quite lingual structure. In my view, however, despite the fact that believing in lingual structure of reality places us in a better situation for defending concepts such as activity, freedom, self-consciousness, ownership, thinking and genuine life, Rorty's emphasis on solidarity,

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1. Researcher in Academy of Philosophy and Theology, Research Center of Islamic Sciences and Culture, Qom, Iran. [mousazadeh@isca.ac.ir](mailto:mousazadeh@isca.ac.ir)

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instead of objectivity and truth, entails a dominion of culture over the rational sciences. Consequently, we observe a leaning towards the principality of 'will' (including both individual and social) according to which, philosophy turns into something *a posteriori* and relied on will.

**Keywords**

Richard Rorty, language, objectivity, solidarity, lingual reality, activity, self-consciousness, freedom.

## **Introduction**

The concept of reality, like many other concepts, have undergone basic changes throughout the history of thought. The initial impression of reality regards it as an idea independent of consciousness and subject, considering the intellectual achievements of the subject as the basis of truth. But the deficiencies of this view were revealed soon and, to offer a proper answer to critics, some thinkers distinguished 'phenomenal reality' from the 'reality *itself*'. There were disagreements among these individuals on what the role of the reality *itself* is and what its relation to the reality for us is. They also disagreed on whether the reality for us (the phenomenal reality) is a personal affair or a public one and issues like these. Finally, the absolute idealism denied the reality outside consciousness. Regarding the relationship between the language and reality, we observe a similar trend. That is, most thinkers consider language and reality as two completely separate categories. Accordingly, the language depicts reality, and it is passive in this depiction. According to this approach, reality – which is quite independent of the subject – is the foundation of truth and verity of lingual descriptions. The later Wittgenstein reversed that approach with a revolutionary motion (like Kant's Copernican revolution), and regarded language as the basis for the reality emergent before us. In this way, in proportion to the new look at the subject as an active agent, not a passive one, in the process of identification, and with the lingual turn occurred in the twentieth century, the reality found a lingual tint and the lingual attitude towards reality was formed. In the meantime, Richard Rorty's view of reality, with its lingual turn, is a quite linguistic view.<sup>1</sup>

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1. For more study about Rorty's view of reality and its lingual structure, see: Musazada, 'I, Asghari, M. and Abdullah-nejad, M. R. (1400 SH). "The Lingual Structure of Reality in Richard Rorty's Thought" in the Scientific-Research Periodical of *Pazhuhishhāyi Falsafī Kalāmī*, 23(90), pp. 103-120.

The present article seeks to offer an analytical-critical description of the lingual structure of reality in Rorty's thought and evaluate it critically.

## **1. Features of Language**

Rorty enumerates features for language that are the foundations of his view regarding 'reality' and its relationship with language. These features are as follows:

### **1-1. The Instrumental Nature of Language**

Darwin believed that the mutations and evolutions occurring in a living organism are quite contingent and pursue no predetermined goal. He, then, says that among the changes, those that heighten the living organism's ability for adopting itself with the environment and, in a sense, increase its possibility for survival are supported, preserved and, indeed, selected by the environment. Darwin's description of evolution has some important and considerable points that have influenced Rorty's description of language. Among them is instrumental look at the capabilities and facilities of the living organism.

The instrument or tool is, basically, for performing tasks and achieving goals, whose nature is constituted of 'being for a goal'; thus, in Rorty's view, language is neither essential in human nor does it have an essence. Language and vocabulary are tools like other tools emerged in the process of gradual evolution and precisely it is always possible that the environmental changes reduce its efficiency. Thus, for preserving better consistency with the new environment and ecology, they are always in need of changes and subject to them (Rorty, 1991a, p. 127). According to such a biological perception of language, the origin and nature of language finds a completely natural explanation,

not an abstract and metaphysical one. That is, the origination of language is related to the empirical and cause-effect condition, with no *a priori* and transcendental condition.

### **1-2. Impossibility of Going Beyond Language**

Instrumental look at language has implications, and Rorty tries to be committed to them. Impossibility of going beyond language is – indeed – one of these implications. Rorty believes that for the beings with language, there is no possibility to exit the language and lingual descriptions; and this, indeed, means that we are imprisoned by our language and our altering and historical descriptions (Rorty, 1990, pp. 96-98). There is no way out of language to achieve the naked reality, whether this reality is of the genus of intellect and intelligible things or of senses and sensible things. Even in regard with statements that apparently describe our internal states (such as I'm hungry, I have pain, etc.), he maintains that they have no function other than helping us in harmonizing and adapting ourselves with others (and the environment). He adduces the beliefs of Wittgenstein and Davidson and says that language is by no means seeking to establish a relationship with non-linguistic reality. Even having a mind means having the ability to harmonize oneself with the environment, not an internal theater (Rorty, 2003).

In this way, he negates any kind of referring the language to reality, including internal and external ones. Thus, there can be no Archimedean and absolute perspective. Therefore, we cannot go out of language to speak about its conformity or non-conformity to reality; nor is there some general and rational principles to be a basis for justifying and using a series of words instead of another series. However, this does not mean that there is no justification for using a series of words and not using another series. In fact, considering the

instrumental look at language and that words do not represent the universe and a reality independent of language, justification of using words is possible in relation to the goal for which they have been created, just as the justification of any tool is always in relation to a certain goal. Efficacy and justification of any description of the universe is evaluable in relation to the goals, purposes and benefits of that description. Thus, evaluation of various descriptions of universe can occur on the basis of fulfilling their purposes and benefits (Nowzari, 1380 SH, p. 27). Accordingly, justifying the usage of the words has nothing to do with establishing a certain relationship between the words and the objects; rather, it is something dependent on the goals and benefits emerged and evaluated in the social and historical contexts. Therefore, the justification of the use of a certain word is something quite social, for firstly justification of the use of a word is justifying it for others and the society; and secondly, justification of using a certain word is dependent on the purposes and benefits in using it and, indeed, the role that the word can play. And since the meaning and role of the words are in their usage, and the usage of a word can occur in the context of social interactions and in the historical and cultural context, justification is – in this sense – something quite social not individual. That is, the question is whether using such a vocabulary is acceptable for others who form the members of the same society or not.

### **1-3. The Social, Metaphoric, Contingent and Possible Nature of the Language**

In Rorty's thought, language is an instrument for improving and facilitating the group and social activities of individuals to the extent that even the individuals' description of the nature and of themselves is also dependent on their needs. Thus, due to the



instrumental feature of the language, we observe the possible feature in language. We infer two points from this. First, language lacks a fixed nature; and second, reality is constructed by language. Lack of a fixed nature for language is another statement of the possible and contingent nature of language, which leads – consequently – to contingent nature of cultural procedures. The result of such a reciprocity in contingent nature of language and cultural procedures is the lack of universal vocabulary. That is, any society will have its own special vocabulary and, so to speak, there is no Archimedean point for evaluating and scoring about the vocabulary used by various societies (Rorty, 1991a, p. 12). And the reality that we speak in one style and not the other are determined by historical events that could be in another form (Brandom, 2000, p. 35). Indeed, in Rorty's view, the ultimate vocabulary is different from one society to another and, thus, we cannot present an always fixed description of reality in general through language. He says:

All human beings carry about a set of words which they employ to justify their actions, their beliefs, and their lives. These are the words in which we formulate praise of our friends and contempt for our enemies, our long-term projects, our deepest self-doubts and our highest hopes. I shall call these words a person's "final vocabulary". (Rorty, 1998, p. 73)

Rorty's metaphoric look at language also reinforces the theory of contingency and possibility of language. He maintains that metaphors merely have literal meanings. They stimulate our thought and our insight of the universe, but they never depict the universe. Thus, the metaphors lead us to new looks and – therefore – new forms of living. For Rorty, such a metaphoric view about language places us in the situation of perceiving the contingent and possible nature of language (see: Asghari, 1394 SH, p. 10). He considers scientific changes and

revolutions as metaphoric re-descriptions of nature and us, not efforts for discovering the innate character hidden in them. Such a look at language and vocabulary can, indeed, be considered as the product of regarding language and vocabulary and, consequently, the cultural procedures as altering phenomena (Rorty, 1385 SH, pp. 41-42). Thus, this metaphoric view of language challenges the idea of mediatory and representative nature of language.

