

# BRIDGING THE REASON/REVELATION DIVIDE: A QUR'ANIC-PEIRCIAN PERSPECTIVE

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## ABSTRACT

Within certain segments of the academic community as well as the religious community the processes of reasoning are considered to be divorced from (and sometimes antithetical to) revelation. This divide between reason and revelation is based on a modern philosophical understanding of “reason” and “revelation”. In the modern academy “philosophy” has come to be associated with certain modes of reasoning that are supposedly not found in religious thought. This interpretation asserts that philosophy is a secular enterprise that is divorced from religious issues and concerns. This interpretation takes the classical Greek thinkers as its role models because they are considered to be the pioneers in the human attempt to rationally comprehend the world and the human being’s place in the world. This understanding of “philosophy” has been accepted by certain segments of the religious community also. As a result of accepting the secular academy’s definition of “philosophy” these segments in the religious community have affirmed the claims of the modern, secular academy that the divide between reason and revelation is unbridgeable. But a considered exploration of the issue reveals that this view of the reason/revelation divide is not tenable from the perspective of either revealed scripture or philosophy.<sup>1</sup>

Beginning with a comparative analysis of the Biblical and Qur’anic narratives of Abraham’s spiritual journey, I will argue that the reason vs. revelation dichotomy is at odds with the Prophetic experience. The Qur’anic description of Abraham’s spiritual journey demonstrates that intense philosophical reflection precedes the event of revelation. In other words, revelation is a grace that is bestowed by the One who is in heaven for

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reasoning that is done well by those on earth. In looking at Abraham's reasoning processes reference will be made to Greek thinkers who engaged in very similar activity in their own cultural and historical milieu. Looking at Abraham's spiritual journey from the perspective of the reason vs. revelation debate using the tools and language of philosophy will aim to challenge the claims of both secular fundamentalism and religious fundamentalism that the divide between reason and revelation is unbridgeable. The discussion will also integrate elements from both classical and modern philosophy to illustrate this very same point. A look at the classical Greek philosophical tradition as well as the work of Charles Sanders Peirce from the modern period reinforces the point that the reason/revelation divide is untenable.

### Setting the Context

Given the fact that the terms "reason" and "revelation" mean a variety of things it is necessary to define them with some precision – not completely or exhaustively, but only provisionally and minimally. Using C. S. Peirce's reflections, and modifying them slightly, the term "revelation" will refer to "a natural gift" (5.359) that manifests itself in the form of a supra-rational faculty, i.e., instincts/intuition, that is found in all creations. The purpose and character of this faculty is described by Peirce in these words: "Every race of animals is provided with instincts well adapted to its needs, and especially to strengthening the stock. It is wonderful how unerring these instincts are. Man is no exception in this respect..." (6.497).<sup>2</sup> The term "reason" will refer

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<sup>2</sup> Because Peirce's description of "instincts" has been used to propose a provisional description of "revelation" it would be prudent to explicitly identify the points and reasons for the modification of the original description. To begin, Peirce limits "instincts" or the capacity to be the recipient of "revelation" to living creatures. But the Qur'anic narrative makes it clear that the ability to receive "revelation" is a property of "inanimate" objects also (see, Qur'an 99:5 where the earth is depicted as being the recipient of "revelation.") The Qur'an notes that living creatures such as the bee are also the recipients of "revelation" (16:68). Furthermore, the Qur'an describes human beings, such as the mother of Moses in 20:37 as being the recipients of "revelation." But it is exceedingly important, for both philosophical and theological reason, to keep in mind that "revelation" in the sense as it is used in the foregoing examples should not be confused with "revelation *an sich*." This is "revelation" to the Blessed Prophet in the form of the Qur'an (or revelations to earlier Prophets.) The thing that distinguishes "revelation *an sich*" from "revelation" is that the identity of the Qur'an is composed of entirely and exclusively of Revelation, whereas

to the “power of drawing inferences”— a power whose acquisition is the result of “a long and difficult art” (5.359). Peirce describes the character and function of the faculty of reasoning in these words:

“This faculty is a very imperfect one in respect to fallibility; but then it is only needed to bridge short gaps. Every step has to be reviewed and criticized; and indeed this is so essential that it is best to call an un-criticized step of inference by another name”. (6.497)

Given what Peirce has said about instincts and drawing inferences, we can use the following definitions for the purposes of the present discussion:

**Reason:** The acquired skill of drawing rational inferences that produces knowledge claims about reality.

**Revelation:** The spontaneous gift of supra-rational inspiration that produces knowledge claims about reality.<sup>3</sup>

Before dealing directly with the reason/revelation issue from the Qur’anic perspective, some comments on the differing character of the Biblical and Qur’anic narratives will be helpful as these comments have a direct bearing on the discussion. The attention to detail is one of the characteristics that sets the Biblical narrative apart from the Qur’anic narrative. For example, whereas the Qur’an makes a general observation that Noah was commanded to build an ark according to Allah’s instructions (11:37), the Bible details the exact specifications according to which the ark was built (Genesis: 6:13-17).

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“revelation” is one among a number of things that make up the identity of the earth, the bee, the mother of Moses etc. In Weberian terms, the Qur’an is revelation in its ideal type, while the others are departures from the ideal type to varying degrees. Consequently, the way the word “revelation” is used in the present discussion does not depart from, but it builds on Peirce’s description of “instincts.” Simultaneously, it displays a broader spectrum of the semantic field of “revelation” (*awha, yubi*) than is assumed in normal Muslim religious discourse (in which “revelation” is equated with the Qur’an or previous scriptures.)

<sup>3</sup> This description is value-neutral regarding the origins of the supra-rational inspiration – it could be from an external/objective reality which could be either divine or demonic. Or the supra-rational inspiration could be from the subjective subconscious of the individual. This is the description of real given by Peirce in (6.453).

Similarly, whereas the Qur'an makes a general observation that Jesus is part of the Israelite line of prophets going back to Abraham, Noah and Adam (3:33-6), the Bible provides a detailed genealogy (Luke: 3:23-38). In the light of this difference in the narrative style the few instances in which this general rule is broken are worthy of special attention – and perhaps the most significant of these instances is the way that the story of Abraham is treated in the two narratives. The first mention of Abraham in the Bible takes place in the form of God's command to him to leave the land of his fathers:

Go forth from your native land and the land of your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and curse him that curses you; and all the families of the earth shall bless themselves by you. Abram went forth as the Lord had commanded him. (Gen. 12: 1-3).

This announcement is of great significance not only for Abram, but for all nations of the earth – all the nations on earth will be judged according to how they related to Abram, those who bless him will be blessed and those who curse him will be cursed. Neither the reasons behind nor the events leading up to the announcement of this momentous imperative are mentioned in the Bible. What has this particular obscure peasant residing somewhere in Babylonia done to be worthy of such a noble status in the eyes of his Lord? Did he demonstrate a particular attitude or display certain characteristics prior to the announcement to be worthy of such grace from his Lord? The Bible is silent on the pre-announcement part of Abram's biography and focuses exclusively on the post-announcement part of his life. In contrast, the Qur'an treats both the pre and post announcement parts of Abraham's biography – and of the two the pre-announcement part is treated more often and in greater detail. The pre-announcement part of Abraham's biography (which is missing in the Bible) details the events, reasons and developments that collectively provide the background for the momentous announcement.

