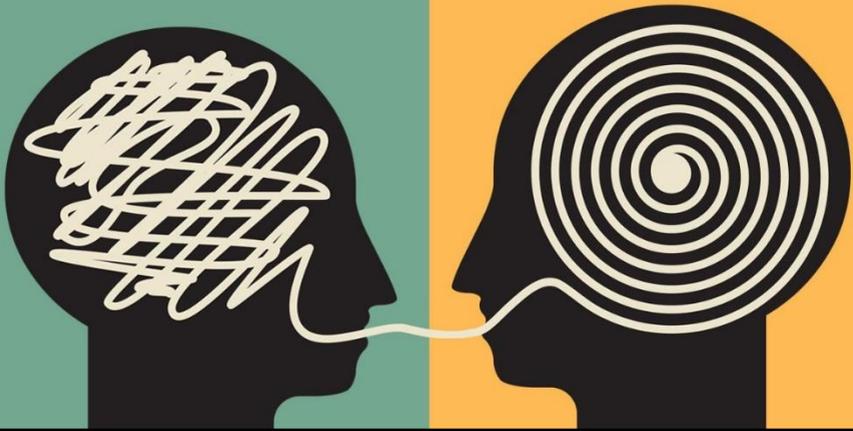


The Reality of the
Intellect
& Its Relationship with
Revelation



By
Shaykh Salih as-Sindhi

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The Reality of the Intellect and Its Relationship with Revelation

**Taken from the book entitled,
Ascension of Awareness by
Dr. Salih 'Abdul-'Aziz as-Sindi**

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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Origin of This Book

These are radio episodes that I aired in the year (1440 AH) on the program "**Awareness**" on the Qur'ān Radio in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, accompanied by the brilliant presenter: Mr. Abdullāh Az-Zahrānī, may Allāh grant him success.

They were also published on the network. Then, when some of the virtuous people urged me to compile them into a book for wider benefit, Allāh facilitated it for me. So, I sought His help, and then reviewed them and modified them to be suitable for reading, rather than listening, while ensuring brevity, ease of expression, and clarity of sentences. I made each episode - of the broadcasted episodes - in a chapter.

I point out that the scientific material here - like any book - is a mixture of what Allāh has opened to His poor servant to His mercy, and what I have benefited from others - from the past and the present - where I collected its scattered parts from scientific sources, websites, and others. It did not cross my mind at the time that those episodes would turn into written papers; Therefore, I did not care to document the references and document the information. When my attention was directed to what it was directed to, it was very difficult for me to go through a new round of documentation according to what the scientific research methodology requires; so I sufficed with this indication, which I hope will pave the way for me to apologize, hoping that Allāh will magnify the reward for

the people of knowledge from whom I benefited from their knowledge and drew from their seas, and I did not address them directly, seeking refuge in Him, the Exalted, from being filled with what I was not given.

I also do not forget to thank my dear brother Dr. Sa'ūd bin Uwayd al-Aufī for his help in publishing this book, may Allāh reward him with good.

The Intellect: Its Reality, Its Limits, and the Islāmic Stance Towards It¹

This topic is a cornerstone in many intellectual issues that have led to deviation and the differences among people.

The truth of the matter is that discussing "the intellect" involves a complex issue, one that has seen significant differences, branches, and methodologies. It's astonishing that the intellect can be perplexed by itself!

The Meaning of the Intellect

The term "intellect" is used in texts and scholarly discourse to mean one of four things:

The first: Instinct or the faculty endowed by Allāh *سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى* in humans through which they perceive. As some scholars say: It is the power prepared to accept knowledge.

This instinct distinguishes humans from animals and the sane from the insane, and is our focus in this chapter.

The second: It refers to essential sciences universally shared among all rational beings, such as the knowledge that

¹ This is Chapter Two of *Ascension of Awareness*.

the whole is greater than the part, and that creation necessitates a Creator, etc.

The third: It denotes theoretical sciences acquired through contemplation and reasoning.

The fourth: It refers to acting upon knowledge, or actions that are based on knowledge, as in Allāh's statement:

﴿وَقَالُوا لَوْ كُنَّا نَسْمَعُ أَوْ نَعْقِلُ مَا كُنَّا فِي أَصْحَابِ السَّعِيرِ﴾

what means, **“And they say, ‘If we had listened or used our intellects, we would not be among the companions of the Blaze.’”** [al-Mulk: 10]

It's important to clarify the intended meaning of the intellect based on the context in each case.

