

**Reason and Revelation:
A Flash of Muhammad Abduh's Thought**

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Abstract

In the history of Islamic development world there are some important events, particularly about Islamic thought. One of the famous men talking about thought is Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905). He was born and growing up in the middle of absolute authority under Muhammad Ali's government in Egypt. This situation made him up sad and troubles. So he learned too many teachers about al-Qur'ān, theology, mathematic, logical, metaphysic, mysticism, and philosophy.

To answer all the questions especially in the relation between reason and revelation, he always based on logical and revelation. According to these relations he said; the verses of al-Qur'ān never contrary to the reason, sciences and logical. Even, the verses always endorse the utilization of the reason, to think about creatures, nature and humanity. The revelation is impossible to understanding well without reason. That is why, he said, rational thought will make pure faith. Really, the difference between men is not in devotion but in the power of reason, knowledge and sciences. Reason brings men closer to the creator Allah, and inevitable reason must be believe in God's existence. Isn't it, the first verse fell on to the prophet Muhammad about knowledge or using the reason, see surah al-'alaq:1-5.

Proclaim! (Or read!) In the name of Thy Lord and Cherisher, who created?

Created man, out of a (mere) clot of congealed Blood:

Proclaim! And Thy Lord is Most Bountiful,-

He who taught (the use of) the pen,-

Taught man that which He knew not

Truthfully, what acceptable and suitable is the relation both two aspects no black spot and invalid. So let drop out taqlid from our mind and become smart and intellect.

According to, the Study of Religions subject in the State College for Islamic Studies (STAIN), this paper is important, because this is one of focus in learning.

Key Word: Muhammad Abduh, Reason, Revelation.

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Biography

The birthplace of Muhammad Abduh is not exactly known, nor is the year when he was born. Many say that the year of 1849 is the most commonly date accepted. Muhammad Abduh himself, however, in one of his writings, states two different dates, i.e. 1842 and 1849.

In the age of ten he was clever in reading and writing, and therefore, he was then sent to the home of a 'ḥāfiẓ' or professional recite of the Holy Qur'an. According to some sources he only spent the time two years to finish the courses.

In 1862, when he was thirteen years old, he was sent to school of the Ahmadi Mosque in Tanta that he might perfect the memorizing of the Qur'an (Charles C. Adams, 1968:19-20).

The great event of the youth of Muhammad Abduh was his entry into the University of El-Azhar in 1866, when he was seventeen. He just stayed two years here without deriving much [profit from the courses. This is probably because of his high intelligence that he never felt satisfied of the courses, particularly this theology. On the last range of his study he finally got 'Ālim', the highest rank in Academic University achievement in the university at that time.

Talking about his careers, first of all, he became a teacher of theology, logical, and morals. A few years later (1877-1882) he became a famous professor in El-Azhar University. And then, in 1888 he was appointed as 'Qaḍi' of Native Tribunal and then a counselor court of Appeal. Eleven years later, he was nominated to be The Grand Mufti of Egypt. Finally, Muhammad Abduh passed away on July 11, 1905 in the midst of his work, without having had yet accomplished all his projects of reform. All Muslim particularly Egyptian people and government took the funeral of the Grand Mufti as an occasion of public mourning.

Relation between Reason and Revelation

Talking about reason and revelation it will bring us to a long discussion and unlimited time. Since this writing is a summary of Muhammad Abduh's doctrines on reason and revelation, the writer tries to set forth the problem just from the point of view that he thinks more important on the functions of those two matters.

According to Abduh's concepts of theology, he always tried to maintain a balance between reason and revelation. He could not accept then possibility of a contradiction between God's truth either in the al-Qur'an or in His Nature. Abduh, however, did not go so far as a 'Mu'tazilist' in subjecting God's power to the principle of justice. In this case Abduh says that voluntary actions may also be distinguished as beautiful or ugly depending up on their utility and harmfulness. This distinction can be discovered by human reason in senses without the aid of revelation.

The aim of revelation is therefore not in its traditional purpose, to arbitrarily endow certain acts with character good or bad, but the revelation to help the valuable reason by defining some of good and bad acts on the basis of utility principle.

