

Principles of Knowledge from the Perspective of Kant and Abu Mu'in al-Nasafi

Qudratullah Behzad^{1*}, Dr. Seyed Zuhair Al-Mesilini²

¹PhD student in Islamic Theology, Department of Philosophy and Islamic Theology, Al-Mustafa International University, Golestan Branch, Afghanistan | Email: 11516035@miu.ac.ir

²Scientific Department of Islamic Theology, Golestan Representative Office, Al-Mustafa International University, Tunisia | ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-1335-7267> | Email: zohir_mesilini@miu.ac.ir

*Corresponding Author: Qudratullah Behzad | Email: 11516035@miu.ac.ir

Abstract

This article examines and analyzes the principles of knowledge from the perspectives of Abu Mu'in al-Nasafi and Immanuel Kant. Abu Mu'in al-Nasafi categorizes the sources of religious knowledge into three types: revelation, reason, and sensory perception or intuition. In contrast, Kant's principles of knowledge are based on reason, morality, and experience.

The study demonstrates that although reason has historically been regarded as a fundamental tool for acquiring knowledge, philosophers have also acknowledged its inherent limitations. Nasafi viewed reason as a divine gift that, when guided by revelation, could approach the truth; however, it was incapable of comprehending all dimensions of reality on its own. Similarly, Kant, while emphasizing the limitations of theoretical reason, believed that reason could not attain complete knowledge of the "thing-in-itself" and could only function within the realm of "phenomena."

The findings of this research indicate that both thinkers, despite their cultural and methodological differences, recognized the limitations of rational knowledge. However, Nasafi believed that revelation and faith complemented reason in achieving complete knowledge, whereas Kant restricted the domain of reason to empirical and moral matters, considering metaphysical knowledge beyond the capacity of reason. Through a comparative analysis of the views of both figures and a critique of Kant's perspective, this study concludes that rational principles of knowledge, due to their inherent limitations, are insufficient for attaining complete truth. Therefore, the attainment of comprehensive knowledge always requires reliance on supra-experiential sources, particularly divine revelation.

Keywords: Revelation, Faith, Reason, Knowledge, Kant, Abu Mu'in.

Introduction

In this article, I examine and compare the principles of rational knowledge from the perspectives of Abu Mu'in al-Nasafi, a prominent Islamic theologian, and Immanuel Kant, a great Western philosopher. The concept of rational knowledge and the pursuit of truth through reason and thought has always been one of the fundamental issues in the history of philosophy and theology. Throughout history, thinkers from diverse intellectual and cultural backgrounds have sought to define and assess the role of reason in attaining truth and knowledge. This study is an attempt to understand the differences and similarities between these two prominent approaches in Islamic and Western philosophy.

Abu Mu'in al-Nasafi, who holds a significant position in the Islamic theological tradition, aims to explain the role of reason alongside revelation and faith in guiding humanity toward truth. On the other hand, Immanuel Kant, as one of the founders of modern philosophy, examines the limitations of reason and demonstrates how human intellect can comprehend the world to a certain extent but faces constraints in achieving complete knowledge of reality. Comparing these two perspectives can help us gain a deeper

understanding of the principles and limitations of rational knowledge in different intellectual traditions and analyze the role of reason in ethics, religion, and science.

The objective of this article is to explore the foundations, methods, and applications of rational knowledge in the thought of Nasafi and Kant, addressing questions about the place of reason in human life and knowledge. Furthermore, this research aims to clarify the similarities and differences between these two viewpoints, contributing to a better understanding of the relationships and mutual influences between Islamic and Western philosophy in the realm of epistemology.