The Limits of the Intellect

While the intellect holds a significant position in the Sharī'ah, its limits are narrow, and its domains are restricted; it cannot go beyond these limits. It is inherently deficient and prone to error. Thus, it is too weak to judge matters outside its authority or to be entirely independent of the Sharī'ah. This reflects the perfection of the Creator and the weakness of the creation, as Allāh عزَّوجلَّ says:

﴿وَخُلِقَ الْإِنْسَانُ ضَعِيفًا﴾

What means, “**And man was created weak.**” [an-Nisā': 28].

Therefore, the rule is: **The intellect has some authority, but it is limited, not absolute.**

There are many proofs for this, including:

Firstly, the intellect has no role in matters of the unseen. Details related to Allāh's Attributes, the Angels, or the Hereafter, for example, are known only through Revelation, not through intellect. The intellect cannot guide to them on its own; it merely accepts and submits to them once that information reaches it, recognizing their possibility.

Secondly, the intellect cannot independently guide to the right path and those who seek guidance solely through it will go astray.

The intellect is like the light of the eye; the eye cannot see unless it is illuminated by sunlight or a lamp. If light does not reach the eye, it is unable to see. Similarly, the intellect cannot discern guidance unless it is connected with the light of the Qur'ān and faith. Reflect on the statement of Allāh تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى:

﴿وَلَقَدْ مَكَّنَّهُمْ فِيمَا إِن مَّكَّنَّاكُمْ فِيهِ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُمْ سَمْعًا وَأَبْصَرًا وَأَفْئِدَةً
فَمَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنْهُمْ سَمْعُهُمْ وَلَا أَبْصَرُهُمْ وَلَا أَفْئِدَتُهُمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِذْ كَانُوا
يُجْحَدُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَحَاقَ بِهِم مَّا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِءُونَ﴾

“And We had empowered them with what We have not empowered you, and We had made for them hearing and

vision and hearts, but their hearing and vision and hearts availed them not at all when they were [persistently] denying the signs of Allāh , and they were enveloped by what they used to ridicule.” [Al-Aḥqāf: 26] Thus, the only path to guidance is through Divine Revelation:

﴿وَإِنْ أَهْتَدَيْتُ فَبِمَا يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ رَبِّي﴾

“And if I am guided, it is by what my Lord reveals to me.”
[Sabā': 50]

Thirdly, the intellect cannot independently resolve disputes among people. Only Divine Revelation has this capability, as it is devoid of discrepancies and disturbances. Despite being powerful, intellects vary and often, the unknown can be confused with the rational. Thus, no individual's statement or reasoning alone can settle disputes; only the Divine Scripture from Heaven and the infallible Messenger صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَعَلَىٰ آلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ conveying what has been revealed to him by Allāh جَلَّ وَعَلَا can do so. This is why Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَىٰ commands referring disputes back to the Book and the Sunnah, as He عَزَّوَجَلَّ says:

﴿فَإِنْ تَنَزَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ
الْآخِرِ ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا﴾

“If you disagree over anything, refer it to Allāh and the Messenger if you believe in Allāh and the Last Day. This is better and more suitable for final determination.” [an-Nisā: 59]

Reason for the Limitation of the Intellect

There are four reasons that can explain this limitation, which also serve as signs.

The first reason is that the intellect is an imperfect creation, created by Allāh تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى as such; imperfect, incomplete, limited, and unable to encompass all matters. Many things are beyond its capacity and capability, to the extent that scholars – with all their knowledge, intellects, and technologies – do not know everything about a fly!

The second reason is that the intellect is constrained by what it perceives through the senses. It has no power to understand anything beyond sensory perceptions. Our judgments with our intellects are based on the knowledge stored in our minds, what we call mental representation or previous experience. Thus, if people two hundred years ago were told that a person could travel in an airconditioned room flying from Madīnah to Jeddah in minutes, what would they think of the speaker? Most likely, they would consider him insane!

Likewise, if someone were to say that through a small device, one could hear a man from China in Madīnah as he speaks, and he could see him too – the speaker would also likely be considered insane! Why? Because these concepts were beyond their comprehension, and it is human nature to reject the unfamiliar.

Therefore, the functioning of the intellect—which involves understanding, analysis, and deduction—relies on sensory inputs. If individuals were to go beyond these, their judgment would be misguided.