## **2. Structural Nature of Reality**

Naturalists would assume, for long, that there is a reality independent of language, and that the task of language is describing it. A naturalist considers the universe as having a fixed and perpetual essence, with the possibility of direct encounter with it and knowing it through that encounter independent of language; and thus, the truth and verity are also in conformity of language with a reality existing there independent of it. Rorty says that the naturalist image of the relationship between language and the universe leads him back to the claim that the universe is independent of recognizable languages... This primary encounter is the encounter with the universe itself, the world that inherently exists (1990, p. 109). In other words, the naturalists believe that some sciences lead us beyond language and our needs to something absolute, non-relative, and tremendously non-human. Matters such as objective reality, thing-in-itself and God are examples of such affairs out of ourselves, our language, and our purposes and our needs, to whom numerous thinkers have resorted in various historical eras.

However, Rorty neither accepts the duality of language and reality, nor does he accept that the language is a barrier between the mind and the reality, because the language is the inseparable element of our experience of the universe and there is no distinction between

knowing things and using them. Thus, the claim to know something does not mean, in principle, that we are able to do it or ascribe it to something else (Rorty, 1990, pp. 98-99). Accordingly, the truth (verity) is also dependent on the language created by the human for certain purposes and goals and cannot be out of language. This is because firstly, just our description of the universe have the possibility of verity or falsity. Secondly, descriptions are able to be formulated just in the form of sentences. Thirdly, sentences are constituent elements of language, and language has been created by human.

Now, when we put two aspects of Rorty's thought beside one another, it becomes clear how, in Rorty's view, reality for us is something that we ourselves make in cooperation with one another. Those two aspects are as follows: firstly, reality is never accessible for us in a naked form and we always face our own description of reality, not the reality independent of our language and our needs. Secondly, the language has an instrumental, poetic and metaphoric nature.

In regard with the fact that we always face our own description of reality, not the reality independent of the language and our needs, it must be said that, in Rorty's view, the main function of lingual behavior and the signs and voices one produces is to harmonize his actions with the environment and with others, and preparing the possibility for predicting his future behavior for others. Thus, the language is formed in a certain relationship with the environment, not in vacuum. In other words, the function and purpose of sentences that apparently are descriptions and output of states such as hunger and the like is not externalizing what is internal. Rather, indeed, it is helping the environment in predicting the actions and harmonizing our behavior with it (Rorty, 1990, pp. 28-29). In fact, word are nodes in the causal network between the human and the environment that link him to his ecology, not representations that are inside the mind. This is

because the tools are a part of the process of the living organisms' interaction with the environment wherein they breathe and, as mentioned before, languages are very efficient and useful tools for interacting and working with things in the environment. Thus, human's encounter with reality does not occur in vacuum; rather, it occurs in relationship with human's purposes and needs; and here, language plays the role of an efficient tool used in the basis of usefulness and in line with achieving the purposes and needs of a being that has language. Human's encounter with the reality is a lingual encounter, because – in principle – the human cannot go beyond the language. For us (the creatures with language), there is no possibility to exit the language and the lingual descriptions (Rorty, 1990. P. 97). And this – indeed – means that we are imprisoned by the language and the altering and historical descriptions.

When, on the one hand, the vocabulary has a basically instrumental nature and the relationship between the instrument with what is used is a useful relationship and, on the other hand, our only knowledge of something is considering its relationship with other things, it is quite natural that exiting the language and its descriptions and naked observation and perception of reality is impossible. Thus, "Never can we step out of the language and we will not be able to achieve the reality without intermediacy of lingual descriptions." (Rorty, 1990, p. 97). Rorty's main idea in this regard is that human's encounter with reality is a lingual encounter and, thus, reality never comes to our access in the naked form; and the universe cannot exist for us without our descriptions of it.

As to the fact that language has an instrumental, poetic and metaphoric nature, we must say that although the realistic function of language is under question, its poetic and metaphoric structure has been emphasized. Unlike the traditional philosophies, who have

ignored the poetic structure of language, perceiving its metaphoric aspect as a negative one, the metaphoric and poetic aspects of language have a very important and interesting role and function for the contemporary thinkers, in a way that today the usage of metaphor is not restricted to poetry and literature any longer. Rather, it represents many discourses created – including science, art, morality, and politics – and even sometimes in science, morality and art, we observe sentences that are traditionally false, and are – despite their false form – very illuminative and useful and, thus, many thinkers – including Rorty – believe that metaphor and poetic form are basic elements of progress in all scientific and cultural grounds. He believes that metaphors, while having no meaning except the literal meaning, have some important functions in the language. In relation to beliefs, they have a causal role and, thus, play a very strong role in the creation and redefinition of our beliefs, our descriptions and even our needs (Rorty, 1991b, p. 124). The causes of belief, unlike its reasons that have an epistemological role, play just an ontological role. Thus, despite the fact that metaphors are very efficient and useful tools for presence and activity in the environment and with others, they lack the cognitive aspect. He says when a metaphor is created, it does not speak of or show what is already existent, although such a metaphor is caused by what is already existent (Rorty, 1998, p. 36). We see that for Rorty, metaphor, just like the language itself, has an instrumental aspect and is useful for acting in the environment and with others as well as achieving our goals, not for representing reality.

Therefore, considering the fact that, on the one hand, it is not possible to go beyond language, encountering with reality is a lingual encounter and it is not possible to access the naked reality, and the language has an instrumental , poetic and metaphoric structure on the other hand, we can conclude that the language and vocabulary do not

represent the universe and reality; rather, they are – indeed – creators and innovators of reality (Rorty, 1990, p. 10). The language has a poetic structure that creates the universe; it does not reflect it; and thus, there is no truth without presupposition and impartiality far from its historical possibilities and probabilities. The language just equips us with a description of the universe that is essentially historical and possible. The language constructs the universe, not represents it.

Of course, as we mentioned before, when we say we will not see the reality clear, vivid and naked before our eyes and, thus, the idea of having access to the reality itself independent of any special style of description is not understandable does not mean that we construct the reality arbitrarily in any way we want. This is because, while emphasizing that there is no way for encountering the reality except through the language and its descriptions, Rorty believes that there are things with their causal effects in the outside world and our lingual descriptions – which are under the influence of lingual community and the history influencing the describer – are ultimately related to these causal effects. This is while these effects are understandable and recognizable in the level of language, not independent of it. However, it removes the doubt of the arbitrariness of the human constructs.

Rorty believes that the prominent feature of objectivism and, in a sense, we can say the foundation of distinctions such as mind and object or language and reality, is focusing on searching for truth, the truth that is as something that must be searched for itself, not as something good for the person and the real community. In his view, the object that is independent of human and his needs is – somehow – the inevitable result of the belief that the only way for meaningfulness of our life is in having relationship with a meta-human truth that one can access in a way independent of the link with others and

participating in the society. What objectivity wants is – indeed – an attempt for establishing relations with a non-human affair and moving to an already prepared place outside the universe and human community. The heritage of the objectivist thought – formed on the axis of searching for truth – are terms such as ‘God’, ‘intellect’ and ‘nature’ as well as going away from concepts such as solidarity, agreement and humans’ consensus in the society. However, unlike leaning towards objectivity – which is a type of leaning towards non-human reality – proclivity to solidarity is a type of leaning to relationship with members of society and other individuals and, thus, it is good to substitute the concept of ‘non-imposed agreement’ for the less useful concept of objectivity (Rorty, 1991b, p. 154). Solidarity is not a non-historical reality discovered by the thinkers throughout history. Rather, it has been constructed by the human community throughout history (Rorty, 1998, p. 19). Such a feature (constructed nature of solidarity) is in relation to the historical, time and place features of solidarity. By reinterpreting objectivity into solidarity, the objectivity is indeed reduced into inter-mentality. Thus, the questions such as ‘how can one establish relationship with a reality independent from mind and language’ will be avoided and, instead, the emphasis will be put on questions such as ‘what are the limitations of our community?’ and ‘Are our encounters sufficiently free and open?’ (Rorty, 1991b, p. 13).