## **Revelation and the Reasoned Argument from Nature**

The Qur'an shows Abraham to be a gadfly *par excellence*, prior to giving him the honorific titles of "leader of humanity" (2:124). The Qur'anic narrative contains detailed descriptions of a number of episodes from Abraham's youth in which he is constantly interrogating those around him about "What is divinity?" or "Who is God?" He argues with his father (19:41), with his people (6:75-83) and (21:51-72) and with the king (2:257). These passages make it obvious that Abraham's initial challenge to the established understanding of divinity is based on reasoned argumentation, not revealed knowledge. Speaking in more general terms than the specific case of Abraham (as), the following passage from the Qur'an acknowledges the fact that arguments for or against a particular understanding of divinity/God can come from at least two different sources:

*Say: "Do you see what it is you invoke besides Allah? Show me what it is they have created on earth, or have they a share in the heavens? Bring me a Book (revealed) before this, or any remnant of knowledge (you may have), if you are telling the truth" (46:4).*

Through the Qur'an, Allah repeatedly affirms the fact that one can appeal to a revealed Book or knowledge acquired through other means (i.e., "any remnant of knowledge") to support a particular understanding of divinity/God. In other words, the Revealed Word does not exhaust the possibilities of legitimate sources of knowledge. The following words appear in two different places in the Qur'an: *Yet among men there is many a one that argues about Allah without having any knowledge, without any guidance and without any light-giving revelation (22:8) and (31:20)*. Once again, the point to be noted is that "light-giving revelation" is considered as one source of knowledge among others that can be appealed to in support of a particular position.

The Qur'an itself identifies the other source of knowledge, besides "light giving revelation", that can be used to support a particular position. This is illustrated by the evidence that the Qur'an appeals to in order to affirm the validity and veracity of Muhammad's claim to Prophethood. The Qur'an refers to itself as "light giving revelation" and posits in the strongest of terms that Muhammad is a Prophet of Allah, following in the line of Adam, Noah, Abraham, the Hebrew Prophets. This claim by the Qur'an and then by the Prophet himself is treated with great derision and mockery by the pagans of

Mecca. Instead of taking this claim seriously they brush it aside by saying that Muhammad is “possessed” or a “madman” (37:36 and 23:70). This charge is repeated with such frequency and gains such currency that Muhammad becomes personally despondent. In response to this charge by the pagans, and to provide succor to Muhammad’s heart, the Qur’an replies:

*Nun. By the pen, and all that they write [therewith]! You are not, by the grace of your Lord, mad or possessed! And, verily, yours shall be reward never-ending— for, behold, you are of the most exalted of character; and [soon] you will see, and they [who ridicule you] will also see, which of you was bereft of reason.(68:1-6)*

Commenting on these *ayat*, Hasan and Usmani note that the Qur’an is appealing to evidence provided by written history (and that which will come to be recorded by history) that Muhammad is neither mad nor possessed. According to Hasan and Usmani “the pen” that is mentioned in 68:1 is symbolic of the knowledge that has been accumulated and recorded through the ages by different scholars of many different cultures and civilizations. This knowledge allows any reasonable person to distinguish between a madman and a genuine Prophet. The knowledge that has been recorded by “the pen” shows that madmen display certain characteristics and modes of behaviour, while genuine Prophets display very different characteristics and modes of behaviour (Hasan and Usmani, 748, n.4). The knowledge claims made in the “light” of revealed knowledge is appealing to the knowledge that has been recorded by “the pen” to support its own knowledge claim – i.e., the verity of Muhammad’s claim to Prophethood. In this particular case Revelation concludes its knowledge claim by stating that soon everyone will come to know which of the two disputing parties is “*bereft of reason*” and both revelation and “the pen” will record this fact also.

The foregoing discussion illustrates the fact that the Qur’an distinguishes between two different sources of knowledge, knowledge contained in the revealed word and knowledge acquired through “the pen”. In his translation and commentary on the Qur’an, Asad equates a Prophet’s reception of revelation as that which has been “bestowed from on high” and knowledge that has been gained through other means, symbolized by “the pen”, as that which has been “vouchsafed”. This distinction corresponds with the different verbs that the Qur’an associates with the transmission of the two

different types of knowledge – *anzala* (bestow from on high) and *'atā* (vouchsafe). The former is associated with the revelation of a Book to a Prophet and the latter with the granting of knowledge through other means. The very first *ayat* revealed to Muhammad illustrate the different, yet related, aspects of these two types of knowledge:

*Read in the name of thy Lord, who has created – created man out of a germ-cell! Read – for thy Lord is the Most Bountiful One who has taught [man] the use of the pen – taught man what he did not know! (96:1-5)*

These words themselves are an example of revealed knowledge – these are the very first words of the Qur'an that were revealed to Muhammad. The earliest of the Qur'anic revelation in turn draws the individual's attention to the human being's biological origins (from a "germ-cell" or "something which clings") and the knowledge that human beings have accumulated through the use of the "pen". Commenting on the meaning of "the pen", Asad notes:

"The pen" is used here as a symbol for the art of writing or, more specifically, for all knowledge recorded by means of writing: and this explains the symbolic summons "Read!" at the beginning of verses 1 and 3. Man's unique ability to transmit, by means of written records, his thoughts, experiences and insights from individual to individual, from generation to generation, and from one cultural environment to another endows all human knowledge with a cumulative character; and since, thanks to this God-given ability, every human being partakes, in one way or another, in mankind's continuous accumulation of knowledge, man is spoken of as being "taught by God" things which the single individual does not – and, indeed, cannot – know by himself...Furthermore, God's "teaching" man signifies also the act of His revealing, through the prophets, spiritual truths and moral standards which cannot be unequivocally established through human experience and reasoning alone: and, thus, it circumscribes the phenomenon of divine revelation as such (Asad, 963 ff, fn. 3).