The third reason is that the intellect is subject to biases that can divert it from the truth.

It is not always objective, as it can be swayed off course by desires, emotions, anger, doubt, negligence, etc., to the point where a wise person once said, “How can the intellect hope for salvation when desires and whims envelop it?” There are many supporting proofs for this in both reality and religious texts.

The fourth reason is that the intellect is not a single, agreed-upon thing.

Beware of a fallacy here. Some who champion extreme rationalism make the intellect the standard for judging all things, as if it were a book or a universal law to refer to and be judged by; this is not entirely accurate. The reality is that Zayd has an intellect, ‘Amr has an intellect, and each has their own way of thinking. Yes, there are essential truths that all rational beings agree upon, but there are many issues where the rational disagree. What one person affirms with their intellect, another denies with theirs, while a third may be undecided with their intellect! Furthermore, what a person affirms with their intellect at one time, they may deny with it at another.

Therefore, the principle is: **The intellect is a faculty that varies from person to person.**

Consider the state of the people of the earth and their differences in religions, sects, and ways of thinking. Ibn al-Wazīr said in a line of poetry:

**Disagreements arise from differences in
knowledge, some have more, some less**

It's important to clarify that stating the intellect is limited does not demean it or belittle its value; rather, it is an acknowledgment of its honor and proper valuation. This recognizes that it should not be burdened beyond its capacity. It is not honoring a strong man to task him with carrying a house! Nor is it honoring someone with sharp vision to task them with staring directly at the sun! Similarly, the intellect is honored by being applied within its domain, not by burdening it beyond its capacity.

This is a principle we must understand: honoring the intellect involves using it within its scope, not burdening it beyond its capacity.

As it has been said: Minds are like valleys, each with a certain capacity to hold water. If you were to pour the sea into them, it would result in great corruption and overwhelming flood.

Thus, the intellect has authority within the limits of its domain, and its domain does not extend beyond what can be

perceived through the senses. Anything beyond that is unreachable and not subject to its judgment.

The intellect is like a phone; no matter how new, if it reaches a place with no network coverage, it stops working; there's neither sending nor receiving, the same goes for the intellect!

I really like a narration reported by Ibn Baṭṭāh, in his book *al-Ibānah* (1/422) from Ibn ‘Abbās رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا - and though the chain of narration has some weaknesses, the meaning is sound and beneficial. A man brought his son to Ibn ‘Abbās and said, “Dispute has bewildered his intellect, contention has consumed his heart, and he has been diverted from his Lord.” The man found that his son was delving into matters beyond his intellectual capacity, affecting his sanity. Ibn Abbās رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا asked, “Look my nephew, what is the black thing you see?” The boy answered, “So-and-so.” Ibn ‘Abbās said, “You are correct. What is behind him?” The boy replied, “I don't know.” ‘Abdullāh said, “O my nephew, just as Allāh set a finite limit for the eyesight, beyond which is a hidden veil, so He set limits for the hearts' insight that it cannot exceed.” He said: Allāh restored his intellect, and the boy turned away from meddling in matters that did not concern him, looking into what does not benefit him, and pondering over what confuses him. [End of quote]

It's a truth that must be accepted: “Intellectual capability is limited.” Any attempt to delve into what is beyond

this capacity is doomed to failure! Those who are truly ‘intellectual’ should exhibit humility.

If the intellect is incapable of comprehending things it generally observes, such as the number of sand grains, stars in the sky, leaves on trees, or fish in the sea, how can it aspire to grasp what is beyond the senses?

Here's an important principle that must settle in our hearts: “**Allāh ﷺ gave us intellects to perceive what is near, not what is far.**” That is, to understand what is observable and within easy grasp, and to then utilize it as much creatively as possible, without grasping for what is beyond reach.

From this, we understand the mercy of the Prophet ﷺ towards his nation when he said,

تفكروا في آلاء الله، ولا تفكروا في الله.

“**Reflect on the bounties of Allāh, and do not reflect on Allāh the Almighty,**” [Reported by aṭ-Ṭabarānī in al-Awsaṭ, no. 6319 and considered ḥasan by some scholars]

Extremism in Venerating the Intellect is the Root of Misguidance

This principle states: “**Extremism in venerating the intellect is the root of misguidance,**” and it is often the source of deviations from the path of truth.