1. Conceptual Analysis

1.1. Definition of Intellect

The term "intellect" (*'aql*) has multiple meanings in linguistic usage, the most significant of which are:

1. **Restraint, control, and restriction** – This is evident in classical Arabic expressions such as *'aqala al-ba'ir bi al-'iqāl* (he tied the camel with a rope) or *'aqalat al-mar'ah sha'rahā* (the woman tied her hair), and similarly, *'aqala lisānahu* (he restrained his tongue).
2. **Understanding and comprehension** – When applied to humans, intellect refers to the ability to restrain one's desires and impulses (*hawa al-nafs*). As Mustafa ¹states, the intellect serves as a means of control. Likewise, al-Raghib al-Isfahani defines intellect as preservation and retention²

In philosophical terminology, the concept of intellect has been used in two principal meanings since ancient times:

- **(a) The intellect as an immaterial entity** – It is independent of material existence both in its essence and in its operations ³
- **(b) The intellect as a faculty of the soul** – It is described as a divine light that guides human beings toward truth. God has endowed this faculty in humans as an internal proof (*hujjat bāṭini*). Intellect is one of the fundamental faculties of human beings, distinguished from sense perception, imagination, and illusion. It has the capability to grasp universal and abstract concepts, as it perceives entities in their non-material form. Consequently, the intellect is the faculty responsible for comprehending existence. If it dominates the animalistic faculties (*shahawāt* and desires of the soul), it remains free from error. Human error arises when other faculties, such as sensory perception, imagination, and illusion, overpower the intellect. The function of the intellect is never devoid of wisdom, and it is considered reprehensible for rational beings (*dhawi al-'uqūl*) to act without wisdom⁴

1.2. Definition of Sensory Perception

Sensory perception (*ḥiss*) refers to the mental representation of objects when the mind directly interacts with the external world through one of the five senses. For example, when a person observes a beautiful scene or a delicate flower, a specific image of it is reflected in their mind. This is a state of immediate, present observation.

As Abu Mansur al-Maturidi (may Allah have mercy on him) states:

¹ - Mostafavi, Hassan, *Al-Tahqiq fi Kalimat al-Quran al-Karim* (Investigation into the Words of the Holy Quran), (Tehran: Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, 1989), 8, 196.

² - Ragheb Isfahani, Hossein, *Mufradat al-Alfāz al-Qur'ān* (Vocabulary of the Words of the Quran), (Arāyeh Cultural Institute, 2008), 345.

³ - Shirazi, Sadr al-Din, *Sharh Usul al-Kafi* (Commentary on Usul al-Kafi), (Tehran-Iran: Ministry of Culture and Higher Education, Institute for Cultural Studies and Research, 1987), 1, 227.

⁴ - al-Nasafi, Abu al-Ma'in Maymun ibn Muhammad, *Bahr al-Kalam* (The Sea of Discourse), (Beirut-Lebanon: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyah, 2005), 6; Javadi, Mohsen, *Ma'nashenasi-ye Hosn va Qobh dar Falsafeh va Kalam-e Islami, Ayah-e Ma'refat* (Semantics of Good and Evil in Islamic Philosophy and Kalam, Verse of Knowledge), (Tehran: Shahid Beheshti Publications, 2008), 51

"The essence and attributes of objects that we perceive are never without a 'designer' (*muṣawwir*), for we sense these images through direct observation, thereby deducing the existence of a designer"⁵

1-3. Definition of Witnessing (Shuhud)

In linguistic terms, *shuhud* (witnessing) refers to observation through the inner eye and insight. As Raghib Isfahani states: "*Al-shuhud wa al-shahada al-hudur ma'a al-mushahada imma bil-basar aw bil-basirah...*"⁶

The essence of *shuhud* and *shahada* lies in presence accompanied by vision, whether it is through the physical eye or the inner eye (*basirah*). Additionally, *shuhud* carries meanings such as intuition, perception, discovery, illumination, comprehension, and inspiration. Our primary focus is on the latter meaning—*shuhud* as an inner inspiration, discovery, and cognition that serves as a means for uncovering Islamic knowledge.

In technical usage, *shuhud* has been employed with various meanings and interpretations, including witnessing something through presence or bearing testimony, where one term is used interchangeably with the other.