For Asad, the earliest revelation in the Qur'an draws our attention to the fact that Allah "teaches" human beings through different means. First, there

is the phenomenon of revelation that reaches humanity through the means of oral transmission – from Allah to Gabriel and then to a Prophet (in this case Muhammad) – of which the Qur’anic *ayat* themselves are the most prominent example. Then there is the phenomenon of knowledge based on “human experience and reasoning” that has been accumulated by numerous human beings and cultures and transmitted by means of the written word or “the pen.” The path of transmission of revelation is Allah–Gabriel–Prophet. The path of transmission of acquired knowledge is scholar–pen–recipient. Hasan and Usmani propose that “the pen” mentioned in 96:3 is symbolic of the mediating role played by Gabriel in the transmission process of revealed knowledge (Hasan and Usmani, 797, n.11). Asad further details the characteristics of the type of knowledge transmitted by the pen when commenting on 88:7. Referring to the comments that he made on 96:1-5 he states:

In note 3 on those verses I have expressed the opinion that they allude to mankind’s cumulative acquisition of empirical and rational knowledge, handed down from generation to generation and from one civilization to another: and it is to this very phenomenon that the present passage, too, refers. We are told here that God, who has formed man in accordance with what he is meant to be and has promised to guide him, will enable him to acquire...elements of knowledge which mankind will accumulate, record and collectively “remember” – except what God may cause man to “forget”... as having become redundant by virtue of his new experiences and his acquisition of wider, more differentiated elements of knowledge, empirical as well as deductive or speculative, including more advanced empirically acquired skills. However, the very next sentence makes it clear that all knowledge arrived at through our observation of the external world and through speculation, though necessary and most valuable, is definitely limited in scope and does not therefore, in itself suffice to give us an insight into ultimate truths (Asad, 946 ff. fn. 4)

For Asad, the Qur’anic narrative explicitly recognizes as “necessary and most valuable” the “knowledge arrived at through our observation of the external world and through speculation [i.e., inferential reasoning]”. This type of knowledge that has been transmitted by the “pen” during the course of history is seen as being complementary to the revealed knowledge that has



been transmitted orally. Asad is quite precise and articulate in his description and distinction of the two types of knowledge that are implied in the very first *ayat* revealed to Muhammad. But it is important to note that all Muslim commentators agree that the knowledge which Allah has taught humanity “by the pen” is different from the knowledge that has been revealed to the Prophets. For the purposes of the present discussion we will distinguish between the two types of knowledge by referring to one as “Revelation” that has been “bestowed from on high” or “revealed” to a Prophet. And we will refer to the other as “acquired” knowledge that has been “given” or “vouchsafed” by Allah as a result of proper observation and reasoning processes. It appears that the Qur’anic distinction between revelation and knowledge acquired through the pen (as interpreted by Asad, Hasan and Usmani) corresponds closely to Peirce’s philosophical distinction between “instincts” and “reasoning”. This may be due to the fact that the terms were defined in such a way at the beginning of the discussion so as to facilitate this correspondence. Or it may be the case that such a correspondence is *real*, i.e. it would be what it is whether or not any individual or group of individuals recognized it.<sup>4</sup>

As noted earlier, a number of dialogues between Abraham and his contemporaries are recorded in the Qur’an, prior to his receiving the command to leave his homeland and seek another place of residence. The common characteristic of these dialogues is that Abraham’s arguments in these dialogues are not based on knowledge contained in a revealed Book, but rather on knowledge that has been arrived at through reasoning processes – more specifically through inferential reasoning. In other words, the evidence that Abraham presents to his contemporaries to support his claims regarding the question “What is divinity?” is not based on revealed knowledge but on philosophically reasoned knowledge. In the very early part of his life Abraham confronted his people based upon knowledge that he had gained as a result of turning his attention (or having his attention turned) towards the natural, created world:

*And, Lo, [thus] spoke Abraham unto his father Azar: “Do you take idols for gods? Verily, I see that you and your people have obviously gone astray!” And thus We gave*

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*Abraham [his first] insight into [Our] mighty dominion over the heavens and the earth— and [this] to the end that he might become one of those who are inwardly sure. (6:74-5).*

The Qur'an goes on to detail Abraham's reasoning process once his intentionality (in Husserlian terms) is fixed on the created world (i.e., Allah's "mighty dominion over the heavens and the earth"). Abraham in turn makes his rational reflections on the world of nature a part of public discourse in order to facilitate the education of his people regarding the questions "What is divinity?":

*Then, when the night overshadowed him with its darkness, he beheld a star; [and] he exclaimed, "This is my Lord!"— but when it went down, he said "I love not the things that go down." Then, when he beheld the moon rising, he said "This is my Lord!"— but when it went down he said, "Indeed if my Lord does not guide me, I will most certainly be one of the people who go astray!" Then when he beheld the sun rising, he said, "This is my Lord! This one is the greatest [of all]!" But when it [too] went down, he exclaimed: "O my people! Behold, far be it from me to ascribe divinity, as you do, to anything besides Allah! Behold, unto Him who brought into being the heavens and the earth have I turned my face, having turned away from all that is false; and I am not of those who ascribe divinity to anything besides Him." (6:76-9)*

Here Abraham gathers evidence from the world of nature to support his claim that divinity cannot be ascribed to anything in the world of nature (as his contemporaries were wont to do), it must be ascribed exclusively to the One who has created this world.

When his people continued to argue with him in spite of the fact that they could not counter his philosophic reasoning, Abraham asks them to leave aside philosophic reasoning and bring some other evidence to support their claims:

*And his people argued with him. He said: "Do you argue with me about Allah, when it is He who has guided me? But I do not fear anything to which you ascribe divinity side by side with Him, [for no evil can befall me] unless my Lord so wills. All things does my Lord embrace with His knowledge; will you not, then, keep this in mind? And why should I fear anything that you worship side by side with Him, seeing that you are*

*not afraid of ascribing divinity to other powers besides Allah without His ever having bestowed upon you from on high any warrant thereof?”*(6: 80-1).

In addition to weak philosophical reasoning, his contemporaries are mistaken in their understanding of divinity because it cannot be justified with reference to any revealed knowledge. Abraham’s contemporaries are guilty of ascribing divinity to other powers besides Allah without any warrant being given to them from on high. The Qur’an goes on to identify the source of knowledge that produced Abraham’s line of reasoning. Referring to the line of argumentation that Abraham has used and the conclusions that he has reached as a result, Allah states in the Qur’an: “*And this was Our argument that We vouchsafed unto Abraham against his people: [for] We do raise by degrees whom We will. Verily, your Lord is wise, all-knowing*” (6:83). In terms of the distinction that was made above regarding the two types of knowledge, this *āyah* evidences that Abraham’s arguments against his people were based on philosophic reasoning that had been “vouchsafed” or “given” to him by Allah, not knowledge that had been revealed to him.

At this stage, Abraham uses arguments based on philosophical reflection on the world of nature to support his theological/religious claims. Abraham proceeds from empirical observations about the world of nature, to making philosophic judgments on the nature of empirical reality and concludes with making a particular theological claim. This mode of reasoning by Abraham resembles that of the methodology of the pre-Socratic Greek thinkers. According to Aristotle’s understanding, the pre-Socratics “were the ‘students of nature’ and their subject was the ‘study of nature’” (Barnes, 13). Using their observations of the natural world as a starting point, the pre-Socratic thinkers went on to ponder more “scientific” or “religious” concerns such as the origin, constituents, ultimate fate/destiny, and development of the universe. In its more developed and refined form pre-Socratic thought drew a direct link between the study of nature and reflections on “what is divinity?” An illustration of this pre-Socratic mode of inquiry is the work of Heraclitus, one of the most renowned pre-Socratic thinkers. Nietzsche, a prominent student and admirer of pre-Socratic philosophy, has Heraclitus coming to the following conclusions after Heraclitus has closely observed the workings of the world of nature:

'Becoming' is what I contemplate, and no one else has watched so attentively this everlasting wavebeat and rhythm of things. And what did I see? Lawful order, unfailing certainties, ever-like orbits of lawfulness, Erinnyes sitting in judgement on all transgressions against lawful order, the whole world the spectacle of sovereign justice and of the demonically ever-present natural forces that serve it. Not the punishment of what has come-to-be did I see, but the justification of that which is coming-into-being. When did hybris, when did apostasy ever reveal itself in inviolable forms, in laws held sacred? Where injustice rules, there are caprice, disorder, lawlessness, contradiction. But where law and Zeus' daughter Dike rule alone, as they do in this world, how could there be the sphere of guilt, of penance, of judgment? (Nietzsche, 50 ff.)