### **3. Evaluation of Rorty's View**

We noted that Rorty considers features for language that overshadow the whole of his thought. Firstly. He considers the language as having an instrumental feature and, thus, lacking a fixed nature and identity. Secondly, he maintains that going beyond the language is not possible and, thus, the limits of our world is the same as the limits of our language and vice versa. Thirdly, the language has a metaphoric,

poetic and contingent feature. As an example, according to the fact that there is no possibility for exiting the language and, at the same time, the language has a poetic and metaphoric feature, the function of the language cannot be representing reality and reality is never accessible for us in a naked form and as it exists independent from the language and the descriptions. Thus, in Rorty's view, the reality existent and accessible for us is a lingual reality constructed linguistically in cooperation with others in a community. Of course, it is clear that Rorty's intention of saying that 'the reality is constructed by the language' does never mean that we construct the reality arbitrarily in whatever form we want. Rather, we are responding to the external stimuli, a response from the type of various sentences that show themselves in the form of lingual reactions. Thus, without negating the external world independent of the language, Rorty denies the possibility of speaking of it and its immediate presence for us.

In the first place, it seems that belief in the lingual structure of reality places us in a better situation for defending concepts with new and proper definitions for resolving our daily issues. Among these concepts – that can be said to form, in a sense, the main body of the structure of the contemporary thought – are the concepts of freedom, agency, ownership, self-consciousness, thought and, perhaps more importantly, genuine life. These concepts are intermingled in the contemporary world in a way that perfect and precise understanding of each of them depends on a widespread and all-out perception of other concepts and, in principle, the real understanding of them is possible in relation and in proportion to one another.

The belief that the reality with which the human faces is constructed by human himself through the lingual medium with its instrumental feature, and is – consequently – quite fluid and historical, has displaced the realm of human activity and extended it to the extent



that has brought even the reality under the dominance of collective will. This is a will quite historical and fluid and, in its turn, has led to the historicity and fluidity of reality.

I believe such a construction by the human being is certainly free, for the human attributes it to himself and this attribution is meaningful just when the human regards himself as responsible for it and, thus, finds himself free in doing or leaving it. And basically, the mere acceptance of responsibility for an action shows the individual's freedom (his will) in doing it and, consequently, is a basis for the claim that he has informed activity. Indeed, the free activity, which is certainly along with consciousness, is the foundation for attributing an activity to the individual. On the one hand, and most importantly, accepting responsibility and attributing it to oneself is a turning point in self-consciousness. That is, going beyond consciousness as the common point between the human and the animal to self-consciousness depends on this attribution and thus free activity. Indeed, in such an attribution, 'I' or 'self' comes to the existence and makes the attribution possible. In short, 'I' or 'self' and, better said, self-consciousness has its roots in free activity on which Rorty emphasizes with emphasis on language.

With the above explanation in mind, the relationship between the concepts of ownership and free activity is also understandable. Clearly, the real owner of reality and event is the free and self-conscious agent who has, due to this agency, the possibility of attributing that action to himself. Perhaps, it is due to this fact that in the religious tradition, we see that God as the cause and creator of the possible beings is their real owner. Even one can show that some of the divine Names, apart from the Name *Mālik* (meaning 'the owner') are rooted in the fact that the creator of something is its real owner – Names such as *rabb* (lord), *mudabbir* (administrator), etc.

Regarding thinking and reflection, we must say that the essence of thinking is, in principle, linked with creativity and dynamism. Thought cannot be imitated, nor can it be acquired. Thought must be produced and constructed; thus, just a free and self-conscious agent has the opportunity to be in the situation of thinking and contemplation.

This can be shown by comparing the humans and the robots or computer more easily. We must see why the artificial intelligence, with its ever-increasing advancements and complexities, has not managed to be the owner of thought or possess 'I'. I think the answer to such questions is, finally, that these human artifacts have no agency or free will, and until such a being has no activity and cannot create something, it cannot be the owner of thought and, certainly, of itself.

The concept of genuine life, which is – in a more serious and more widespread sense – the concept of the contemporary world, and has attracted the attention of theoreticians of various intellectual and cultural spheres, mostly denotes a conflict with alienation. Now, it is about to become a dominant discourse in the international culture and even in the moral and legal relationships with phrases such as 'be yourself' or 'live yourself' and the like. 'Genuine life' is, indeed, a life that the individual has brought it under his ownership and is its real owner. Thus, we see how free activity and ownership are emphasized here as well. This is because without construction and creation, ownership and 'self' do not have any meaning. In fact, without free activity and creativity, there is no self and no self-consciousness, not any ownership of something (such as life, thought, etc.). Even emphasis on democracy has its roots in the same free agency, hence in ownership and self-governance.

Therefore, we see that some of the most important concepts of the contemporary lifeworld, which are in a meaningful relationship to

one another, are defensible and explainable by stressing on Rorty's language-constructed reality. However, and despite such a privileged position of this view in the contemporary discourse, Rorty's stress on solidarity instead of objectivity and truth necessitates priority and dominance of the sphere of culture over rational sciences, hence over relativism – the dominance that is proportional to the spirit governing over Rorty's anti-rational, anti-foundational and anti-naturalist approaches.

In fact, Rorty is in conflict with essential affairs, whether in the sense of fixed and eternal affairs or as affairs we see their fluidity and historicity as the result of unity of form and content and dialectic among them. Consequently, it seems that Rorty relies on instrumental, metaphoric and poetic view of language and the possibility of going beyond it and is leaning towards some principality of will (including both individual and social), based on which philosophy turns into an *a posteriori* affair dependent on will. Indeed, Rorty makes reality dependent on the subject and, on the one hand, broadens the territory of 'will' and makes it freer and, on the other hand, denies the *a priori* and necessary affairs (whether transcendental or non-transcendental), while preserving the reality itself. He tries, by supposing the existence of reality itself, to save us from being completely without criterion and without reliance. But it is not clear how such an inaccessible reality (reality *itself*) can afford this task. Besides, basically, the necessity of supposing such a reality is doubted and, thus, one can say that we are logically faced with a mental idealism completely based on will and completely relativist.

The final point is that emphasis on searching for solidarity instead of truth and substantial and rational affairs and, in a sense, eliminative encounter with the issue, while being a metaphysical fact,

seems to be an answer based on 'will' rather than an answer based on 'thought'. Thus, it cannot be the solution. I believe that the real solution for the issue shows itself in understanding the superior position encompassing both parties. And Rorty's answer makes us face with some more serious issues regarding the political, legal and social system. This is what requires separate investigation and attention, and we suggest its investigation to those interested in it.

### **Conclusion**

According to the study conducted here, we can conclude that Richard Rorty, influenced by his Darwinian approach, considers 'reality' something lingual and constructed by the language, innovated by us as human beings in cooperation with one another and in proportion to our historical-cultural situation as well as our needs. Of course, in saying 'the reality is constructed by the language', Rorty does never mean that we construct the reality arbitrarily and in whatever way we wish. Rather, what occurs in practice is that we are responding to the external stimuli, a response of the type of various sentences that show themselves in the form of lingual reactions. Besides, it is known that the reason for Rorty's offering such a view and defending it is the features he regards for the language. Rorty enumerates some features for the language, and we can consider his view of reality as the product of such an attitude. Firstly, he considers the language as an instrument like other instruments and, thus, considers it without a fixed nature and identity. Secondly, he believes that it is not possible to go beyond the language and, thus, the limits of our world are the same as the limits of our language and vice versa. Thirdly, the language has a metaphoric, poetic and contingent feature. Considering the fact that it is not possible to go out of the language and, on the one

hand, considering the poetic and metaphoric feature of the language, the function of language cannot be – in principle – representing reality; and reality is never accessible for us in a naked form and as independent of language and descriptions. Therefore, in Rorty's view, the reality existent and available for us is a lingual reality constructed by the language in cooperation with others in a community.

Evaluation of Rorty's view showed that belief in the lingual construction of reality places us in a better situation for defending concepts such as activity, freedom, self-consciousness, ownership, thought and genuine life that we can say, in a sense, form the main body of the structure of the contemporary thought. These concepts are so intermingled that the precise and complete understanding of each depends on a broad and comprehensive understanding of other concepts. And, in principle, the real understanding of them is possible in relation and in proportion to one another. Nevertheless, Rorty's emphasis on solidarity instead of objectivity and truth necessitates a type of priority and dominance of the sphere of culture over the rational sciences, the dominance that is in proportion to spirit governing Rorty's anti-rationalism, anti-foundationalism and anti-naturalist approaches. As a result, it seems that Rorty – by relying on the instrumental, metaphoric and poetic view of language, and impossibility of going beyond it – is leaning towards a type of principality of 'will' (including both individual and social) based on which the philosophy is an *a posteriori* and will-based affair. Emphasizing the search for solidarity instead of truth and substantial and rational affairs and – in a sense – the eliminative encounter with the issue, while itself a metaphysical fact, is an answer based on 'will' instead of an answer based on thought, hence unable to be a solution to the problem. I believe that the real solution to the problem shows

itself in understanding the superior position encompassing both parties. And Rorty's answer makes us face with some more serious issues regarding the political, legal and social system. This is what requires separate investigation and attention, and we suggest its investigation to those interested in it.