It is evident that there are extreme rationalist doctrines asserting the intellect as the sole reference for interpreting everything in existence. According to these doctrines, the intellect is the only criterion for assessing the truthfulness of propositions and making judgments upon them. Whatever it perceives is affirmed, and what it does not is denied. This implies a lack of need for Divine Revelation and denies all that the intellect cannot perceive of the unseen.

The glaring truth is: These rationalists blatantly contradict reason itself. If they truly understood, reason itself would tell them: “I have limited capacity, do not burden me with what I cannot bear!”

The invalidity of their doctrine, which posits the intellect as the sole, infallible standard, becomes evident through tangible, sensory evidence. These rationalists have utterly failed to unveil many things or to explain them logically, such as the origin of the universe and life, consciousness, emotions, intelligence, the soul, and much more. Therefore, they are gravely mistaken, and those who follow them are undoubtedly gravely mistaken.

I say to the rationalist: Let's not go far; let's talk about the brain... the very brain that is present in every human, studied by neuroscientists and anatomists, weighing less than a kilogram and a half. Do you know it's one of the most mysterious entities in the universe? No one has yet been able to decode the pattern of neuronal cells and their operations; thoughts, intelligence, emotions... despite it being within their reach. So, how about things that are beyond?!

Thus, its creation seems to contain a message directed to us: We should be humble, not deluded by our intellects and knowledge. If you know something you are ignorant of many other things, and the One Who encompasses all knowledge is your Lord, the Almighty.

I compare this rationalist to an ant that walked on a piece of paper and saw the tip of a pen moving across it. This is the extent of the ant's perception, leading it to be extremely fascinated with the tip of the pen, singing praises of its poetry and prose. The reason for this: Its limited vision. It did not see the pen itself, or the hand of the one writing, or the person who is the truly fascinating. This is like these individuals know the superficial aspects of worldly life but are oblivious to the greater truth, that there exists a majestic Creator, Whose knowledge and mercy encompass everything, the Almighty.

Lesson Learned from the Above

The lesson to be learned is one of submission; to surrender to Allāh , the All-Knowing, the All-Wise, the Great, and to surrender to His Revelation. Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى is the Creator of the intellect and the judgment of the intellect is tied to its Creator. He created it as a means to reach Him, not to cut off from Him; to indicate His power, not to lead away from His wisdom.

Therefore, our principle as Muslims is: **“The firm footing of Islam is only established on the back of submission and surrender.”** And how beautifully did az-Zuhri رَحِمَهُ اللَّهُ say:

مِنَ اللَّهِ الرَّسَالَةُ، وَمِنَ الرَّسُولِ الْبَلَاغُ، وَعَلَيْنَا التَّسْلِيمُ.

“From Allāh is the Message, from the Messenger صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ is its delivery, and upon us is submission.”

All this serves as a precursor to the topic to be discussed in the next chapter: The relationship between reason and Revelation.²

² For further benefit I recommend reading: *Miftāḥ Dār as-Sa'ādah* by Ibn al-Qayyim (1/322-325), Dar 'Ālam al-Fawā'id edition, and *ad-Dā' wad-Dawā'* by Ibn al-Qayyim (147), Dar 'Ālam al-Fawā'id edition as well.

The Relationship Between Revelation and Reason³

Firstly, it's essential to consider the foundation and essence: What is Islām? Islām is submission to Allāh, and turning oneself entirely towards Him,

﴿وَمَنْ يُسَلِّمْ وَجْهَهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَى﴾

what means, **“And whoever submits his face to Allāh while he is a doer of good - then he has grasped the most trustworthy handhold.”** [Luqmān: 22]

Islām is responding to Allāh and His Messenger
صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ,

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اسْتَجِيبُوا لِلَّهِ وَلِلرَّسُولِ إِذَا دَعَاكُمْ لِمَا يُحْيِيكُمْ﴾

“O you who have believed, respond to Allāh and to the Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life.”
[al-Anfāl: 24]

The sincere Muslim's implicit statement to his Lord عَزَّ وَجَلَّ is: O Lord, I am Your servant, ignorant except for what You teach me, astray except for if You guide me. There is no guidance for me except through Your Revelation, and no happiness except in following Your Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ. I set my face wherever You place me, and I follow wherever You lead

³ This is Chapter Three of *Ascension of Awareness*.

me. I am commanded by Your command, abstaining from Your prohibitions, submitting to Your decree, content with Your decision. This is truly a Muslim, and whoever is not like this should re-evaluate his faith.