Very much like Abraham, Heraclitus proceeds from empirical observations about the world of nature (i.e., lawful regularity), to certain rational claims about the nature of reality (i.e. reality is a "becoming" not a "being") and then to particular theological claims (i.e., lawful order is evidence of the rule of Zeus).

### **Revelation and the Reasoned Argument About Reason**

The distinction between pre-Socratic and Socratic/post-Socratic periods of Greek philosophy is a widely accepted one. One of the reasons given for this distinction is that, generally speaking, the pre-Socratics concentrated their attention on the objects in the world of nature as they carried out their philosophical inquiries. Socrates, in contrast and again generally speaking, concentrated his philosophical gaze on the subject that was busy studying the object. Even though it is only a shift of emphasis, the shift of attention from the world of nature to the inner world of the human being (away from *Natur* and towards the *Geist*) as the object of philosophic inquiry marks a significant development in intellectual history. Socrates posited that proper philosophical inquiry should aim to make the subject more conscious of his (and we may add here) own reasoning processes. It was the flaws in the reasoning processes that led to disagreements about what is "out there" in the world of nature or in the social world of ethical and moral norms. Towards this end, Socrates developed the elenchic method of argumentation based on dialectic. The goal of this method was to lay bare the hidden

presuppositions that at least one of the dialogue partners unconsciously carried him/her in the reasoning processes, which in turn were responsible for the disagreement between the two parties. The goal of instigating aporia was not to reach consensus about a faulty/disputed knowledge claim it is more concerned with bringing to consciousness the line of reasoning that is behind the knowledge claim and demonstrating the flaws in that particular line. In short, the aim of the elanchic method was not to provide a clearer understanding of what is “out there” in the world of nature but rather to provide a clearer understanding of what is “in here”— in the reasoning processes, presuppositions and values that shape the observation of and knowledge claims about empirical reality. With Socrates the Delphic imperative of “Know thyself” takes on a meaning and significance that it had not had before.

Just as Heraclitus’ philosophical reflections are illustrative of arguing from the world of nature to religious claims, the philosophical reflections of Socrates are illustrative of arguing from the individual’s own inner world to higher truths. In the *Euthyphro*, Socrates uses the question of “what is piety?” as the starting point of his elanchic discourse with Euthyphro. In the *Apology*, he uses the question of “what is wisdom?” in order to better understand the proclamation of the Oracle that he himself is the wisest of all people. In both cases his dialectical method of argumentation leads to the realization on the part of his conversation partners that piety and wisdom are not what they had initially thought them to be. If anything the widely accepted, preconceived notions of piety and wisdom are actually a negation of piety and wisdom.

After his observation of the world of nature, along the lines of the pre-Socratic reasoning, and developing arguments based on these observations in line with what Allah had vouchsafed to him, Abraham turns to a more Socratic method of reasoning and directly engages his contemporaries on the issue of “what is divinity?” The Qur’an sets the stage for the upcoming confrontation in the following words:

*And, indeed, long before [the time of Moses] We vouchsafed unto Abraham his consciousness of what is right; and We were aware of [what moved] him when he said*

*to his father and his people, "What are these images to which you are so intensely devoted?" (21:51-2)*

Abraham challenges his contemporaries to provide an adequate explanation of their devotion to idols based on knowledge that had been vouchsafed unto "his consciousness of what is right". Commenting on this phrase, Asad notes:

The possessive pronoun "his" affixed to the noun *rushd* (which, in this context, has the meaning of "consciousness of what is right") emphasizes the highly personal, intellectual quality of Abraham's progressive realization of God's almightiness and uniqueness (Asad, 494, fn.59).

The challenge is based on intellectual, rational reasoning processes that have endowed Abraham with a particular, personal understanding of Allah's power and uniqueness – an understanding that refutes the established, societal understanding of divinity. The response to the personal, intellectual inquiry made by Abraham and the discussion thereafter is as follows:

*They answered: "We found our forefathers worshipping them." He said: "Indeed, you and your forefathers have obviously gone astray!" They asked: "Have you come to us [with this claim] in all earnest – or are you just joking?" He said: "Nay, but your [true] Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth – He who has brought them into being; and I am one of those who bear witness to this [truth]!" (21:53-6)*

In response to the reasoned and rational evidence that Abraham has offered to support his understanding of divinity, his people counter with an appeal to neither revelation nor reason – they fall back on established tradition to support their understanding of divinity (Hasan and Usmani, 453, n.3). As the exchange between Abraham and his people demonstrates, the dialectical process has already begun, with claims and counter-claims being offered by the two parties. It appears that the discussion is at a deadlock as there is no way to objectively demonstrate the validity of one claim or the other. But Abraham's intellectual energies are fast at work in trying to push the dialectic further and instigating the condition of aporia. As the discussion appears to have come to an inconclusive end, Abraham is thinking and planning: *And [he added to himself,] "By Allah, I shall most certainly bring about the*

*downfall of your idols as soon as you have turned your backs and gone away!”* (21: 57). When his people were leaving to celebrate an annual festival, Abraham excused himself on the grounds of ill-health. After the townspeople had left he took advantage of the opportunity and made his way into the pantheon that housed their idols, and;

Thereupon he approached their gods stealthily and said, “What! You do not eat [of the offerings placed before you?] What is wrong with you that you do not speak?” And then he fell upon them, smiting them with his right hand. (37:91-3).

He broke all the idols into pieces using a hammer, but left the biggest idol in tact and hung the hammer around its neck, with the following result upon the return of the townspeople from the festival:

And he broke those [idols] to pieces, [all] save the biggest of them, so that they might turn to it. [When they saw what had happened,] they said: “Who has done this our gods? Verily, he is one of the most wicked individuals.” Some [among them] replied: “We heard a youth speak of these [gods with scorn]: his name is Abraham.” [The others] said: “Then bring him before the people’s eyes, so that they might bear witness [against him]!” (21: 58-61).