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## **The Analysis and Critique of Cognitive Rationality from Rescher's Viewpoint**

**Nafise Sate<sup>1</sup>**

**Mohsen Sate<sup>2</sup>**

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### **Abstract**

In Rescher's view, the cognitive rationality is using dialectic arguments for managing the acceptance of various beliefs and answering the individual's questions in the best way – an approach that can entail access to rational propositions and true knowledge. While believing in the limitation of rational faculties, Rescher maintains that the intelligence endowed in human being in an evolutionary way prepares the ground for his access to the authentic knowledge. The cognitive importance of the criterion of investigating the value of knowledge suggests the existence of an effective factor that can help us in qualitative and quantitative promotion of and deepening our essential information. Skepticism rejects the possibility of accessing authentic information and puts a seemingly strong obstacle on the way to implementing and realizing the goals of argument, and maintains that cognitive rationality is never possible. Rescher considers justification of skepticism based on

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1. Associate Professor in Department of Islamic Philosophy and Theology, Faculty of Theology, Qom University, Qom, Iran. Nafise.sate@yahoo.com

2. Graduate in Comparative Philosophy, Qom University, Qom, Iran. sate.mohsen@yahoo.com

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the wrong assumption that the rational justification of a belief is restricted to the deductive reasoning founded on pre-justified propositions. However, in addition to this, we have the method of hypothetical justification that skeptics ignore.

**Keywords**

rationality, cognitive rationality, skepticism, Rescher

## Introduction

The power of reasoning and its application in acquiring consciousness is a natural and innate matter. Inconvenience of not knowing is a natural sense, and unawareness of the surrounding environment is, from the evolutionary viewpoint, dangerous for the man. This is a useful natural sense, and awareness of the things and events occurring around one is of great practical importance (James, 1997, pp. 78-79). By proposing Aristotle's idea that 'All men by nature desire to know' (Aristotle, 1924, p. 101), Rescher says, "We as rational beings are not persuaded by any answer to our questions, and just those answers persuade us that are coherent and consistent. The motivation for acquiring cohesive information is one of the basic pillars of cognitive intelligence, and the cognitive gap or disorder is as discomforting for us as physical pain, and bafflement and ignorance cost us much" (Rescher, 1988, p. 65).

In the contemporary philosophy, discussion of rationality – as one of the most fundamental discussions of epistemology – has gained importance more than before and, instead of stressing on the ontological issues, rationality is considered as the main pillar of discussions on epistemology. The main issue regarding the rationality is the question of what 'being rational' and 'living rationally' are and on what foundation we can consider a belief or a behavior as reasonable or consider someone as wise. After centuries of discussions about 'rationality', the efforts for recognizing this concept is difficult and without achieving an agreement about the meaning of rationality, various definitions have been offered for it (Rabi'-nia, 1394 SH, p. 2). The question about *whatness* of 'rationality' plays a central role in the theory of rationality and it is a meta-epistemic question; and in the opposite direction, there is a practical or normative epistemological

question about what to be recognized and how to recognize them (Fumerton, 2006, p. 26).

Seemingly, it is necessary to introduce a coherent and consistent view about rationality by using an analytical and critical approach. Nicholas Rescher is among the prominent philosophers who deal with this discussion in a serious and detailed manner. He offers a coherent view with many strong points that make his view distinguished, and any inquiry about rationality needs to consider and investigate his view. Unlike the views of philosophers such as David Hume, Friedrich Nietzsche and Herbert Simon, Rescher believes that considering rationality as 'a slave to emotional feeling' is unacceptable. In his view, rationality has both a domain of method that investigates the way to achieve the goal and the cognitive and evaluative sphere that are used to discover and evaluate the matters. If we have improper and unconsidered goals, we will not be rational, no matter how effective and efficient our tools and methods are. On the other hand, Rescher cast doubts on the interpretation of rationality as 'maximizing utility' and argues that the type of 'economic rationality' based on pure and unevaluated desires are just nominally rational, for it is possible that – in principle – they seem quite irrational. In Rescher's view, the real rationality is seeking to realize the valuable goals. Among other important features of Rescher's theory of rationality is simultaneous acknowledgement of limitations of human rationality, which is considerable in the cognitive realm and perfect support of public and universal rationality. Accordingly, anything performing it, believing it or considering it as a value is rational for someone is necessarily rational to the same extent for any other person in the same conditions. Rationality is a universal concept, but it also depends on the environmental conditions and the situation.

Numerous works have been composed, in Persian, in expositing

and criticizing Rescher's opinions in the sphere of logics, but two articles have been published about Rescher's rationality as follows:

- Sate', M., Javadi, M. and Monfared, M. (1401 SH). "Aqlāniyyat-i Ahdāf az Dīdgāh Rescher" in *Zhihn Magazine*, no. 23. This article deals with the rationality of goals in a concentrated manner and does not investigate the cognitive rationality.
- Poli, R. (2007). "Rescher on Rationality, Values, and Social Responsibility" (Trans. 'Eydi, B.) in *Kitāb Māh-i Falsafa*, no. 3. This article falls in the category of introducing books and briefly introduces Moutafakis's book on Rescher's philosophical thought. The present article makes use of Moutafakis's opinions by precisely mentioning the source.

### 1. Rescher's Theory of Rationality

In Rescher's view, rationality is a broad concept including all states of life divided into practical and theoretical sections. Rescher accepts the limitations of rationality and its importance in the cognitive realm and rejects the concept of 'maximizing' which includes all existing possibilities. Instead, he offers the concept of 'optimizing', which means recognizing limitations, and guides our decision towards the best we can do in a real situation (Amanda, 2015, p.1). Optimization is certainly a theory in the sphere of studying the ultimate wisdom and considers reality as having a certain goal called 'optimization' (Rescher, 2006, p. 3). Rationality means wise search for proper goals and includes three interconnected argumentative methods as follows: cognitive argumentation related to information; practical argumentation related to actions; and evaluative argumentation related to values, goals and proprieties (Rescher, 1988, pp. 12-13). Evaluative argumentation specifies the properness of goals, and cognitive and practical argumentations make possible the wise search for them through inciting the actions in

the light of the best information acquired, which ultimately leads us to proper goals. Thus, rationality is related to both goals and means, and it has both individual and public aspects. Its individual aspect specifies what action is reasonable for a certain person in certain conditions; and its public aspect specifies what the logical and reasonable matter is for every individual. In the ideal state, these two aspects conform to each other. The extent to which these two aspects deviate in sub-ideal states is equal to the extent to which certain individuals cannot behave in completely reasonable way (Kekes, 1994, p. 2).

Rationality necessitates 'intelligent pursuit of proper goals' and having 'persuasive arguments' and applying good arguments (Rescher, 1988, p. 3). In his explanation of rationality, Rescher stresses on its normativity, and considers goodness or persuasiveness of the arguments that rationalize the beliefs, actions and evaluation as the origin of this normativity (Siegel, 1992, p. 3). The sayings originated from rationality have a normative format and tell us how to go forth to find the answer to the questions of what to believe, what to do, and what to consider valuable. Thus, 'a rational person is the person who decides on the basis of argumentation in his beliefs, actions and evaluations, and attempts to take and enforce all his decisions with consideration of the strongest arguments' (Rescher, 1988, p. 10).

Rationality necessitates having ability for 'giving a description' wherein the individual uses his intelligence to present the 'logic' for what he does as a proper action. The individual must be able to describe the reasons for what he does sufficiently so that others can understand him and accept that going forth like him is reasonable. Wherever the agent has a deficiency in managing his beliefs, assessments and actions, whenever the agent's information or his evaluations or decisions are improper in an environmental condition, rationality fails.