One of his important doctrines in this case are those the Muslims must be able to free themselves from '*taqlid*' (repetition of other person's work or idea without investigation) of traditional authority if they are o benefit from this power and to acquire the capacity to resist those who are used to arguing against them. This could be achieved without sacrificing the basic truths of Islam (Malise Ruthven, 1984:304).

We agree with Abduh's idea, that 'taqlid' is not good, for it makes the peoples or society not creative and even ignorant of any new problems and commentary on religious thoughts. Furthermore, 'taqlid' can also bring about all the peoples to have fatal attitudes. The relation between the two (reason and revelation) is briefly described in Abduh's statements on the conception of Islamic Religion which he was endeavoring to inculcate a religion purified of all later growth and free sects and divisions.

The religion, Abduh's says, should be considered as one of the checks up of human reason... while religion thus supplements and aids reason, at the same time reason sits in judgment upon religion (Charles C. Adams, 1968:127). The relation between two cases is actually, coming out in the Qur'an as the Holy Book from the God. al-Qur'an always suggest the 'ummah' or people to use their reason, because it is a virtue of God that doesn't belong to other creatures. For our guidance there many verses in the Qur'an talking about reason (*al-'aql, al-qolb, al-fuad, al-zikr, al-basyir or basyiroh, al-albāb, etc.*)

This opportunity I would like to emphasize about three words only. The first, "al-'aql", always formed into verb present continuous, (*ya'qilūn and ta'qilūn*) discovered in 39 verses of al-Qur'an, for instance:

وَفِي الْأَرْضِ قِطْعٌ مُتَجَاوِرَاتٌ وَجَنَّاتٌ مِّنْ أَعْنَابٍ وَزُرْعٌ وَنَخِيلٌ وَصِنَوَانٌ غَيْرُ صِنَوَانٍ يُسْقَى بِمَاءٍ وَاحِدٍ
وَنُفِصِّلُ بَعْضَهَا عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ فِي الْأُكُلِ إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ

The meaning:

And In the earth are tracts (diverse though) neighboring, and Gardens of vines and fields sown with corn, and palm trees - growing out of single roots or otherwise: watered with the same water, yet some of them we make more excellent than others to eat. Behold, Verily In these things there are Signs for those who understand! al-Ra'du (13): 4 (A. Yusuf Ali, The Holy Qur'an, 1968:603).

This verse indicate us that Allah, growing the palm trees in single or netting roots, even though Allah created the date palm, the crops of food-grains, and the grape-vine are all fed by the same kind of water: yet how different the harvests which they yield! And that applies to all vegetation. The fruit eatable produce may vary in shape, size, color, flavor, etc. in endless variety. This verse closed by special stressing and addressed to whom utilize the reason or intelligent. Although, if analyze seriously the focus of the verse is how the experts of agriculture to explore their skill in farming, increasing quality and quantity of the product, and finally make prosperities for human life.

In the other verse Allah express:

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ عَلَقَةٍ ثُمَّ يُخْرِجُكُمْ طِفْلًا ثُمَّ لِتَبْلُغُوا أَشُدَّكُمْ ثُمَّ لِيَكُونُوا شُيُوخًا وَمِنْكُمْ مَنْ يُتَوَفَّىٰ مِنْ قَبْلٍ وَلِيَتَّبِعُوا أَجَلَ مُّسَمًّىٰ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ

The meaning:

it is He who has created you from dust then from a sperm-drop, then from a leech-like clot; then does He get you out (into the Light) As a child: then lets

you (grow and) reach your age of full strength; then lets you become old - though of you there are some who die before; and lets you reach a term appointed; In order that ye may learn wisdom. al-Mukmin (40): 67 (Ibid., p. 1280-81).

This verse give us, how Allah creates and describes the growth of man in his mother's womb starts from a sperm-drop, then become a leech-like clot and get you out as a child, then He let you grow, strength and someone die before born and someone live for long time until a term appointed. Those all learn for the wisdom. This verse emphasize for the people that himself made from the dust, something low and useless before, men do not know, why men alive and die, even though, when and where their soul end.

The other verse Allah express:

قَالَ رَبُّ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا إِنَّ كُنْتُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ

The meaning:

(Moses) said: "Lord of the east and the west, and all between! If ye only had sense!" asy-Syua'ra (26): 28 (Ibid., p.950).

اعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يُحْيِي الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا قَدْ بَيَّنَّا لَكُمُ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ

The Meaning:

Know ye (all) that Allah grivet life to the earth after its death! Already have we shown the Signs plainly to you, that ye may learn wisdom? al-Hadid (57):17 (Ibid., p.1502).

According the two verses of al-Qur'an, make motivate and inspiration for our mind to performance maximum all about inside and outside of the nature, moreover life and death that always follow us wherever we gone. No one, predictability when the death catch-up and take out our life, even if a physician, a scientist and a millionaire but, that is the secret, mystery and the authority of Allah. In this verse, Allah show us His domination whatever all in the east and the west and all between two sides. So, these verses encourage man to use the smart and intelligent. That is why, the people need to organize research in all aspect of the earth even all the planet.

The second, about words of 'qolb or qulūb' in the Holy Qur'an we find 17 verses. Some of them:

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَذِكْرَى لِمَنْ كَانَ لَهُ قَلْبٌ أَوْ أَلْقَى السَّمْعَ وَهُوَ شَهِيدٌ

The meaning:

Verily In This is a Message for any that has a heart and understanding or who gives ear and earnestly witnesses (the truth). Qāf (50):37 (Ibid., p.1417).

Actually this verse show us that the revelation push people up strongly in using reason or 'qolb' in their life.

وَلَقَدْ ذَرَأْنَا لِجَهَنَّمَ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الْجِنِّ وَالإِنسِ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ لَّا يَفْقَهُونَ بِهَا وَهُمْ أَعْيُنٌ لَّا يُبْصِرُونَ بِهَا وَهُمْ آذَانٌ لَّا يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا أُولَئِكَ كَالْأَنْعَامِ بَلْ هُمْ أَضَلُّ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْعَافِلُونَ

The meaning:

Many are the Jinn's and men we have made for Hell: They have hearts wherewith they understand not, eyes wherewith they see not, and ears wherewith they hear not. They are like cattle, nay more misguided: for they are heedless (of warning). al-A'rāf (7): 179 (Ibid., p.395-96).

Also in surah al-Haj emphasized:

أَفَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَتَكُونَ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ يَعْقِلُونَ بِهَا أَوْ آذَانٌ يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا فَإِنَّهَا لَا تَعْمَى الْأَبْصَارُ وَلَكِن تَعْمَى الْقُلُوبُ الَّتِي فِي الصُّدُورِ

The meaning:

Do they not travel through the land, so that their hearts (and minds) may thus learn wisdom and their ears may thus learn to hear? Truly it is not their eyes that are blind, but their hearts which are in their breasts. al-Haj (22): 46 (Ibid., p.863).

If we interested well the verse Qāf: 37 and compare to the verse al-A'rāf: 179 also, al-Haj: 46 above, very clear and explicitly for anybody who want to actualize the reason in whole of the life. Furthermore, Allah warns to threaten that who do not utilize reason or 'qolb', to attend and understand the verses of Allah, also all His creature, be sure they will suffer and drop inside the hell. Moreover, men and jins Allah had prepared completely eyes for watching good things, harmony, safeties, unities and pull all the hypocritical, criminals and slanders. Ears also, must be utilized for hearing good news, advices, and particularly complaints from the sufferer caused of poverty, uneducated, and weak people in economical, educational and health. A tribe or a nation are forbidden to occupy and intimidate other tribe, because very contrary for virtue and human right. Furthermore, al-Qur'an always emphasizes the people to help and strengthen each other in all aspects. If the people do not actualize the mind or the reason, Allah strictly called them same as the cattle and misguide in the world cause of their carelessness.

Then the other verses Allah emphasize:

يَا مَعْشَرَ الْجِنِّ وَالإِنسِ إِنِ اسْتَطَعْتُمْ أَنْ تَنْفُذُوا مِنْ أَقْطَارِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ فَانفُذُوا لَّا تَنْفُذُونَ إِلَّا بِسُلْطَانٍ

The meaning:

O ye assembly of Jinns and men! if it be ye can pass beyond the zones of the heavens and the earth, pass ye! Not without authority shall ye be able to pass! al-Rahman (55): 33 (Ibid., p.1476).