Upon finding all their totems smashed to bits, except the biggest one, it did not take long for them to identify the perpetrator of this blasphemous outrage. Abraham was brought before the people and asked to offer an explanation for the dilapidated condition of the pantheon. It appears that this is precisely what Abraham was hoping would happen:

[And when he came] they asked: “Have you done this to our gods, O Abraham?” He answered: “No, it was this one, the biggest of them all, that did it: but ask them [yourselves] – provided they can speak!” (21:62-3)

When asked who had wrought this terrible deed, Abraham told the people that they should direct their inquiry to their gods, and especially to their chief god who was still standing and appeared to be culprit given the fact that a hammer was hanging around its neck. This line of reasoning used by

Abraham made it patently clear to all present the absurdity of their understanding/definition of divinity – and for a brief moment this realization dawned upon them collectively: “*And so they turned upon one another, saying, ‘Behold, it is you who are doing wrong.’*” (21:64). But this realization is only for a brief moment, and only to be discussed in their own circles – in the end the pre-existing *collective effervescence* superseded the rational conclusion suggested by one’s own reasoning processes. In terms of their confrontation with Abraham, the people continued their argumentative ways: “*But then they relapsed into their former ways of thinking and said: ‘You know very well that these [idols] cannot speak!’*” (21: 65) This was the opening that Abraham was looking for and he drove his point home with unimpeachable rational clarity:

Replied [Abraham]: “Do you then worship instead of Allah, something that cannot benefit you in any way, nor harm you? Fie upon you and that you worship instead of Allah! Will you then not use your reason?” (21: 66-7).

It is here that the point of aporia is reached and the internal contradiction of the established, collective understanding of divinity shown to be devoid of any substance by Abraham’s reasoned argumentation. Looking at the argument as a whole, it is clear that the pattern of his argument closely follows the elanchic method of Socrates. His final words are an appeal to the people to “*use your reason*” – the response to this very reasonable request is most un-reasonable: “*They exclaimed: ‘Burn him, and [thereby] succor your gods, if you are going to do [anything]!’*”(21:68).

Up till this point in his biography, there is no explicit recognition or declaration on Abraham’s part that he is the recipient of divine revelation. He is dialoguing and arguing with his people based upon reasoning processes that are not directly connected to revealed knowledge. As noted above, the reasoning processes used by Abraham display both pre-Socratic characteristics (philosophic wonder about the world of nature) and Socratic characteristics (elanchic reasoning aimed at instigating aporia). In terms of the distinction that is implicit in the very first words revealed to Muhammad (96:1-5), Abraham’s arguments are based on knowledge that Allah has “taught man by the pen”, not on what Allah has revealed orally through Gabriel. There is no parallel in the Biblical narrative to Abraham’s exercise of



reason and rationality prior to the momentous announcement declaring him to be the recipient of Allah's special grace. From the perspective of the Qur'anic narrative, it is in the aftermath of the people's attempt to burn him alive that "Abram" receives the command from Allah to leave the land of his fathers to a land that will be shown to him. The final conversation that Abraham has with his father before leaving his house is recorded by the Qur'an in these words:

*And call to mind, through this divine writ, Abraham. Behold, he was a man of truth, [already] a prophet when he spoke [thus] unto his father: "O my father! Why do you worship something that neither hears nor sees and can be of no avail whatever to you? O my father! Behold, there has indeed come to me knowledge such as has not yet come to you: follow me, then; I shall guide you onto a perfect way." (19:41-3).*

Here Abraham explicitly states that he is in possession of certain knowledge that has "come" to him but has not come to his father. In a sense Abraham has made the claim that he has climbed out of the cave and gazed upon the sun, and returned to those in the cave, more specifically his father, to inform them that they are mistaking the shadows for reality.

### **Revelation's Relationship to Reasoned Arguments**

The manner in which the first revelation to Muhammad speaks of "the pen" (96:1-5) and the way this phrase has been interpreted by Asad, Hasan and Usmani, which is illustrative of the manner in which the phrase is understood by Muslim commentators in general, evidences that there is a complementary relationship between reason and revelation. While the origin of revelatory knowledge and philosophic knowledge is the same – the very first words of the very first revelation are "Read in the name your Lord..." – the specific dynamics and character of the two types of knowledge is different. The complementary yet distinct character of these two types of knowledge is highlighted by looking at the spiritual evolution of Abraham (as). The pre-announcement part of Abraham's biography, as it is recorded in the Qur'an, is illustrative of the value, validity, character and dynamics of rational/reasoned knowledge in the human quest to better understand reality. Just as the very first revelation sent to the last of the Prophets asserts the value and validity of rational/reasoned knowledge, the biography of the

“father of the Prophets”– one of the three honorific titles the Qur’an gives to Abraham – offers a practical example of this value and validity.

At this point it would be useful to engage in some second order reflections on the Qur’anic valuation of reason and rationality. It is not only in the story of Abraham that the Qur’an affirms the value of reasoning faculties and the validity of knowledge arrived at through reasoning processes. There are more than four dozen places in the Qur’an where human beings are either lauded for using their reasoning faculties properly, criticized for using them otherwise and/or encouraged to sharpen their reasoning abilities. In other words the Qur’anic treatment of reason and rationality is pervasive and constant. But it is interesting to note that nowhere in the Qur’an is there a clear and distinct (or Cartesian) definition of “reason” or a description of the elements that go into the reasoning process or definitive criteria delineating flawed reasoning from sound reasoning. The Qur’anic description of reasoning is limited to providing examples of good reasoning (as well as bad reasoning), exhortations to reason well and warnings about the consequences of reasoning poorly. This appears to be a lacuna in the Qur’anic narrative; How can a topic of such pressing import be left so vaguely defined? On closer examination this “lacuna” is a defining characteristic of the Qur’anic narrative, as illustrated by the following examples. In a variety of places the Qur’an describes the Blessed Prophet to be the best model for human behaviour. But there are only a handful of episodes from the Prophet’s life that are even mentioned in the Qur’an – out of them only a few are mentioned in any detail. Furthermore, of the episodes that are mentioned almost half of them are occasions on which the Divine Word is correcting some aspects of the Prophet’s behaviour. In short, if one wants to follow the exhortation of the Qur’an to adopt the Blessed Prophet as a role model then the Qur’anic narrative proves to be an inadequate resource. Another example, in a similar vein, is the Qur’anic command to establish *salāt* and pay the *zakāt*. This command is repeated on dozens of occasions and one’s religious life is defined by performing these acts. But an individual seeking to fulfill these commands will be unable to do so if he/she seeks to do it only on the basis of what the Qur’an has to say about *salāt* and *zakāt*. The Qur’an contains only the most general references to the what, when, how, where of *salāt* and *zakāt* and these references are not nearly

enough to make possible a systematic and coherent performance of *salāt* and payment of *zakāt*.