There are three types of rationality pertaining to three domains of rationality: theoretical or cognitive rationality (related to information), practical rationality (related to actions), and evaluative rationality (related to values, goals and preferences). In Rescher's view, a systematic unity governs these three types of rationality and they overlap one another in a way that one cannot separate them. The rational justification of what we do, we believe or we consider as a value must come out of the layers of the process of rational selection, i.e. from the layer of concrete and objective items to abstract principles of rationality that enjoy universal validity (Moutafakis, 2007, p. 30).

## **2. The Cognitive Rationality**

Every human being has some beliefs about himself and his surroundings, is able to manipulate his beliefs, and can change them. Thus, it is necessary for the 'process of making belief' and the 'process of adjusting belief' to define and adjust certain methods, foundations and logic to specify believing in what propositions is rational. The goal of the theoretical rationality is believing in right beliefs and not believing in errors. The theoretical rationality pertains to the issue of value and limits of knowledge and ability of its realism, and discusses issues such as the criterion of distinguishing between knowledge and non-knowledge, how to evaluate the epistemic theories and choosing their best. As a result, we can consider it as specified to the sphere of theory, beliefs, reasoning and argumentation with the main question of what causes the theoretical procedures and practices to be rational (Pollock and Cruz, 1999, p. 320). Max Weber believes that the theoretical rationality is dominance over reality through the most precise abstract concepts (Bahman-pur, 1297 SH, p. 480). And for Howard Sankey, the rational belief is the belief that plays the role of normative and value criteria (Sankey, H., 1994, p. 124). Sometimes, the

irrational beliefs is considered as a belief that is clearly in conflict with what the person must know and is a kind of illusion. According to this account, any belief that is not irrational is a rational belief. Rescher maintains that 'cognitive rationality' is using the persuasive arguments for managing various beliefs and answering the individual's question in the best way. The commitment of argument for cognitive inquiry is an absolute commitment and causes the generation of insatiable demand for development and deepening of the information. Argumentation cannot leave alone an issue that – to some extent – is going forth well; rather, it insists on our non-stop perception of the surrounding world and ourselves. (Rescher, 1988, p. 48).

The man is an inquirer seeking for answers to his questions. The need for information and cognitive knowledge about the surrounding environment is, like the need for food, among the man's immediate needs. We as rational animals must provide the food for our mind and have to be satisfied with the best thing at our disposal in search for information, just like in our search for food. This need for acquiring information and understanding forces us to make all-out effort to fulfill it.

Without having information about our surrounding, we cannot act. This motivation for acquiring coherent information is one of the fundamental bases of cognitive intelligence. The cognitive knowledge must be formed of understandable materials and present a comprehensive and coherent explanation of what are there in our environment. Cognitive gap or disorder is just as painful as physical pain, and confusion and ignorance will cost us much (Rescher, 1988, p. 65).

The duty of cognitive rationality is assessing verity and rightness of propositions. The desirable point in our effort for achieving valid cognition is accessing the standards that make possible acquiring more

fundamental and more authentic knowledge. Among these standards, we can refer to integrity, strength and simplicity. The closer is the knowledge produced in our mind to these items and the more internal order it enjoys, the more convincing and assuring it will be.

### **3. The Dialectic Argument**

Since Aristotle's time, the deductive argument has been the only type of argument enjoying a high level of importance and validity for providing reliability and certainty of the propositions. The result of such an attitude is the tendency of philosophers towards the deductive arguments furthering in a linear form and turning away from other types of proofs unable to provide validity for propositions. Rescher, while opposing this view, considered dialectic argument more proper for the condition of acquiring knowledge. He puts away linear arguments and turns to circular or dialectic arguments. The importance of Rescher's emphasis on dialectic arguments is clarified when, with some reflections, we find out that we are stuck in the wrong belief of the ancient Greeks that only those spheres whose rational patterns are developed through mathematical arguments and in a linear form are strong and coherent; and that only when we argue on the basis of inferential method, the results are reliable and cohesive. On the contrary, in any sphere wherein we develop and progress with circular and dialectic arguments, they have a lower degree of validity (Rescher, 1988, p. 90).

The dialectic argument, according to Rescher's definition, deals with repeated examination of the previous results and findings in the light of new results and findings. This model of argumentation is in the multi-stage form and during it, one subject is examined from various inconsistent angles, going forth in annular or circular form. It



repeatedly returns to this certain issue and examines it from various angles. Repeated investigation of an issue from various cognitive views, which are interchangeably inconsistent, is the very feature that distinguishes, more than anything else, the dialectic argument from the inferential linear arguments. Such circular methods deepen the individual's understanding of the subject under discussion and lead to achieving results that are more precise. Through continuous reconstruction of information, the person investigates information each time from a special aspect and evaluates them from various angles, using a variety of premises and even inconsistent ones for proving them (Rescher, 1988, p. 83). The processes of inferential and dialectic argument, though they are different from one another in different ways, are not different in that one of them is related to considered thinking and the other to irresponsible carelessness, one is quite scientific and the other is merely simple and trivial. The general tendency towards the mentality that humanities are non-scientific disciplines is rooted in the too much limited and backward perception of strong and solid argumentation. The claim is not that there is no difference between formal sciences and natural sciences on the one hand and the humanities on the other hand. Rather, the main idea is that their difference is not in a way that we can consider, on that basis, the former group of disciplines quite scientific and the latter group non-scientific (Rescher, 1988, pp. 89-90).

The unique feature of the dialectic arguments is that, in addition to repeated examination of new results and findings and going forth in annular and circular form, they cause the possibility of inconsistency in macro and general level of mental information. Such a circular method deepens the individual's understanding of the subject and causes his access to precise results. Inconsistency in the

sphere of exclusive and specific beliefs and opinions does not occur for one proposition, because such a state leads to conjunction of contradictory ideas. This inconsistency and non-harmony among the data or, so to speak, inconsistency among the premises is just a local disorder, not necessarily overall, and will lead to no anarchy. By referring to various degrees of inconsistency, Rescher believes that inconsistency of the weak type is not so much far from the mind and occasional contradictions are possible to occur. We must be ready to face these occasional inconsistencies in the general structure of our knowledge, not in the local scale, but in the macro scale. It is in such a case that, from the rational viewpoint, we can accept the occurrence of 'A' in one state and the occurrence of 'other than A' in another state. Such an attitude to inconsistency is the result of the reality that although consistency is an important cognitive principle, it is not the basic prerequisite for logical beliefs and thoughts, and it is not necessary that, from the very onset and before starting any task, we emphasize it unconditionally.

The event occurring in the moment of facing the inconsistent information is that, instead of suspending the judgment or preferring one source to the other, we can be hopeful, by temporary acceptance of and considering the data obtained from all sources, that more issues will be clarified upon going forth. This necessitates the acceptance of inconsistency with the hope to achieve the desirable reality. In acquiring authentic and valid information, we always hope to achieve our scientific ideal – which is the harmonious, cohesive and consistent information – in the near future. Thus, consistency is something that we must attempt to achieve at the end. We must expect its occurrence, not demanding it from the onset. In this way, consistency is the ultimate ideal, not an immediate requirement.

#### **4. The Cognitive Importance**

The cognitive importance means a foundational criterion for examining the value of knowledge. That is, an effective factor exists that can help us in qualitative and quantitative promotion and deepening our essential information. The cognitive importance is determined on the basis of factors such as essential validity, centrality, publicity, and fruitfulness. Similarly, the cognitive validity is the extent of efficiency and efficacy of a cognitive issue in acquiring comprehensive and compiled information about the surrounding world. Rational qualification in studying the criterion of knowledge is specified in the following way: the descriptive-informational theories or value judgments have the rational acceptable or valid cognitive conditions that optimally formulate our cognitive information, and this formulation continues under the support of the real-descriptive generalities (Rescher, 2001, p. 7). In cognitive validity, the knowledge is valuable just to the extent it fulfills our need for understanding. In Rescher's view, no informational data enjoys absolute importance; rather, all data are tools for producing knowledge and, depending on the environmental conditions, they are considered important in gradational form. The importance of information is generally the product of systemic factors, not separate factors. As a result, in time of examining the cognitive importance, we must look at issues beyond the cognitive reality separately and must pay attention to its real position in a larger scale. The cognitive importance depends on the fact that to what extent an informational item can make difference and to what extent it can clarify other issues (Rescher, 2017, pp. 103-104).