This verse, very explicitly command that called 'jinns and men' seriously endorse to utilize 'the sulṭān' means the power. The power of men and jins really

found in their knowledge or sciences. By this knowledge or sciences ye able explore the planets and earth. If it's not, you are nothing.

According to this verse A. Yusuf Ali said in his interpretation:

Where, jins and men are addressed collectively. That whole passage should be read as a commentary on this verse. If you think that because you do things in secret, or because some of your sins do not seem to meet their inevitable punishment or some of your good deeds seem to go unnoticed, do not be deceived. Judgment will soon come. You cannot possibly escape out of the zones in which your lives have been cast, without authority from God. Be grateful to God for the chances He has given you. All that hath been promised unto you will come to pass: nor can ye frustrate it in the least bit. (Ibid).

If the reason have been could related well and perfectly Allah determine you will find the tranquility into your hearts as the guidance of live. Allah has been emphasized in His verse;

هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ السَّكِينَةَ فِي قُلُوبِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ لِيَزِدُّوا إِيمَانًا مَعَ إِيمَانِهِمْ وَلِلَّهِ جُنُودُ السَّمَاوَاتِ
وَالْأَرْضِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا

The meaning:

It is He who sent down tranquility into the hearts of the believers, that They may add Faith to their faith;- for to Allah belong the forces of the heavens and the earth; and Allah is full of knowledge and Wisdom. al-Fath (48): 4. (Ibid., p.1391-92).

In this verse clearly understood that tranquility Allah sent down to the hearts of believers that they believe the Power and His existence in the world are in all things and aspects, also to manage everything. Because Allah widest and deepest of knowledge also wisdom. Therefore He able sends the 'arms forces' from the sky and earth (*The Department of Religion and Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia's, comment this word means; helper from the God by His angels, cattle, winds etc.*). These are realities, there are many events or incidents in the world are not acceptable by reason or our logical. But according to A. Yusuf Ali's interpretation about the word of *'junūd'* means Allah's forces.

The third, according to word of *'al-afidah'*, Allah explain us in one His verses in al-Qur'an, explained:

رَبَّنَا إِنِّي أَسْكَنْتُ مِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي بِوَادٍ غَيْرِ ذِي زَرْعٍ عِنْدَ بَيْتِكَ الْمُحَرَّمِ رَبَّنَا لِيُقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ فَاجْعَلْ أَفْئِدَةً مِنَ
النَّاسِ تَهْوِي إِلَيْهِمْ وَارْزُقْهُمْ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَشْكُرُونَ

The meaning:

O Our Lord! I have made some of My offspring to dwell In a valley without cultivation, by Thy sacred House; In order, O Our Lord, that They may establish regular prayer: so fill the hearts of some among men with love

towards them, and feed them with fruits: so that They may give thanks. Ibrahim (14): 37. (Ibid., p. 630-31)

This verse declares about the praying of Prophet Ibrahim which his offspring dwell in a valley, barren and without cultivation near Thy Sacred House (*baitullah*). The Prophet Ibrahim prays to Allah may his offspring establish regular prayer every day. By this way, every human heart inclined towards them and feed them the fruits. In the end of this verse said, may be the offspring of the Prophet Ibrahim clever in thanks God. If we analyze there is the relation between the hearts and thanks God. The good hearts and sensitive to the virtual always related to Allah and men. The hearts like this, that would realized in its living and society. Allah declares us, who do not run this well in the life, He (God) strikes men humbleness, sufferings and troubles in their life. See this verse of al-Qur'an, in Surah Ali Imran:

ضُرِبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الذَّلَّةُ أَيَّنَ مَا تَقُفُوا إِلَّا يَحْبِلُ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَحَبْلٍ مِنَ النَّاسِ وَبَاءُوا بِعَصَبٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ
وَضُرِبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَسْكَنَةُ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا يَكْفُرُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَيَقْتُلُونَ الْأَنْبِيَاءَ بِغَيْرِ حَقِّ ذَلِكَ بِمَا عَصَوْا
وَكَانُوا يَعْتَدُونَ

The meaning:

Shame is pitched over them (Like a tent) Wherever They are found, except when under a Covenant (of protection) from Allah and from men; They draw on themselves wrath from Allah, and pitched over them is (the tent of) destitution, This because they rejected the signs of Allah, and slew the prophets in defiance of right; this because they rebelled and transgressed beyond bounds. Ali Imran (3): 112 (Ibid., p.151-52).