This presents us with a paradox in the Qur'anic narrative – commands/exhortations combined with an incomplete description of how the commands/exhortations are to be acted upon. The only way to resolve this paradox is to acknowledge that the Qur'anic narrative points to sources of knowledge beyond itself in order for its own commands/exhortations to be understood and carried out. Adopting the Blessed Prophet as a role model requires (at the very minimum) the aid of historical knowledge. Learning how to perform the *salāt* and pay the *zakāt* requires (at the very minimum) the aid of *fiqhi* knowledge. A partial list of the requirements that history and *fiqh* have to meet in order to be reliable sources of knowledge would include historiography, objective research methods and tools, adequate technology to insure reliable transmission of reports (i.e., paper, ink, or other recording devices), a developed and agreed upon written script, etc. It goes without saying that none of this is found “in the Qur'an.” It may very well be the case that the Qur'anic event proved to be the occasion for the development and maturation of certain technologies and processes that were latent potentialities in the pre-Qur'anic cultural setting, but that is not the same as being “in the Qur'an.” In sum, the Qur'an's dependence on the non-Qur'an for the rational comprehension of the Qur'anic message is obvious both from a reasoned and Qur'anic point of view – the latter being illustrated by the journey of Abraham in the present case.

Another way to illustrate the Qur'an's dependence on the non-Qur'an for its own rational comprehension is to look at a few examples that demonstrate how an increase in non-Qur'anic knowledge opens up the possibility of a deeper understanding of the Qur'an. The Qur'an repeatedly states that Allah is the Creator and the Lord of the heavens and the earth and “*what is between them*” (30:7, 32:4, 37:5). The discoveries of modern physics and astronomy (among other non-Qur'anic modern sciences) have exponentially expanded the human understanding of “what is between” the heavens and the earth. Prior to these discoveries the Qur'anic phrase was understood to refer to the air, clouds, birds flying in the air. After the modern scientific discoveries the phrase can be understood to also refer to radio waves, x-rays, neutrinos, ultra-violet light, etc. Along the same lines

findings in the area of entomology and modern medicine potentially expand the understanding of the following Qur'anic passage:

And [consider how] your Lord has inspired the bee: "Prepare for yourself dwellings in mountains and in trees, and what people construct. Then feed on all kinds of fruit and follow the ways made easy for you by your Lord." From their bellies comes a drink of different a colour in which there is healing for human beings. There truly is a sign for those who think. (16: 68-9)

Prior to the findings of modern entomology and medicine human beings had been using honey for culinary and medicinal purposes for centuries, if not millennia. In other words, humans have been aware of the behaviour and benefits of bees long before there was modern science. But at the same time modern science has made possible a level of rational understanding of the phenomena referred to in this passage that was not possible in the pre-modern world.<sup>5</sup>

The foregoing discussion demonstrates that not only is the Qur'an dependent upon the non-Qur'an for its rational comprehension (as illustrated by the examples of the Qur'anic commands to take the Blessed Prophet as exemplar and establish *salāt* /pay *zakāt*), it is also dependent upon the non-

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<sup>5</sup> A word of caution is in order at this point. The examples of "what is between them" and of the bee demonstrate that modern scientific inquiry has the potential of leading to deeper understanding of Qur'anic passages – but this should not be confused with "knowing better". These two examples demonstrate that scientific discoveries have made it possible to expand the field of meaning of particular Qur'anic passages, thereby giving the Qur'anic passages novel depths. But this does not necessarily mean that the knowledge of modern human beings about these things is "better than" that of their pre-modern predecessors. To equate "knowing more" with "knowing better" is a sophomoric logical mistake. It is more a reflection of the immature, underdeveloped reasoning processes and/or pre-established ideological commitments of the individual concerned rather than anything that is real. As Max Weber has observed, the "progress" of knowledge (in which moderns, especially those in the academy, take so much pride) does not necessarily mean knowing better, it does not even necessarily mean knowing "more" than individuals and epochs that have not experienced "progress". The progress of knowledge only means the possibility (not the necessity) of increasing self-awareness and increasing capacity for self-expression, while at the same time opening up the possibility of increasing disenchantment and alienation from the self, as well as alienation from one's natural and social environment.

Qur'an for increasing the breadth and depth of its meanings. In other words the rational comprehension of Qur'anic (i.e., revealed) knowledge requires (and is actually dependant on) a variety (perhaps an infinity) of "non-Qur'anic" sciences – i.e., the reasoned and rational investigation of empirical phenomena. The fact that the Qur'an would see an intimate relationship between itself and the empirical reality studied by the non-Qur'anic sciences is not the least surprising in light of the following passage.

*Everything in the heaven and earth belongs to Allah. Allah is Self-sufficient and worthy of all praise. If all the trees on earth were pens and all the seas, with seven more seas besides, [were ink,] still Allah's words would not run out: Allah is Almighty, All-Wise.(31:26-7)*

It is obvious that the "words" referred to in this passage do not mean merely the words of the Qur'an – there is no shortage of ink or pens presently if the goal is to transcribe the words of Qur'an. In the most general sense, the "words" refers to all that which is (actually or potentially) the object of study by the non-Qur'anic sciences. This passage highlights a point that is implicit (but only barely so) in the Qur'anic narrative on Abraham's spiritual/philosophic journey. There is clear consciousness on the Qur'an's part regarding the relationship of what is "in" the Qur'an (or Qur'anic knowledge) to what is "outside" the Qur'an (or non-Qur'anic knowledge.) This consciousness is so acute that it goes to the extent of not only explicitly exhorting but repeatedly directly challenging, instructing, exhorting the reader to turn to the non-Qur'anic for the rational comprehension of the Qur'anic. This is a more particular manifestation of a general Qur'anic characteristic – the Qur'anic consciousness of its relationship to the non-Qur'anic. It is important to keep this seminally Qur'anic characteristic in mind in order to balance, what has been called, the "textual consciousness" of the Qur'an (Berlinerblau, 117). A recent valuation of the self-conscious character of the Qur'anic narrative illustrates the point by contrasting it to the Biblical narrative. After noting that the Hebrew Bible is not a particularly self-conscious book. It does not know its name. It shows no absolute [sic.] awareness that it is a "Bible," or even a corpus of collected documents. It equivocates as to its origins...(Berlinerblau, 118).Berlinerblau goes on to note:

Contrast this with the Qur'an, a work that Stefan Wild described as the most "self-referential holy text known in the history of world religions." Wild has certainly identified a signal oddity of Islam's foundational document. The work in question knows that it is a "book." The name of this book, we are told again and again, is "the Qur'an." Not only is it conscious of itself, but its merits as well. It describes itself as "glorious," "wise," "clear," "the Book with the truth," and so on. So flush is this document with a sense of its incomparability that it challenges others to come up with something better. "If you doubt what We have revealed to Our servant," it affirms, "produce one chapter comparable to it." When the Hebrew Bible wants to prove the greatness of God it depicts God's greatness. The Qur'an does that and more: it also points to the greatness of the Qur'an. As Daniel Madigan recently put it: "The Qur'an is both itself and *about* itself." (*Ibid.*)

It is indeed the case that Qur'an is "both itself and *about* itself" – but it not merely "*about* itself." If we take the Qur'an to be an example of "revealed knowledge" and reasoned arguments as an example of rational knowledge then even the brief discussion of Abraham's journey demonstrates that the Qur'an is just as aware, conscious, conscientious and affirmative of the non-Qur'anic other as it is of its Qur'anic self. The Qur'an is no less about the non-Qur'an than it is about itself.