In Sufism, *shuhud* signifies the presence of the heart and the perception of whatever is present within it. If the Truth (*Haqq*) manifests within the heart, the person becomes a witness to it. The term *shuhud* is derived from *shahida*, meaning presence, and it is the opposite of *ghaybah* (absence)⁷

1-4. Definition of Revelation (Wahy)

In linguistic terms, *wahy* (revelation) has multiple meanings:

- The communication of something subtly and swiftly.
- A secret speech (symbolic and metaphorical).
- A pure sound devoid of articulation, or even writing⁸

Revelation involves delivering a message in a concealed manner. For this reason, inspiration (*ilham*) is also referred to as *wahy*. Some scholars define *wahy* as anything that one person conveys to another, whether through gestures, speech, or writing⁹

In theological discourse, *wahy* is defined as any form of knowledge that is granted to a prophet—either through an angel (Gabriel) or directly from God—concerning divine laws. This applies regardless of whether the prophet has an independent religious law (*shari'ah*) or not, as in the case of a *nabi*¹⁰

2. Background and Position of Abu Mu'in al-Nasafi in Islamic Theology

Abu Mu'in al-Nasafi was a prominent thinker in the field of Islamic theology (*kalam*) and one of the leading followers and commentators of the Maturidi school. He was active in the Greater Khorasan region (modern-day Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan).

Through works such as *Tabsirat al-Adillah* and *Al-Tamhid fi Usul al-Din*, he sought to fortify Islamic doctrinal principles using rational and logical arguments. Nasafi placed significant emphasis on the harmony between reason ('*aql*) and revelation (*wahy*), advocating a balanced approach that avoided extremes in relying solely on either intellect or divine revelation. His position in Islamic theology is significant due to his contributions in articulating and reinforcing the philosophical and doctrinal foundations of the Maturidi school.

2. The Background and Position of Abu Mu'in al-Nasafi in Islamic Theology

⁵ - Nasafi, Muhammad ibn Omar, Fakhr al-Razi, *Tafsir Kabir* (The Great Exegesis), (Beirut-Lebanon: Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-Arabi, 1999), Vol. 7, 247

⁶ - Ragheb Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Qur'an* (Vocabulary of the Words of the Quran), 267.

⁷-Kashani, Abd al-Razzaq, *Istilahat al-Sufiyyah* (Terminology of the Sufis), (Qom: Bidar Publication, n.d.), 153-154.

⁸ - Ragheb Isfahani, "Mufradat Alfaz al-Qur'an," 4, 427.

⁹ - Ibn Manzur, Muhammad Akram, *Lisan al-Arab* (The Tongue of the Arabs), (Qom: Nashrat Adab al-Hawzah, 1985), 15, 380.

¹⁰ - Khalili, Mustafa, *Aql va Wahy dar Islam* (Reason and Revelation in Islam), (Qom: Bustan-e Ketab Institute, 2008), 106.

Abu Mu'in al-Nasafi was a prominent thinker in Islamic theology and a follower and interpreter of the Maturidi school. He was active in the Greater Khorasan region (present-day Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan). Through his works, such as *Tabṣirat al-Adillah* and *al-Tamhid fi Usul al-Din*, he sought to solidify Islamic doctrinal principles with rational and logical arguments.

Nasafi emphasized the harmony between reason (*Aql*) and revelation (*Wahy*) and adopted a balanced approach to avoid excess in either rationalism or reliance on divine revelation. His significance in Islamic theology lies in his efforts to explain and strengthen the doctrinal and philosophical foundations of the Maturidi school.

2-1. Rational Knowledge in the Thought of Abu Mu'in al-Nasafi

Abu Mu'in al-Nasafi, a distinguished Islamic theologian of the 5th century AH, paid special attention to rational knowledge, considering it one of the fundamental means for attaining truth. As one of the great scholars of the Maturidi theological school, he aimed to clarify the role of reason alongside revelation and faith in guiding humans toward the truth.

In Nasafi's view, rational knowledge refers to attaining truth through the proper use of human intellect. He believed that reason is a divine gift that guides individuals toward knowing God and understanding ethical principles. While reason is an independent tool, it is not separate from revelation. It assists humans in comprehending religious and moral principles. However, he asserted that the knowledge of God and religious principles cannot be attained by reason alone; rather, revelation and faith must accompany it to ensure a proper path toward the truth¹¹

2-2. Tools and Methods for Attaining Knowledge

Abu Mu'in al-Nasafi identified three primary sources for attaining religious knowledge:

- a) Reason (*Aql*);
- b) Revelation (*Wahy*);
- c) The five senses or intuition (*Shuhud*)¹²

He emphasized the harmony and interaction among these sources, arguing that each plays a distinct role in the process of knowledge acquisition but does not function independently from the others:

- **Reason:** According to Nasafi, reason is a necessary and capable instrument that enables humans to comprehend religious and moral principles. While reason can perceive certain truths, its understanding remains incomplete. It can interpret religious propositions but cannot independently attain all divine teachings. Reason can grasp general concepts such as good (*Hasan*) and evil (*Qubh*), but it cannot fully comprehend metaphysical realities such as angels or many divine rulings.
- **Revelation:** In Nasafi's view, revelation is a divine source that corrects and completes human intellectual knowledge. He believed that reason alone cannot attain absolute truth and requires divine guidance. Revelation provides both general and detailed religious doctrines, while reason serves as an interpreter, explaining and reinforcing divine rulings.
- **Intuition and the Five Senses:** Nasafi discussed intuition (*Shuhud*) less than the other two sources but acknowledged inner experiences and spiritual insights as means of acquiring knowledge. He believed that intuition and inspiration (*Ilham*) can contribute to understanding Islamic teachings. The five senses, widely recognized by both theologians and philosophers, serve as an essential tool for acquiring religious knowledge. Individuals who lack one or more senses may still attain certain insights through intuition and inner experience, though not as comprehensively as those with fully functioning senses¹³

¹¹ -al-Nasafi, Abu al-Ma'in Maymun ibn Muhammad, *Tabṣirat al-Adillah* (Admonition to the Proofs), (Damascus-Syria: French Scientific Institute for Arabic Studies, 2006), 1, 15

¹² - *Ibid.*: "Bahr al-Kalam" (The Sea of Theology), 1, 15

¹³ - *Ibid.*: 1, 15-24.

2-3. Rational Knowledge and Its Relationship with Faith and Revelation

Nasafi, in explaining the relationship between reason and faith, views reason as a factor that can guide humans toward religious beliefs and the recognition of God. In this approach, reason and faith are not in conflict with each other but are complementary. According to him, faith without reason and rational thinking leads to excess and irrational beliefs, and reason without faith cannot reach perfection due to its limitations. He poses the question, "If the message of revelation has reached a person who is rational but does not believe, is that person excused or not? And if someone does not know the conditions of faith, are they considered a believer or not?"¹⁴

He answers, "In our view, such a person is not excused; rather, it is obligatory for them to reason that the world has a Creator."

Therefore, rational knowledge in Nasafi's view is not only about logical reasoning and argument but also a tool for approaching revelation and faith, deepening religious understanding. By emphasizing the interaction between reason and revelation, Nasafi introduces rational knowledge as one of the important tools for understanding truth and achieving religious and ethical principles. In his thinking, reason alone cannot answer all human questions and needs revelation.¹⁵ This perspective of Nasafi, according to his esteemed teacher, shows that he places reason alongside revelation and faith, avoiding extremes of rationalism or traditionalism. Through this, he seeks to arrive at a balanced explanation of rational knowledge and its relationship with religion and ethics.

For this reason, to gain a deeper understanding of religious concepts and to reach the truth, it is necessary for reason and revelation to be together. Reason, when linked with revelation, can serve as an effective tool for explaining theological and philosophical issues, as, without revelation, reason cannot reach all the truths of Islamic knowledge.

In the thought of Abū Ma'in Nasafi, rational knowledge and faith are two concepts that, rather than being in opposition, can interact and evolve together. Nasafi, with a harmonized view of these two concepts, sees reason and faith as complementary, each playing a crucial role in guiding humans toward truth when linked with revelation. He believes that reason, as one of God's gifts, provides a way to understand religious concepts and recognize God, but this reason requires the guidance of revelation and the affirmation of faith to reach perfection in understanding the truth. For example, the intellect accepts the punishment of the grave, and revelation confirms the intellect, helping to deepen the understanding of such matters.¹⁶