Faith necessarily entails adherence to the Qur’ān and the Sunnah, signifying belief in the obligation to follow them, leaving no room for deviation from them. Only submission and acceptance are allowed, and this matter is serious, not trivial,

﴿وَمَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ وَلَا مُؤْمِنَةٍ إِذَا قَضَى اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَمْرًا أَنْ يَكُونَ لَهُمُ الْخِيَرَةُ مِنْ أَمْرِهِمْ﴾

what means, **“It is not for a believing man or a believing woman, when Allāh and His Messenger have decided a matter, that they should [thereafter] have any choice in their affair.”** [al-Aḥzāb: 36]

Faith requires the sovereignty of Revelation; it governs everything, prioritized over all else, and everything besides it—be it opinions, intellect, or doctrine—is secondary,

﴿يَتَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تَقْدِمُوا بَيْنَ يَدَيِ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ﴾

what means, **“O you who believe, do not put [yourselves] forward before Allāh and His Messenger but fear Allāh,”** [al-Ḥujurāt: 1]

﴿فَلَا وَرَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ حَتَّىٰ يُحَكِّمُوكَ فِي مَا شَجَرَ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُوا فِي
 أَنفُسِهِمْ حَرَجًا مِّمَّا قَضَيْتَ وَيُسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا﴾

what means, “But no, by your Lord, they will not [truly] believe until they make you, [O Muḥammad], judge concerning that over which they dispute among themselves and then find within themselves no discomfort in what you have judged and submit in [full, willing] submission.” [an-Nisā: 65] This is Islām.

We must always remind ourselves about this issue, because today people are tested with misguided calls that attack the Qur'an and the Sunnah, doubt their authority, or compete with them with the rotten ideas of prioritizing reason over revelation, judging evidence by intellect, or that submission to evidence is contingent upon understanding its wisdom. These and similar calls are misguided, predominantly bearing the scent of hypocrisy, and Allāh جَلَّ وَعَلَا said about the hypocrites,

﴿وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ تَعَالَوْا إِلَىٰ مَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ وَإِلَى الرَّسُولِ رَأَيْتَ الْمُتَنَفِقِينَ يَصُدُّونَ
 عَنكَ صُدُودًا﴾

what means, “And when it is said to them, ‘Come to what Allāh has revealed and to the Messenger,’ you see the hypocrites turning away from you in aversion.” [an-Nisā: 61]

The relationship between Revelation and reason is one of support, not contradiction. When we say “Revelation,” it refers to the evidence from the Qur'ān and authentic ḥadīths of the Sunnah, and it is absolutely impossible for authentic Revelation to contradict clear reason.

It's impossible for Revelation and reason to conflict or contradict. For example, there cannot be an Āyah that reason deems impossible; such an assumption itself is impossible. There is no opposition between Divine law and rational truth.

This is a fundamental principle among us Muslims. We believe:

- Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى is the One Who revealed to His servant Muḥammad صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ this Revelation which is the Qur'ān and the Sunnah.
- And He عَلَّمَهُ is the One Who created the intellects.
- Therefore, the source is one so how could there be any contradiction?

Contradiction arises in corrupt or incapable minds. Corrupt minds, astray, arrogant towards their Lord, naturally claim such contradiction. Or incapable minds, due to their limitations, imagine contradiction and opposition when the reality is otherwise.

Causes of Misconceptions Regarding Contradictions

Exploring this matter reveals that the emergence of this misconception is due to three reasons:

The first reason: The inauthenticity of what is transmitted.

Naturally, this does not apply to the Qur'ān but rather to what is claimed to conflict between reason and what is narrated from the Prophet ﷺ. Someone not knowledgeable might hear a ḥadīth that seemingly contradicts basic reason and then claims, "See, here reason and Revelation conflict!" But upon verification, it turns out the ḥadīth is not authentically attributed to the Prophet ﷺ; it may be fabricated or weak, thus revealing no real contradiction exists since contradiction can only occur between two established facts. It's important to note that the authority to authenticate and weaken ḥadīths rests with the specialized scholars, not with the general public.

The second reason: Attributing to the Shari'ah what is not part of it.

Some people might mistakenly believe certain Isrā'īliyyāt (biblical stories) are words of the Prophet ﷺ or some, perhaps non-Muslims, might wrongly attribute innovated acts of certain innovative sects to Islām falsely, then claim, "Look, this is Islām!" But in truth, Islām is innocent of this.