### **Reason and the Reality of Revelation**

The discussion seems to have gone off on a tangent in light of the title and the stated goals in the introductory pages. Since those opening pages the discussion shifted to the Qur'an's relationship to the non-Qur'anic sciences and in the last few pages into an even more general statement about the Qur'an's relationship to the non-Qur'an. But this tangent will prove to be helpful if we take some of the points raised in the foregoing discussion and apply them to the specific issue at hand, the reason vs. revelation divide. A plain sense reading of the Qur'anic narrative demonstrates that the Qur'an sees a close relationship between reason and revelation – the Qur'an presents itself as the prime example of Divine Revelation and simultaneously affirms the value of proper reasoning and critiques the conclusions reached by faulty reasoning. A second order reading of the Qur'anic narrative demonstrates

that the Qur'an is dependent upon non-Qur'anic sources for a more detailed, rational, and we may even say "practiceable" understanding of its message. Putting these two points together suggests that we will have to turn to non-Qur'anic resources in order to further explicate the reason and revelation relationship that is repeatedly intimated (but never systematically explicated) in the Qur'an. At this point we turn to the science of philosophy to explicate this relationship, more specifically to the philosophical insights of C.S Peirce. For Peirce philosophy is not some vague, imprecise "love of wisdom." He describes philosophy as a "*positive science*, in the sense of discovering what really is true [universally]; but it limits itself to so much of truth as can be inferred from common sense experience" (1.184). Peirce's description of the goal of "positive science" provides an even more precise understanding of philosophy (in light of the fact that he has described philosophy as a positive science). Peirce notes that the goal of "positive science" is to seek "such knowledge as may conveniently be expressed in a *categorical proposition*" (5.39).

In contrast to the Qur'an which does not go beyond giving examples of good/bad reasoning, lauding the proper use of reason and warning against the misuse/abuse of reason, these issues are of central concern in the science of philosophy. Peirce notes:

The object of reasoning is to find out, from the considerations of what we already know, something else which we do not know. Consequently, reasoning is good if it be such as to give true conclusions from true premises, and not otherwise. Thus, the question of the validity is purely one of fact and not of thinking (5.365).

More precisely, logic is the specialized science in philosophy that is specifically concerned with a close and detailed study of the reasoning processes and seeks to establish objective criteria that separate valid reasoning from invalid reasoning. While human beings are "in the main logical animals" (5.366) it is interesting to note that only a handful of individuals "care to study logic, because everybody conceives himself to be proficient enough in the art of reasoning already" (5. 358). The cavalier attitude towards logic is also displayed at the collective level where "the medieval schoolmen, following the Romans, made logic the earliest of a boy's studies after grammar, as being very easy" (5.359). But the history of

the development of logic demonstrates that it is anything but a “very easy” science because the number of times that the predominant logic in a particular socio-historical setting has been demonstrated to be false is as numerous as the number of important scientific discoveries that have been made in history:

[E]very work of science great enough to be well remembered for a few generations affords some exemplification of the defective state of the art of reasoning of the time when it was written; and each chief step in science has been a lesson in logic (5.363).

Logic’s development and self-understanding is dependent on the development and maturation of a variety of sciences. If this is indeed the case then a logician working in an age when certain natural/physical sciences had reached a relatively advanced stage of maturity would be able to advance the science of logic beyond the work of preceding logician.<sup>6</sup> Living in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (thereby benefiting from the scientific advances since the classical and medieval periods) Peirce does just that by demonstrating that reasoning cannot be equated with inferential reasoning if one wants to give a complete and scientifically adequate account for not only the validity but also the origin of novel knowledge claims. After noting that the “chief business of logicians is to classify arguments” (2.619) he goes on to note that the two main types of arguments thus far identified by logicians (deduction and induction) are nothing but an “inversion” of each other. He also goes on to demonstrate that such arguments do not add anything new to already existing knowledge – the one renders existing knowledge claims more precise

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<sup>6</sup> This description of the evolution of logic might be interpreted to mean that because we live in an age characterized by a more refined logic, then it means that we are more rational and know better than those who came before us. Once again, this is an unmitigated, brash value-judgment (as well as an elementary logical mistake.) Peirce notes that “reason is a mere succedaneum to be used where instinct is wanting” (6.500). Those with perfect instincts would be ill-served to subject their activities to logical analysis – the bee, the ant, the bear, the earth, the sky, etc. have, can and should continue to go about their business without any recourse to logic. Similarly, those individuals with unerring instincts (such as the Blessed Prophets) did not need to take courses in elementary and advanced logic for their judgments to be sound. But in an age characterized by the demise of charisma and the end of Prophecy, the dependence on the science of logic becomes that much more pressing and needed in order to judge the soundness of knowledge claims and reasoning processes.



(deduction), while the other provides some of the criteria to test the validity of the knowledge claims (induction). But neither of the two can be considered as the origins of a particular knowledge claim. It is in his attempt to identify origins of a new knowledge claim (or the “Eureka moment”) that Peirce makes a case for a third class of arguments in addition to deduction and induction.

Peirce notes that supra-rational instinct is the origin of all knowledge and inferential reasoning (be in inductive or deductive) is nothing more than a means of articulating and testing the validity of knowledge claims. Peirce labels the logic of hypothesis formation (i.e., making knowledge claims) “retroduction” and in his later works as “abduction”. He identifies supra-rational instincts as the grounds in which such claims are rooted. He calls the logic of explicating the knowledge claims in rational and communicable form as “deduction.” And the logic of testing and evaluating the validity of the knowledge claims as induction. The following passage sums up the basic characteristics and relationship between abduction /retroduction, deduction and induction:

Observe that neither Deduction nor Induction contributes the smallest positive item to the final conclusion of the inquiry. They render definite the indefinite; Deduction explicates; Induction evaluates: that is all. Over chasm that yawns between the ultimate goal of science and such ideas of Man’s environment as, coming over him during his primeval wanderings in the forest, while yet his very notion of error was of the vaguest, he managed to communicate to some fellow, we are building a cantilever bridge of induction, held together by scientific struts and ties. Yet every plank of its advance is first laid by Retroduction alone, that is to say, by the spontaneous conjectures of instinctive reason; and neither Deduction nor Induction contributes a single new concept to that structure. Nor is this less true or less important for those inquiries of self-interest (6.475).

For Peirce human “instinctive reason” is best described as “a divinatorial power” (following Galileo) and it is “like that of a wasp or a bird” that produces both the knowledge claim and the confidence in the validity of the knowledge claim. This confidence that is altogether different from “rash cocksureness” (6.477) because it is open to being tested and verified

according to objective criteria. Most human beings during most of their normal course of their activity find their instincts and common sense to be more than sufficient in their mundane, routine pursuits. When human beings do turn to deductive and inductive reasoning it is only under special circumstances and for very specific and limited purposes. Peirce argues that he is not the first philosopher to make this observation; it is obvious from a careful reading of Hume:

The fourth part of the first book of Hume's *Treatise on Human Nature* affords a strong argument for the correctness of my view that reason is a mere succedaneum to be used where instinct is wanting, by exhibiting the intensely ridiculous way in which a man winds himself up in silly paper doubts if he undertakes to throw common sense, i.e., instinct, overboard and be perfectly rational...[A] careful reader will see that if [Hume] proves anything at all by all his reasoning, it is that reasoning, as such, is *ipso facto* and essentially illogical, "illegitimate," and unreasonable. And the reason it is so is that either it is bad reasoning, or rest on doubtful premises, or else that those premises have not been thoroughly criticized (6.500).