2-4. The Role of Reason in the Path of Faith and Revelation

Abū Ma'in Nasafi views reason as a means that guides humans toward understanding and accepting religious principles and truths. He believes that reason enables individuals to logically and rationally understand the existence of God, divine attributes, and the concept of faith. From his perspective, reason can serve as a tool to achieve religious beliefs and interpret them.¹⁷ This rational interpretation helps individuals build their faith based on logical and understandable arguments, preventing them from falling into superstitions and baseless beliefs. He even considers the knowledge of God to be an intellectual obligation, stating: "If a rational person has not received the message of revelation and does not know their Lord, is that person excused? In our view, they are not excused, and it is obligatory for that person to reason that the world has a Creator..."¹⁸. For those who have not received the message of the messengers or

¹⁴ - Abu al-Ma'in Maymun, al-Nasafi, *al-Tamhid fi Usul al-Din* (The Prelude to the Principles of Religion), (Cairo-Egypt: Dar al-Thaqafah, 1987 [1407 AH]), 11; Ibid.: "Bahr al-Kalam" (The Sea of Theology), 29.

¹⁵ - Muhammad ibn Muhammad, al-Maturidi, *al-Tawhid* (The Book of Monotheism), Beirut-Lebanon: (Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 2006 [1427 AH]), 6-7.

¹⁶ - Ibid.: 162.

¹⁷ - Abu al-Ma'in, al-Nasafi, *Tabṣirat al-Adillah* (Admonition to the Proofs), 1, 16.

¹⁸ - Al-Nasafi, *Bahr al-Kalam* (The Sea of Theology), 29

scriptures, but are endowed with the gift of reason and yet do not recognize their Lord, is it excusable? In our view, the Maturidī Hanafi school does not consider them excused; they must use their reason to contemplate and deduce that the universe has a Creator. If there were no reason, even unseen religious truths would not be believable. Abū Maʿīn Nasafi, in his book *Bahr al-Kalām*, states: "The punishment of the grave can be proven through intellectual arguments, such as explaining the case of a person who has fallen asleep"¹⁹ Therefore, the punishment of the grave is one of the unseen religious propositions that Nasafi believes can be proven with reason, and without reason, the understanding of religious doctrines would be rendered void.

2-5. The Role of Revelation in Completing Rational Knowledge

While Nasafi emphasizes the importance of reason, he is also aware of its limitations and believes that reason alone cannot grasp all truths. Although reason has the ability to argue and understand, due to its inherent limitations, it cannot comprehend all aspects of divine truth and religious rulings²⁰

Therefore, revelation comes as a complete and divine source to illuminate areas where reason is unable to access, supporting the judgments of reason. Revelation, in essence, is a collection of divine teachings and guidance sent through the prophets to help humans gain a deeper understanding of truth and find their way to God. It can be said that revelation provides the final word and completes the understanding of Islamic knowledge.

2-6. The Interaction and Link Between Reason and Revelation in Creating Deep Faith

From Nasafi's perspective, rational knowledge and revelation can lead to a deep and lasting faith when they interact and align with each other. True faith, in his view, is based on both reason and revelation, meaning that the individual first uses reason and reflection to confirm the truth of revelatory teachings and then accepts this belief with their heart and soul. In other words, faith, according to Nasafi, is a process that begins with the use of reason and argument, as mentioned above, and then reaches its depth through reliance on revelation and heartfelt acceptance. This process allows the individual to attain stable faith and, with reliance on rational understanding and guidance from revelation, avoid falling into superstitions and incorrect beliefs²¹. As noted above, reason, in addition to distinguishing between good and evil, must also prove the existence of God, while revelation complements the judgment of reason. Since reason cannot comprehend all the details of Islamic knowledge, revelation is necessary to complete both the general and specific aspects of this knowledge.