The third reason: The inaccuracy of what is claimed to be rational.

Mistakes in this area are common; someone might claim that reason necessitates or prohibits something, when in fact the opposite is true.

Meaning, what is termed “intellect” or “reason” here might just be an incorrect theoretical proposition labeled as such by its proponent, either due to erroneous conception or belief, based on false premises for that conception or belief.

For example, some say the concept of weighing deeds in the Hereafter contradicts reason. When asked why, they say, “Because deeds are intangible, and intangibles cannot be weighed!” This is incorrect; creations have managed to measure some intangibles; in this era, we can measure temperature and light speed, both intangibles. So, is the Creator **تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى** incapable of weighing intangibles?

Consider this enlightening anecdote: A learned scholar told me he was in a gathering where someone questioned the possibility of Hell (may Allāh protect us from it) having two breaths, one in the winter and one in the summer, as stated in an authentic ḥadīth found in al-Bukhārī, no. 536 and Muslim, no. 617. “How can one thing emit both cold and heat?” Before I could answer, someone from the general public, not a scholar, said, “What's the problem with that? This air conditioner, – and he pointed to it - emits cold air from the front and hot air from

the back!"⁴ Therefore, the error of ruling that something is rationally obligatory or impossible occurs frequently, due to a mistake in intellectual conception.

The fourth reason: Failure to differentiate between rational impossibility and improbability.

What is rationally impossible, like something being existent and non-existent at the same time, or a part being larger than the whole, cannot be possible in the Sharī'ah at all.

As for what is improbable yet rationally possible - it's not impossible, but we are not aware of its occurrence in the world; like the existence of a river of honey or milk flowing in Paradise or whatever Allāh wills. It is something inherently possible, not impossible. The One Who created a sea of salty water is capable of creating a river of honey or purified milk.

It is essential to distinguish between what is rationally impossible and what is improbable.

Many of the issues raised stem from not distinguishing between these two; some claim that what is Revealed is rationally impossible, which may lead to skepticism or denial. However, upon closer examination, it becomes clear that it is not impossible but rather rationally possible, though improbable, unusual, or we have not seen its like or are

⁴ One of the blessings Allāh has bestowed upon us in this era is that modern inventions and scientific discoveries have made it easier for us to understand some of the matters that may have been problematic in the past.

unaware of its occurrence; there is a difference between the two!

Thus, denying a truthful report because it presents something unusual constitutes a significant methodological error, deviating from the principles of reason and fairness, and constitutes a great sin!

The fifth reason: Not differentiating between the intellectual impossibilities and intellectual marvels.

- **Intellectual impossibilities:** What clear reason deems definitively impossible.

- **Intellectual marvels:** What the intellect cannot comprehend, is perplexed by, or stands in awe of its greatness, but does not deem it impossible.

For instance, that Allāh Almighty hears every sound, no matter how faint, without one sound distracting Him from another, is profoundly astonishing. The intellect stands amazed before this, acknowledging its incapacity and the greatness and perfection of its Lord, exalted is He.

The mistake here is that some people assume that what the intellect finds bewildering and utterly fails to comprehend is deemed intellectually impossible; this is incorrect. The intellect is not qualified to judge everything that comes in the Sharī'ah or to comprehend it fully. Due to its incapacity - and the intellect's limitations was previously discussed - it may

stand incapable to comprehend some parts of the Revelation, yet it does not deem them impossible.

This incapacity does not justify disrespect towards the Sharī'ah. Instead, it should lead to an acknowledgment of the intellect's limitations and shortcomings, and to a firm belief in the perfection of the Creator, the Almighty, and His legislation.

Therefore, it is essential to emphasize the need to distinguish between:

- What the intellect knows to be false and impossible, which never occurs in the Sharī'ah.
- And what the intellect cannot conceive or falls short of understanding in detail. This occurs in matters of the unseen, fate, Divine Attributes, and even in some jurisprudential issues. Hence, scholars have said: Messengers عَلَيْهِمُ السَّلَامُ inform us about the marvels that challenge the intellect, but they do not inform us about what is intellectually impossible.

The sixth reason: Misinterpretation of the text.

Someone might claim there is a contradiction between reason and an Āyah or ḥadīth due to a misunderstanding of the text and not interpreting it correctly. For example, it is established in al-Bukhārī, no. 1144 and Muslim, no. 774 that the Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ said regarding someone who sleeps through the night without praying:

بال الشيطان في أذنه.