Truly, very explicitly in this verse that whoever would not bring about these two mutual aspects; men relation to the God (vertical line) and men relation to each other (horizontal line), be sure the men will become humbleness and find difficulties. They have not protected by Allah, men will run his life without guidance and protection of Allah, except by own logical, ego and full of desirous. Of course, this condition will bring out the men to the dangerous situation.

The end of the verses of al-Qur'an that we must attend seriously and make our guidance for understanding all the signs in the world also in ourselves of the God's Power please read these two verse:

كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ

The meaning:

Thus doth Allah make Clear His Signs to you: In order that ye may understand. al-Baqarah (2): 242 (Ibid., p.96).

وَتِلْكَ الْأَمْثَالُ نَضْرِبُهَا لِلنَّاسِ وَمَا يَعْقِلُهَا إِلَّا الْعَالِمُونَ

The meaning:

And such are the parables we set forth for mankind, but only those understand them who have knowledge. al-Ankabut: 43 (Ibid., p.1040).

What clearly and exactly are those two verses for anybody to push and utilize the reason facing the live? But, never forget to relate all problems and aspects in your lives to the Holy Qur'an. Because, the guidance, laws, comparisons, educations, histories, humanities, are perfect inside. Islam said, *aqidah*, *syari'ah*, *muamalah*, *akhlak* (Theology, laws, worldly, good character).

Furthermore, Muhammad Abduh declares as Harun Nasution noticed in his book, that the verses of God, there are three kinds, first the revelation towards on particularly men and common people, this is a big part of verses al-Qur'an. Second, towards of common people, this verse is only a few of verses. Third, the verse towards for particular men (*khawas*), this is very few verses found in al-Qur'an (Harun Nasution, 1987: 37-38, trans. by the writer).

Muhammad Abduh declares that the reason "al-'aql" is a power only own by the human, and its make him differ to the other creatures. Reason is the pillar of human life and the basic of its existences forward. Reason also is the foundation in character building. (Ibid., p.44). Islam is a religion accommodate about reason, the faith is not perfect without based on the reason and to find the pure faith reachable by the reason. Taqlid (follow in one mind without analyze before) is one of cause important thing bring out Islam backward in nineteenth and twentieth century. He criticized the ulama who taught that the Islamic followers obliged follow the result of last ulama interpretation, this situation made the thought and the function of the reason decline. In Islam; religion and reason made first correlation as a brotherhood. Reason is inside become backboneed and the verse is hard foundation. Between reason and revelation never challenged each other.

The revelation enable informs something irrational and difficult to understand, but even though, revelation is impossible inform and bring something for guidance men misunderstood. Furthermore, if the externally revelation bring something impossible or irrational things, the reason obliged receive and believe and goal of the verse is not external. But reason, necessarily make others interpretation or hand over to God.

All of those verses remind everybody to make his reason as one of true decision makers on his life. Hence, the use of reason (*al-ijtihad*) for interpreting religious doctrines (Islam) is perfectly worth growing and developing. It was Abduh's firm conviction that the spirit of Islam, as truly conceived. (Charles C.Adams,1968:142).

Conclusion

We come now to the conclusion that there is no contradiction between reason and revelation, reason is a virtue or superiority from the God's creation between all His creatures and nature. Man can use it to alternate which one is good and bad for himself, while the revelation on the other hand, always shows something good and bad. The probable difference between the two, however, that revelation is certainly absolute.

Then, the breaking through and the consequence of Abduh's idea its clearly on his principles reformation of human power resources, that educational and its institutional one of the main important to enroll and release the man from the

poverty, stupidity, and decrease in facing the science and technology area, particularly in the third millennium.

Purely, reason and revelation never contradiction, if there is, it just externally and physically because, revelation is absolute in the rightness also in eternity.

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