The cognitive importance is discernable just when the consequences of an informational item are manifested more and more, and the extent of its participation in improving and completing the body of our previous knowledge is specified. Besides, the practical

importance of a proposition is subordinate to what the person must do, considering the principles of logic and rationality, due to being aware of that proposition. And this, in itself, can be different from what occurs in practice and in the real world. Whether in the sphere of knowledge or in the sphere of practice, importance is something dependent on reason. Importance is not determined just on the basis of the personal views of the individual receiving the information. Rather, what is decisive constitutes the conditions and features of the situation wherein the individual is, and they are objectively explicable and describable. In this way, the cognitive importance is an objective matter, and it has no homogeneity with the individuals' personal desires and is specified based on the objective criteria and norms. The formal importance does not necessarily mean the real importance, because in the formal importance, personal views have a decisive role, but this is not the case in real importance (Rescher, 2017, p. 106).

### **5. The Cognitive Rationality and Skepticism**

The limitation of informational sources is an inescapable reality that leads to formation of the skepticism approach and denial of cognitive rationality. Using definite proofs in accessing theoretical and practical goals is what philosophers always wish, but what hinders achieving this exalted goal is deficiency of information, weakness of mental faculties, and human's particularistic look at the surrounding issues, which –sometimes – causes human's distance from objective reality. By rejecting the possibility of accessing the reliable information, skepticism puts an apparently definite obstacle in the way of making the goals of argument operational and realizing them, and it maintains that cognitive rationality is never possible. The fanatic skepticism insists that there is never a convincing justification for accepting various beliefs.

In Rescher's view, justification of skepticism is based on a wrong assumption based on which, the rational justification of a belief is restricted to a way founded on the pre-justified propositions. In this method of justification, always there must be another pre-justified belief on which the present belief is founded and, by considering it, the rightness of the current belief is proved. The argumentative justification is homogeneous, wherein some justified beliefs must be used as inputs so that one can achieve justified beliefs as outputs (1988, p. 49).

However, the idea that this rational justification can be originated from a former rational justification is quite wrong. In addition to argumentative justification, we have another method called hypothetical justification, easily ignored by skeptics. Unlike argumentative justification, the hypothetical justification is not based on intermediacy of pre-justified beliefs; rather, it originates directly and immediately from a presupposition. A belief is justified through a hypothetical method when there is a presupposition in its favor and there is no justified rational argument based on not accepting it. The rational rightness of a belief that is justified through a hypothetical method is based on the reality that there are some 'proper and desirable evidence' for it, and there is no justified evidence against it. For instance, if after precise examination, I conclude that there is a cat on the mat, I can accept quite logically the claim that 'there is a cat on the mat', not based on pre-proved premises, but merely on the basis of my own objective perception. The basic consideration here is that there is no justified argument based on which I have not to confirm such an objective perception and not to consider it as valid (Rescher, 1988, p. 50).

The beliefs that are justified hypothetically constitute the raw materials for knowledge and show claims that are acceptable in the absence of justified evidence against them and, consequently, make possible the cognitive justification of affairs without using pre-

justified beliefs and propositions. This type of beliefs are always subject to risk of invalidation, but just those beliefs that enjoy strong evidence can invalidate them. As a result, the unwelcome consequences of the idea that all processes of rational justification must be based on propositions already justified on the basis of rational processes are removed.

The role of hypothetical justification in cognitive rationality is quite a fundamental one. In this type of justifications, rationality consists of two parts: the argumentative (or ‘conditioned’) part, and the essential (or ‘absolute’) part. The argumentative rationality stresses on the principle that ‘if you accept certain propositions, you must also accept their consequences as well’. But this principle alone cannot be fruitful unless the person has obtained and accepted acceptable propositions elsewhere. This is where the essential rationality enters and enables us to take definite measures. Presuppositions specify our basic and initial commitments and thereby enable us to start the process of cognitive rationality. According to this process, more arguments may be formed in the next stages (Rescher, 1988, p. 50). Rescher states that a skeptic cannot afford to explain the hypothetical justification. This is while exactly this aspect of rationality makes possible the formation of the process of cognition. The hypothetical beliefs lead to ‘the beginning of the process of cognition’, without impairing our desire for increasing understanding and awareness of the world (Moutafakis, 2007, p. 43). Adopting the approach of hypothetical justification is desirable also from the viewpoint of cost-benefit. The hypothetical justification launches an inquiry plan to which we are already committed. This is an initial stage based on which massive achievements of systematic study and achievements related to the sphere of rational cognition are realized (Moutafakis, 2007, p. 44).

On the contrary, the skeptical approach eliminates any probability of obtaining information for supporting logical claims from the very onset, and this is a great deficiency (Rescher, 1988, p. 64). The one who risks with considerations is more successful than the one who avoids risking, because the risk-taking person gets more answers for questions than the risk-evading person (Moutafakis, 2007, p. 44). For a better understanding of the possibility of realizing cognitive rationality in contrast to skepticism, it is useful to investigate three completely different approaches to risk.

- Risk-avoidance approach, meaning avoidance of any risk with the motto of ‘Never take a risk!’
- Risk-calculation approach, which is a more moderate view based on essential cares and calculations. This approach is divided into two approaches: cautious calculation and bold calculation. In the former type, negative matters affect taking risk, but these negative matters can be marginalized by the considerable benefits of risk-taking. The motto of this approach is ‘avoid risks unless it is relatively clear that you gain a benefit great enough from that risk.’ The latter type considers taking risk under the influence of positive matters, but negative matters can marginalize these positive matters. The motto of this approach is ‘take risks unless it is relatively clear that taking risks will have a great and unexpected harm for you.’
- Risk-seeking approach, which recommends going after risks. The motto of this approach is ‘all events will lead to desirable results’.

These three approaches to risk are related to three different attitudes. ‘Pessimism’ is related to risk-avoidance, ‘realism’ is related to risk calculation, and ‘excessive optimism’ is related to risk-seeking.

What seems rational and logical to do is adopting a moderate method, a method that, in general, minimizes the probability of occurrence of all kinds of error.

Thus, the first and third approaches, in general, cannot be optimal ones from the rational viewpoint. In the moderate approach, calculating risks and considering their negative and positive effects is the basis of action, in a way that errors are reduced to the least level in general. Thus, argumentation invites us to logical calculation and cautious management, and advises us to follow Aristotelian idea of 'moderation' and to avoid extremism or negligence in avoiding and seeking risks (Rescher, 1988, pp. 55-56).

## **6. The problems of Skepticism**

The beneficial function of skepticism is remembering the extent of avoidable risk in knowledge and remembering the essential risks of claims that speak of definiteness, knowledge and absolute truth. We cannot say that a certain claim is quite definite, right, proved and free from any errors and mistakes merely due to being authentic, plausible and justified from the cognitive viewpoint (Rescher, 1988, p. 72).

Despite this positive function, skepticism suffers from many difficulties, including the following ones:

### **6-1. Paying a Heavy Price for Failure from the onset.**

The skeptics simply ignore the goals of cognitive efforts. The goal of rational quests is not merely preventing the occurrence of errors; rather, they aim at finding the answer to questions and obtaining necessary information about the universe. In skepticism, immunity from errors is obtained at a very high price; i.e. not starting from the onset. But if we



never start a task, we definitely and certainly will not reach anywhere. This is the situation where the all-out forbiddance of accepting various beliefs by the skeptics leads (Rescher, 1988 p. 61).

### **6-2. Considering all Claims as Equal**

Perhaps no other critique and objection to radical skepticism is more influential than the fact that for a skeptic, who rejects everything, all claims pertaining to the objective reality of the universe must be considered equal. For him, no claim is more correct than other claims, and there is no difference between two claims from the rationality viewpoint. The best way to confront skepticism is to start from method (standards and criteria) instead of certain propositions or claims (Rescher, 1977, Oxford). Accepting the presupposition in order to use rationality, including the cognitive rationality, is rationally inevitable. Perhaps this presupposition leads to the conclusion that accessing a pleasing knowledge about objective realities is impossible. But until we reach that last stage, we can and must go forth based on the idea that accessing such knowledge is quite possible (Rescher, 1988, p. 62).