In short, a philosophical analysis of the processes of scientific reasoning demonstrates that supra-rational instinct is at the root of all novel scientific discoveries. Philosophy, and more specifically the science of logic, can do no more than state this as being an empirical fact, but both must remain silent regarding the origins, characteristics and habits of this supra-rational instincts. The careful reader will have noted that philosophy/logic stand in exactly the same relationship to supra-rational instincts as the Qur'an's relationship to reason. The Qur'an recognizes both the reality and the validity of reason, but remains silent regarding the technical specifics related to reasoning (the specifics which are the subject matter of logic.) Similarly, philosophy (at least the philosophy of Peirce) recognizes the reality and validity of revelation (minimally defined) but remains silent regarding technical specifics related to revelation (the specifics which are among the most important subject matter of the Qur'anic narrative.)

There is another important similarity between logic and the Qur'an. It is obvious that the Qur'an is not a textbook of history, law, psychology, poetry, sociology, hydrology, geology, entomology, medicine, physics, astronomy,

etc. It is equally obvious that the Qur'an repeatedly touches upon all of these sciences (and many others) and then goes on to state that its own truth is directly related to the truths of these non-Qur'anic sciences. Similarly, logic as a science cannot be confused with physics, biology, chemistry, sociology, anthropology, etc. But at the same time the development and maturation of these sciences has been indispensable in helping logic as a science to better express its own characteristics and "truths". In both cases the developmental evolution of the various sciences has directly contributed to increasing the potential understanding of the "truth" of both the Qur'an and logic. In other words, the evolution of science has potentially increased the ability to grasp the rational truth of both reason and revelation.

### **A Final Word**

The preceding pages have presented two different narratives. First, I outlined the Qur'anic narrative of the journey of Abraham. Then I summarized Peirce's position on the characteristics and the historical development of the science of logic. Given how the Qur'an treats reason and given Peirce's description of the role of supra-rational instinct in the reasoning process it is clear that the reason/revelation divide is not tenable from either the Qur'anic or the philosophical perspective. Just as the Qur'anic exhortations to take the Blessed Prophet as an example, to perform *salāt* and give *ḡakāt*, etc. cannot be practically comprehended without the aid of a variety of "non-Qur'anic" sciences, the Qur'anic valuation of reason and exhortations to use it properly cannot be put into actual practice without the aid of a variety of "non-Qur'anic" sciences. Conversely, all of science (or philosophy) is dependent on revelation if it is to provide a rational (i.e., scientific) account for the origins of abductive hypotheses. In sum, it is not only the case that revealed knowledge is dependent upon human beings drawing valid inferences in order to be rationally articulated, understood and put into practice. It is also the case that philosophy must acknowledge the reality of a supra-rational dimension of reality in order to give a rational account for the origins of rational thought (otherwise the claims about "rational" thought remain self-referential, circular arguments.)

The foregoing discussion shows the reason/revelation divide to be based on a category mistake. It is based on a confusion between the origin of

knowledge claims (supra-rational instincts) and the criteria for articulating and validating knowledge claims (inferential reasoning)<sup>7</sup>. If this category mistake is recognized then it is obvious that the only “divide” that separates reason from revelation is the “divide” that separates the root from the fruit or the soil from the plant. The mistake of reifying the distinction between root and fruit or soil and plant is based on the same flawed reasoning as the mistake of rejecting the distinction between root/fruit or soil/plant. Both the Qur’anic narrative and Peirce’s philosophical reflections not only demand but also give us the wherewithal to see, simultaneously, the similarity and the distinction between reason and revelation – in brief, they give us the wherewithal to see the relationship between reason and revelation. In sum, this discussion did not merely demonstrate that the reason/revelation divide is untenable from the perspective of scripture and philosophy. It has demonstrated that revelation acknowledges not only the validity of reason but its indispensability so that it itself is properly understood. Conversely, philosophy not only recognizes the reality of revelation, it cannot give a completely rational account of the origin of human knowledge without acknowledging this supra-rational reality. Consequently, the relationship between reason and revelation is not merely that the one affirms the other – the relationship goes deeper in that the one requires the other for its self-realization.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> It is obvious that the work of C.S. Peirce the philosophers lends greater depth and breadth to the description of “reason” or “reasoning” as this word is used in the Qur’an. At the same time the Qur’an lends greater depth and breadth to the terms “instincts” as it is used by Peirce. At this point it would be a worthwhile exercise on the part of the reader to go back to the beginning of the essay and see how the terms “reason” and “revelation” have been affirmed and modified from their originally provisional, minimal description.

<sup>8</sup> This description of the relationship between reason and revelation not only corrects the mistaken views of modern fundamentalists (both in the secular academy and the religious seminary) it also sheds light on debates of bygone centuries. For example, this discussion shows that Ibn Rushd’s claim is clearly erroneous. He claimed that revelation and philosophy talk about the same truth but in two different languages. He imagined that the language of revelation is metaphorical and for the *boi poloi*, while the language of philosophy is rational and for a select elite (with himself at or near the top of this elite group.) He was right in that philosophy and revelation talk about the same truth, but obviously wrong in how the words “the same truth” are to be understood. Ghazzali asserted that the particulars of philosophic (or scientific) claims about reality are completely irrelevant as long as they do not contradict certain religious teachings. He notes:

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Once its [the world's] temporal existence is established, it makes no difference whether it is a sphere, a simple body, a hexagon; no difference whether the highest heaven and what is beneath them are thirteen layers, as they say, or lesser or greater. For the relation of the inquiry into [these matters] to the inquiry into divine [matters] is similar to the relation of looking at the number of layers of an onion [or] the number of seeds in a pomegranate. What is intended here is only [the world's] being God's act, whatever mode it was (Ghazzali, 7).

While one can sympathize with Ghazzali's attempt to shield what he held dear (religious truth) from the irresponsible and undisciplined speculations of philosophers, it appears that he overstated his case. Given the fact that the world is a creation of God no less than scripture is the revelation of God, one cannot be as dismissive of philosophical (i.e., scientific) inquiry and conclusions into the nature of reality as Ghazzali was wont to be. In spite of its historical value, Ghazzali's plea for a minimalist and unilinear relationship between philosophy and religion (or reason and revelation) is inadequate on two counts – one scientific, the other religious. On scientific grounds Ghazzali is mistaken because the relationship between the two is deeper and more reflexive than he concluded. On religious grounds Ghazzali's position is mistaken because it does not “meet the demands of the day” – the day being a period in history in which religion finds itself in a post-traditional, post-industrial, on the verge of “post-human,” global village.

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