“The devil urinated in his ear.” Then, some rationalists say: This ḥadīth clearly contradicts reason because we find no physical trace of this urine, and what contradicts the senses contradicts reason. Therefore, this ḥadīth is rejected for contradicting reason!

The error on the part of this rationalist stems from understanding that the devil's urination is physical, like human urination, which is a mistake and a faulty analogy. The devil is unseen to us, and this is not disputed even by those who raise this objection; thus, his urination is also unseen. If you confirm the first then you must confirm the second. If you believe in the existence of the devil despite not seeing him physically, you should also believe in the existence of his urine even though you do not see it physically. Both of these facts were reported by the trustworthy and truthful Prophet صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ whose Prophethood you believe in.

A Rejected Claim

Some have claimed to offer a solution to this issue, stating: If there is a conflict between reason and Revelation, then reason must be prioritized!

This misguided claim is old yet recurrent, composed of two premises and a conclusion:

- **The first premise:** The claim of the centrality, priority, and precedence of reason, and the subordination of Revelation.

- **The second premise:** That there is a conflict between reason and Revelation.

- **The conclusion:** The necessity of prioritizing reason over Revelation.

They erred in both premises, resulting in a conclusively erroneous outcome!

A Response to the First Premise

This claim is undoubtedly false; the truth is that reason is subordinate, and Revelation is paramount.

Centrality, priority, and precedence undeniably belong to Revelation - Divine Revelation from the Creator of intellect, exalted is He.

The intellect is merely a tool for understanding Revelation, not a judge over it. The evidence for this is found in all proofs of Lordship and Prophethood.

Response to the Second Premise

This claim is also false, and its falsehood is evident in several ways:

The first aspect: The Prophet ﷺ is infallible, speaking only the truth about Allāh and reporting only with honesty. Anyone claiming that his reports contradict clear reason is lying; the supposed reason must not be clear, or the reported Revelation must not be authentic, or it was not understood correctly.

The second aspect: Comprehensive induction of Sharī'ah evidence demonstrates a complete harmony between reason and Revelation.

The third aspect: This claim lacks a true example or accurate representation of such a conflict. All alleged conflicts, as shown in previous examples, reveal a misunderstanding, demonstrating that there is no contradiction.

The fourth aspect: The most intellectually complete individuals after the Prophets ﷺ are the Companions رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ followed by their followers and the followers after them. They never perceived any contradiction between reason and Revelation, and their recorded actions and statements stand as testimony.

As for the conclusion, which is the claim of prioritizing reason over Revelation:

This is a false conclusion, built on two flawed premises, and if the premise is flawed, the conclusion is necessarily flawed, as is well-known. However, I will add the following points:

The first matter: Islām, as previously mentioned, is fundamentally about submission to Revelation. Without this, it loses its meaning. Therefore, prioritizing reason over Revelation contradicts the essence of submission; it goes against the very essence of Islām.

The second matter: How can the non-infallible be prioritized over the infallible?! The Revelation has been definitively proven to be infallible, whereas the conclusions of intellects are fallible and are often erroneous. How often does a person judge something with his intellect, only to later realize his judgment was incorrect!

The third matter: Whose intellect is this that we are to make the judge and prioritize? Every individual has an intellect independent from others, with one finding agreeable what another finds objectionable, and vice versa. Hence: **Intellects cannot be standardized and hardly ever agree.**

The Correct Approach When a Person Feels That There Is a Conflict Between Reason and Revelation

Firstly: The Muslim must be certain that there is no real conflict between reason and Revelation in reality.

Firmly believe this principle, and any problem that remains ambiguous will disappear in time, Allāh willing.

Secondly: The Muslim should aim to reach the truth and strengthen his faith in Allāh and His Messenger ﷺ and then he can expect guidance to the correct path. Allāh جل جلاله said:

﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ لَا يَهْدِيهِمُ اللَّهُ﴾

what means, **“Indeed, those who do not believe in the Āyāt of Allāh - Allāh will not guide them.”** [an-Nahl: 104] The opposite implication here is that those who believe in Allāh's Āyāt, Allāh will guide them. Therefore, the guiding principle is: **Believe, and you will be guided.**

Thirdly: Those who encounter a problem should seek out a trustworthy scholar or scholarly body to present their issue, and Allāh willing they will find the cure for their ailment. The cure for ignorance is to ask questions but be cautious not to lend your ear to the enemies of Allāh who confuse you about your religion.