2-7. The Limitations of Reason and the Importance of Faith and Revelation

Abū Maʿīn Nasafi holds the belief that reason alone cannot uncover all the secrets of the world and achieve full knowledge of God, as human reason, due to its inherent limitations, cannot fully grasp the depths of divine truths. Thus, revelation, as a divine source, has a complementary role and occupies a place beyond human reason. Nasafi emphasizes that faith and revelation are essential for deepening and completing human knowledge of God and religious principles. Faith, in this context, is the heartfelt and practical acceptance of the teachings of revelation, allowing reason to deepen its understanding²²

Thus, ultimately, Nasafi views reason and faith in a synergistic relationship; reason acts as a guide and leader, while revelation provides a more complete path for reason to follow. This connection allows humans to benefit from their intellectual abilities while also developing a deeper, heartfelt faith in the divine truths. Therefore, rational knowledge, from Nasafi's perspective, is not only an intellectual

¹⁹ - Ibid.: 162

²⁰ - Ibid.: 32

²¹ - Sayyid Lutfullah, Jalali, "Maturidi Theological Beliefs, Religions, Sects, and Mysticism," *Haft Aseman* (Seven Heavens), 23, (2004 [1383 SH]), 152-156; Shawqi, Yavuz, "The Maturidi School and Contemporary Reality," 157-158, (Tashkent, Uzbekistan, 2021).

²² - Abu al-Maʿīn, al-Nasafi, *Bahr al-Kalam* (The Sea of Theology), 59-90.

capability but, when connected with faith and revelation, becomes a tool for realizing religious and ethical beliefs and achieving a more complete understanding of the truth.

3. Rational Knowledge in the Thought of Immanuel Kant

Immanuel Kant, a prominent German philosopher of the 18th century, was born in 1724 in one of the cities of Germany. He dedicated his life to teaching philosophy and wisdom, and his philosophy became widely known during his time, leaving a profound impact on Western philosophy through his critical approach. With his work *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant fundamentally reconsidered the concept of rational knowledge and the cognitive capacities of humans, focusing on the limits and boundaries of reason. Instead of accepting the unlimited power of reason to know the world, Kant examined its boundaries and redefined the relationship between rational and empirical knowledge. Kant argued that reason can only understand certain aspects of the world, which are related to appearances, not to things as they are in themselves²³ The following sections discuss the principles of rational knowledge in Kant's philosophy.

3-1. Rational Knowledge in Kant's Philosophy

Kant believed that human knowledge is formed by the combination of two types of knowledge: a priori (pre-experience) and a posteriori (post-experience). A priori knowledge refers to knowledge that is independent of experience and is derived through reason, such as the principles of mathematics and logic. In contrast, a posteriori knowledge is that which is obtained through direct experience of the external world. Kant states that reason can achieve a priori knowledge, but this knowledge is limited to our understanding of reality and cannot fully reach the thing-in-itself or the reality independent of the mind²⁴ This distinction between a priori and a posteriori knowledge provides the basis for Kant's analysis of rational knowledge and makes reason only a limited tool in the pursuit of truth.

3-2. The Concept of "Phenomena" and "Thing-in-itself"

One of the key concepts in Kant's philosophy is the distinction between *phenomena* (the world as we experience it) and *noumena* (the thing-in-itself). Kant argues that what we experience of the world is only *phenomena*, or appearances, meaning the world as it is perceived by our mind and senses. On the other hand, *noumena* or the thing-in-itself refers to the reality that exists beyond our experiences, which the mind cannot directly access²⁵ This fundamental distinction shows that while reason can grasp general concepts and principles, it cannot attain complete knowledge or an accurate understanding of reality independent of experience.

3-3. Critique of Pure Reason and the Limitations of Rational Knowledge

In *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant examines the limitations of reason in knowing the world and argues that reason, on its own, cannot access all truth. He identifies three main areas where reason cannot reach the truth: God, the immortality of the soul, and freedom of the will. Kant believes these matters transcend the capacity of reason to attain complete knowledge, and any discussion on these topics will only lead to speculation and hypotheses. Therefore, he asserts that reason, in its search for complete knowledge, must recognize that full understanding of these matters is impossible for human beings²⁶

Kant, in the context of pure reason, states that reason may either relate to an object by organizing and determining its concepts, or it may ascribe reality (or actuality) to it. In the first case, reason is theoretical, and in the second, it is practical²⁷

²³ - Ja'far Subhani, Ayatollah, *Knowledge in Islamic Philosophy*, (Qom: Imam Sadiq Institute, 2003 [1382 SH]), 94, 2nd ed.