### **6-3. Not Taking Action and Establishing Relationship**

Skepticism must enter to action for the human's living and growth in the universe. But they say this action is not necessary to be based on knowledge. Rather, non-cognitive guidance such as appearance, manners and customs, public consensus, and instinct are sufficient for action. Another problem of skepticism is here, because although it is possible to have foundations for action, it cannot defend its own

actions, it cannot justify why instead of doing 'B' it has done 'A'. Indeed, skepticism eliminates any probability of presenting rational evidence for practical processes, while any framework that negates the possibility of existence of authentic cognitive claims shows its own inefficiency and unacceptability, not of cognitive claims.

A radical skeptic not only lags behind in attempting to obtain information, but also loses the possibility for establishing relationship. The skeptic rejects the basic rules of establishing relations with others by rejecting the basic rules of argumentation. Entering a dialogue necessitates accepting rules and regulations that make the dialogue possible. But if we cannot accept anything, no rule can be created. As a result, no dialogue is formed (Rescher, 1988, p. 71).

For example, understanding the speeches and utterances of the members of the society 'A' requires us, before and more important than anything, to understand what they are speaking about. If any member states a different matter using common words, we will have no way to understand their language. Besides, we must be able to discern, rightly, what they mean, because understanding something in their language depends on the fact that they can successfully refer to the concept they have in mind and can distinguish right and wrong interpretations. Besides, the members of the society 'A' must be committed to rules such as 'no transgression', because without it, our intellectual system will do nothing and will be entangled in the logical dilemma. As a result, the possibility of any precise and considered judgment and, consequently, the possibility of any effective relationship will vanish (Yoon, 2020, p. 2).

#### **6-4. Promoting Despair and Human's Adverse Situation**

The skeptic's view necessitates performing the lowest task possible from human's viewpoint; that is, complete despair from improving the conditions, distrust in others' rational actions and benevolence, and not trusting in the limited knowledge we have obtained with perfect consideration. While rationality wants us to take risks, a skeptic is even unable to think of it (Moutafakis, 2007, p. 42).

By rejecting skepticism and accepting evidence essentially indefinite as a foundation for justifying the acceptance of beliefs, Rescher adopts the pragmatic position that just as performing logical actions is useful for a conservative person in any conditions, this is true for accepting beliefs as well. This is because accepting beliefs is one of the human's actions and helps in realization of cognitive goals – both practical and theoretical – more than before. Therefore, the basic desire to obtain information and perceive our surrounding environment puts pressure on us and we must do anything to fulfill that desire. From the pragmatic view, this needs justification, and we must put aside skepticism as a theoretical position, with all kinds of its advantages and disadvantages, by adducing practical evidence (Moutafakis, 2007, p. 66).

#### **7. Evaluation of Rescher's Theory of Cognitive Rationality**

One of the main foundations of Rescher's theory of rationality is the principle of evolution in the nature. In explaining numerous issues, Rescher makes use of this principle. Among them are the following ones:

A) Comprehensibility of the nature and emergence of intelligence. By posing the question of 'why is the nature

comprehensible for the man?’ Rescher proposes his fundamental discussion on the central role of evolution in making possible the emergence of human’s intelligence and considers evolution as the oldest known system in the universe without which life is impossible. He believes that through evolution as dynamic and ordered system, it is possible to explain rationality. The nature of rationality as a general concept has a close tie with our understanding of the systematic process of our evolutionary changes and our situation as an inseparable part of this process (Rescher, 1988, p. 176).

Rescher’s position on the function of intelligence has been criticized. Rescher’s “qualified idealism” and “qualified realism” infuses a sense of contrast and conflict between these two beliefs: (a) our knowledge of the universe is a reflection of our interaction with the universe as it is, regardless of our theories about it. (2) All what can be said about this real universe is what our theorizations let us discover and perceive. The question is why we must believe in the existence of a pre-theoretical universe that sends information to our mind, while all we know about it is due to our theorizations. Rescher considers the critics’ doubts because they could not have considered the ‘retrospective’ aspect of the issue under discussion. When we are inquiring and theorizing about the universe, the above question is never posed. But when we expand knowledge and reach a general image and a theoretical description of the universe, then we can think about the essence of the real pre-theoretical universe retrospectively. Just in such a condition, we start to pose question about the real universe. But the previous experience of theorization shows that this image can evolve in some details and aspects, and this happens frequently. According to what experience shows, we know that regardless of the extent of precision of our descriptions of the universe, the final description is always revocable, and it will never be

perfect and free from deficiencies. Rescher believes what preserves the integrity of the separation between the appearance and the reality is the acceptance of the 'real universe beyond our understanding' after describing the universe through theorization. Thus, 'idealism' as a concept is explained by 'the reality beyond the appearances' (Moutafakis, 2007, p. 12).

B) Compatibility of nature with mathematics: the reality that the universe is 'compatible with mathematics' does not necessarily mean that the universe and the nature must precisely conform to mathematical formula. The universe is compatible with mathematics, not because it is comprehensible for us, but because there is something common for both we as intelligible beings having mathematical knowledge and for the universe as the evolutionary process compatible with mathematics. Mathematics is sentenced to be compatible with the nature, because it is in itself the product of a natural process. Mathematics is compatible with and appropriate for the nature, because it is the reflection of a method wherein we are placed as part of the constituent parts of the nature and formed as a product of an evolutionary process running in the scope of the nature (Rescher, 1988, p. 182).

Rescher believes that the success of a mathematical mind in understanding the method of the nature is not a wonderful mystery. When the practical and objective factors related to both sides of the mind and the nature are explained properly and desirably, the individual easily notices that there is no dualism and no platonic intelligence – the intelligence that is essentially perfect from the viewpoint of knowledge, but is separate from the natural universe from the ontological viewpoint. The mind Rescher speaks of is an evolving mind with an inextricable relationship with the nature due to evolutionary processes.

Hypothesizing the mutual interaction of the intelligence and the natural world, Rescher says that we can say, in our part, that the mathematics in its essence and foundations is based on our experience of the natural world. By gaining and having this ‘experience’, in principle, we react to the nature that surrounds us, to the universe consisting of solid stable bodies that we can measure. Definitely, mathematics is not a natural science, but it is a science dealing with things that Rescher calls ‘imaginable constructions’. And this image is formed in the very mind evolved in the nature and surrounded by it. In addition, this mind forms the probable images on the basis of which probabilities are consistent and harmonious with the nature and which ones are not. This does not mean that we use our thinking faculty in relation to the universe we know and, then, we place the mathematical patterns obtained from this process in a broader theoretical framework. Thus, it is not surprising that the mathematics we have discovered and found so much useful can – in effect – be applicable in our understanding of the nature in a very useful manner.

Rescher’s position on the nature’s comprehensibility and its consistence with the nature is also under criticism. The proposition that ‘the nature has laws necessarily consistent with mathematics’ is never a definite and axiomatic idea. This is while Rescher never proves that nature has laws and, in addition, he does not prove that these laws are essentially and necessarily consistent with mathematics (Moutafakis, 2007, p. 27).

In completing this critique, George Gill argues that Rescher ignores the Pythagorean possibility that ‘the mathematics may have been devised into the nature’. Based on Dirac’s proposition that ‘the physical universe has been determined and completed through an arithmetic principle in its essence’, Gill states that there is a

mathematical feature in the nature. According to this proposition, there is – in principle – one possible mathematics in the universe, just as there is a physical universe. According to Gill's opinion, if Rescher encountered this theory early in his discussion, it was possible for him to revise his separation of the pure math from the physical math or his hypothesis about evolutionary interactionism.

Gill maintains that the old proposition conveys the meaning that there is a universal mathematics and it is the pure mathematics. Unlike Rescher's claim, no matter what effect the environmental factors have, or what features – say – a strange life has, ultimately that intelligent being will reach – like his human counterpart – that mathematics, because both extract the mathematical concepts from the common world wherein the mathematics is placed (Rescher, 1988, p. 28).

It seems that, in this critique, Gill is not right and cannot invalidate the distinction between applied and pure math offered by Rescher because he has not taken the Pythagorean proposition seriously. The fact that the natural order of discoveries in mathematics has a historical course is still running and confirmed by astute thinkers since Plato's time. It means that we firstly encounter processes and then observe the rules and repetitions existing in processes. We, then, identify the regular patterns and, finally, we arrive at enumeration. Perhaps the completion of human's understanding can show that this process has been an accidental event or that these repetitive patterns are accidental events with no generality in the whole universe. However, none of these consequences focused on future is related to the present reality and the fact that we can consider those orders and rules as laws and classify them in the form of mathematical formulas.