Fourthly: Accustom yourself to prioritizing Revelation over reason, and indeed, over everything else absolutely; this is the clear essence of faith.

Make this your principle in life:

﴿اتَّبِعُوا مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ﴾

what means, **“Follow what has been revealed to you from your Lord and do not follow other than Him any allies.”** [al-A'rāf: 3]

In conclusion: Some people might think that a Muslim asking about aspects of the Revelation that they find confusing is absolutely prohibited, but this belief is incorrect. Asking questions is permissible, and even the Companions رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ did so on occasion without being rebuked by the Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ. In a ḥadīth in al-Bukhārī, no. 4760 and Muslim, no. 2806, from the narration of Anas رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ a man asked, “O Messenger of Allāh, how will the disbeliever be gathered on his face on the Day of Resurrection?” He found it puzzling that a person could walk on their face since Allāh جَلَّ وَعَلَا says about the disbelievers:

﴿وَنَحْشُرُهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ عَلَىٰ وُجُوهِهِمْ عُمِيًَّا وَبُكْمًا وَصُمًّا﴾

what means, **“And We will gather them on the Day of Resurrection [fallen] on their faces - blind, dumb, and deaf.”** [al-Isrā: 97] How did the Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ answer him? He said,

أليس الذي أمشاه على رجله في الدنيا

قادرا على أن يمشيه على وجهه يوم القيامة؟

“Isn't He Who made him walk on his legs in this world able to make him walk on his face on the Day of Resurrection?”

Note then, the Prophet ﷺ referred him to the power of Allāh عزَّ وجلَّ. Noticing this removes a significant confusion, which is the realization of Allāh's جَلَّ وعَلَا greatness and power. He is capable of everything and nothing is impossible for Him.

Be aware that asking about intellectual issues has conditions:

The first condition: The inquirer's intention should be to reach the truth.

The second condition: The question should be directed to people of knowledge, not, for example, to peers in a WhatsApp group or tweeted out for whoever it might be to answer! This only increases the person's confusion and spreads disarray among others.

The third condition: The inquirer must maintain respect towards Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى and His Messenger صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ in their question and hold the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth in high esteem.⁵

⁵ For further benefit I recommend reading: *Aṣ-Ṣawā'iq al-Mursalāh* by Ibn al-Qayyim رَحِمَهُ اللهُ (3/829), (3/853), and the sections that follow.

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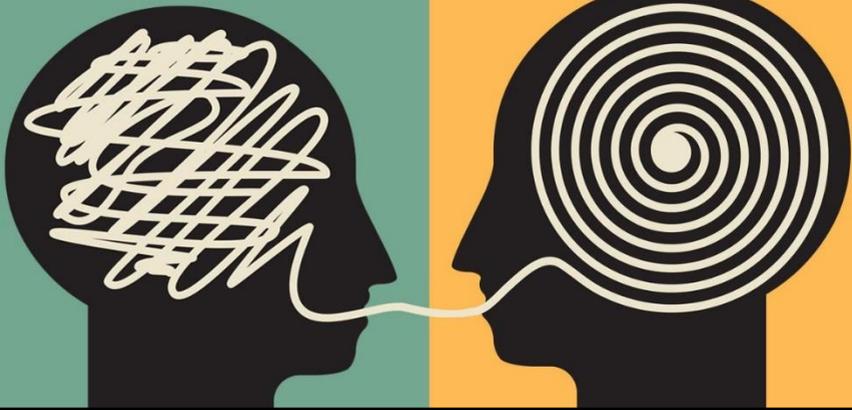
Ascension of Awareness Series

This topic is a cornerstone in many intellectual issues that have led to deviation and the differences among people.

The truth of the matter is that discussing "the intellect" involves a complex issue, one that has seen significant differences, branches, and methodologies. It's astonishing that the intellect can be perplexed by itself!

While the intellect holds a significant position in the Sharī'ah, its limits are narrow, and its domains are restricted; it cannot go beyond these limits. It is inherently deficient and prone to error. Thus, it is too weak to judge matters outside its authority or to be entirely independent of the Sharī'ah

The intellect is like the light of the eye; the eye cannot see unless it is illuminated by sunlight or a lamp. If light does not reach the eye, it is unable to see. Similarly, the intellect cannot discern guidance unless it is connected with the light of the Qur'ān and faith.



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