Rescher's account of reliability of knowledge and rejection of skepticism also faces numerous critiques. Rescher's use of hypothetical

argumentations as a method for rejecting skepticism proves that following skepticism makes impossible one of the basic aspects of human's florescence, i.e. acquisition of theoretical knowledge and cognitive understanding. This kind of rejection of skepticism by Rescher is based on his pragmatic defense of cognitivism and, as a result, Rescher's invalidation of skepticism is not a theoretical invalidation (Moutafakis, 2007, p. 51). It is as if Rescher, with his pragmatic thought, presents a reasonable criterion for evaluating the desert of our cognitive products (ideas, theories, methods, and trends), the criterion whose foundation is beyond the pure theory. Using the capability of successful practical application and implementation of such intellectual tools, he steps in the realm of reality and real world in regard with the issues of the scientific society and intellectual scholars.

According to the proposed critique, Rescher's defense against skepticism is not a direct critique and challenge against it, because his critique does not answer the key question of whether it is possible to acquire knowledge at all or not, while this is a very important issue for skeptics. Although Rescher has well shown that skepticism is not a beneficial and fruitful philosophical position and that its adaptation in indeed is opposition to human's essence, who is always seeking to know, this does not have anything to do with the basic claim of skepticism that 'no knowledge is possible'. Neither hypothetical argument nor any other alternative of the same breed in the future – founded on stronger evidence – can change the fact that we will have with us the 'unwelcome doubt' that perhaps all what we think we know are in principle wrong. This kind of doubt is easily exacerbated by resorting to the so-called 'skeptical probabilities'.

We must note that all our judgments about the universe are



subject to revision or nullification, and the importance and validity of skeptical challenge in facing the cognitive rationality precisely originates from this fact; and this is what Rescher did not deal with in his critique of skepticism. There is no vivid and direct conceptual link between the cognitivists' approach to the obligatory quest for knowledge and their hidden hypothesis that knowledge is possible in principle.

In confronting with the skeptics, Rescher attempts to return his question to cognitivists themselves, and maintains that cognitivists consider the possibility of knowledge as presupposition *a priori* and implicitly and, accordingly, they seek to prove that acquiring knowledge can systematically lead to successful action (Rescher, 2005, p. 5). Accordingly, Rescher's statement in criticizing skepticism to the effect that there are two definite choices, i.e. skepticism and cognitivism, and that cognitivism has a high validity, is a misleading discussion. In effect, there are no such choices, because the fate of the proposition of the possibility of knowledge, which the cognitivists assume and the skeptics completely reject, has not been specified.

Rescher does not accept the above critique and, in his answer, states the argument proposed against cognitivism as follows: (1) Skepticism may be a right approach. (2) Since it is possible that skepticism is a right approach, then nothing can be proved definitely. (3) If nothing can be proved definitely, then knowledge is also not possible. He then considers the problem of argumentation in its third premise wherein he claims that only those claims are accepted as knowledge that can be proved definitely. Rescher says he has supported a standard interpretation in this regard in all his writings. This standard interpretation, like skeptics, does not define knowledge as something proved definitely. Thus, he considers the above critique

invalid and without relations to his own concerns (Rescher, 2005, p. 52).

It seems that such a defense of the validity of knowledge is not successful and, at best, it can claim that trust in reason and acquired knowledge has more efficacy and benefit than suspension of knowledge, especially considering that the question about possibility of acquiring knowledge is a theoretical question that pragmatic defense of it is not justified and cannot present the requested answer.

By reflecting on the meaning of truth and its being two-faceted, we can say that truth means the conformation of the mental form with the identifiable and accessible thing. But if we consider the truth as the depth of the thing to be identified, that is, if in studying the identifiable thing, we transfer all its epistemic aspects into the mind, such a recognition is not possible. The cognitive limitation refers to the limitation of each source of knowledge, and identifying the accidents and requirements of a thing is identifying *min wajh* ('in some respect'), and identifying *min wajh* is not identifying *wajh al-shay'* ('the aspect of the thing'). And this originates from the limitation of cognitive sources – including sense, reason and other sources – under the guise of truth and reporting it to human's perceptive system. In other words, the aspect of the thing is out of the human's perceiving ability. But what is proved about the mental existence is that perceiving the thing 'in some respect' is always possible for the human. Thus, what is really perceived is nothing except 'truth', but it is the truth that is always revealed for humans in some respect. Considering this fact, although the cognitive sources and the specific realm of each are limited, knowing and realizing them is possible, realizable and unimpeachable, just as adducing the principle of 'no contrast' puts the skeptic in the junction of 'silence and turning away' or 'acknowledging a certain fact'; in each case he has to give up skepticism.

## **Conclusion**

The cognitive rationality pertains to ‘the process of making belief’ and ‘the process of adjusting belief’, aiming at believing in the right belief and not believing in error. Rescher considers understanding the surrounding environment as one of the most fundamental requirements of being human and regards access to definite, cohesive and errorless knowledge as impossible and considering a percent of error due to limitation of rational faculty as the very order of reason.

According to the findings of the study, to explain the possibility of the rational cognition, Rescher puts the dialectic argument in contrast to the Aristotelian linear argument. In this type of argumentation, the person investigates and evaluates the claim, each time from a certain aspect and angle, through continuous reconstruction of information. And for proving them, he uses various and even inconsistent premises. By the inconsistent premises, we mean a merely local disorder without leading to logical anarchy. The philosophy of using such premises is that no informational data, judged as being inconsistent and non-harmonious, is put aside in one’s mind and all data – whether consistent or inconsistent – are re-explored and re-investigated equally so that no informational source is left without investigation in the acquired knowledge.

By reflecting on Rescher’s opinions, it is clarified that the common point between his approach and that of the skeptics is the belief in human’s no access to definite knowledge and probability of error in human’s knowledge. This is while the skeptics stop here and question the foundation of knowledge. While accepting these limitations, Rescher speaks of the possibility of cognitive rationality and validity of knowledge by adducing the ‘hypothetical justifications’. A belief is justified in a hypothetical manner when there is a

presupposition in favor of it and there is no justified rational argument for not accepting it. The hypothetical justification makes possible the formation of the process of recognition and leads to the 'start of process of recognition'. On the contrary, the skeptical approach faces the challenges of considering all beliefs as equal, fault in efforts for acquiring knowledge and cognition, not founding action upon knowledge and cognition, and promoting lack of motivation and lack of enthusiasm in acquiring knowledge and, somehow, promoting despair in human beings.

Rescher's theory of rationality presupposes the feature of the nature's comprehensibility for validating cognitive rationality, and by adducing the theory of evolution, it introduces the human's minds as evolving, which has an inextricable link with the nature. Rescher says, "After the development of knowledge and accessing a general image and a theoretical description of the universe, we can think about the real essence of the pre-theoretical universe retrospectively". As Rescher believes, what preserves the integrity of the separation between appearance and reality is the acceptance of the existence of 'the real universe beyond our understanding' after describing the universe through theorization. Thus, 'idealism' as a concept is accounted for by 'the reality beyond the appearances'.

It seems that Rescher has proved neither the existence of natural laws nor the essential consistency of those laws with mathematics. Besides, presupposing the theory of evolution inflicts a basic critique upon his theory, because the theory of evolution is still under disputes and researches in the natural sciences and it leads to making a completely philosophical and theoretical issue dependent on the varying empirical sciences. And if that empirical theory is invalidated, all the comprehensive structure and the scope of his philosophical view is shattered.

On the other hand, Rescher's position about the exclusively commercial essence of intelligence is another serious critique on Rescher's theory focused on the tension between 'qualified idealism' and 'qualified realism'. According to this critique, there is a contrast and conflict in Rescher's view that although our universe is a universe known to us due to various theorizations, we still feel that we must accept it in a realistic manner. Why must we believe in the existence of a pre-theoretical universe that transfers some information into our mind while all what we know about it is because of our own theorizations?

The ultimate conclusion, which is worth noting, is stressing on the critique that Rescher does not present sufficient evidence based on which one can be satisfied with investigating the practical successes of the claims for specifying the theoretical verity of those claims. Rescher cannot justify the usage of one criterion related to the 'practical/ emotional' aspects of the cognitive quests in the 'cognitive/ theoretical' aspects, establishing the necessary cohesion among these various spheres.

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