²⁴ - Zohreh, Memari; Sayyid Hamid, Talebzadeh, "The Thing-in-Itself from Fichte's Perspective," *Pajoohesh-ha-ye Olum-e Ensani Naqsh-e Jahan* (Research in Humanities, Naqsh-e Jahan), Vol. 8, Issue 9, No. 2, (2016 [1395 SH]), 1.

²⁵ - Ibid.: 4-5.

²⁶ - Morteza, Rouhani Ravari, "The Relationship between Faith and Knowledge in Kant's Thought," *Scientific Journal of Metaphysics*, Vol. 12, Issue 30, (2020 [1399 SH]), 139

²⁷ - Ibid.: 143-145; Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 363-367; Mohammad, Rezaei, *Explanation and Critique of Kant's Moral Philosophy*, (Qom: Islamic Propagation Office of Qom Seminary, Publications Center, 2000 [1379 SH]), 32.

Finally, in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant emphasizes that reason alone is not capable of attaining complete truth and must restrict itself to the realm of pre-experience concepts, particularly in areas beyond direct experience and actual knowledge.

3-4. The Relationship Between Reason and Ethics in Kant's Philosophy

One of the most important aspects of rational knowledge in Kant's thought is its connection with ethics. In his work *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant attempts to clarify the role of reason in determining moral principles. According to him, moral principles follow a form of a priori law that exists in human practical reason. These moral principles, which he calls "categorical imperatives," are a priori and inherently present in the reason of all humans and obligate everyone to act according to them. Therefore, for Kant, reason is not only used for understanding the world but also serves as a tool for determining ethical behavior and achieving a free will ²⁸

In this context, Kant refers to the "ought" of ethics, which transcends individual desires and wills. These categorical imperatives guide humans to act according to moral principles, without considering personal interests. With this perspective, Kant views ethics as one of the domains where reason can legitimately intervene and understand its laws. From this point of view, practical reason, within the framework of Kant's moral principles, becomes a tool for guiding humans toward ethical and responsible behavior.

Thus, in Kant's philosophy, reason, when it comes to understanding the world, has specific limitations and cannot access the complete truth. He explicitly states that reason can only reach "phenomena" and is incapable of knowing the "thing-in-itself" or the reality independent of the mind. However, Kant presents reason as a crucial tool for determining moral principles and guiding humanity on the path of ethics, asserting that moral principles exist in human practical reason a priori and independently of experience ²⁹ Kant also addresses religious beliefs, such as the divine intervention in the natural events of the world, like miracles or the incarnation of Christ. As much as possible, he attempts to interpret and justify these based on his ethical doctrine; otherwise, he remains silent or rejects them. Kant does not interpret the incarnation of God in Christ as a miracle in the supernatural order but sees it as a manifestation and moral ideal. He claims that all human beings, as moral agents, have an ideal of moral perfection, and Christ was merely an example of this ideal ³⁰

Therefore, while Kant sees reason as limited in understanding the complete reality, he considers it crucial for determining ethics and establishing a valid moral system. Thus, in Kant's philosophy, rational knowledge is not only the knowledge of the phenomenal world but also the formulation of moral principles and free will, which helps humans act based on reason and ethics.

4. Comparative Analysis of the Views of Abu Ma'in Nasafi and Immanuel Kant on Rational Knowledge

The comparison of the views of Abu Ma'in Nasafi and Immanuel Kant on rational knowledge reveals fundamental differences and similarities in two distinct intellectual traditions: Islamic and Western philosophy. Despite cultural and historical differences, both thinkers sought to investigate the role of reason and knowledge in human understanding, but their conclusions and methods regarding the power and limitations of reason differ significantly. In the following, these similarities and differences will be discussed from various aspects.

4-1. The Role of Reason in the Knowledge of Truth

As mentioned, in the thought of Abu Ma'in Nasafi, reason is viewed as a divine tool for understanding truth and discovering religious principles alongside revelation and faith. Nasafi believes that reason is

²⁸ - Rouhani Ravari, "The Relationship between Faith and Knowledge in Kant's Thought," 153 and 145-146.

²⁹ - Ibid.: 149.

³⁰ - Immanuel, Kant, *Lectures on Moral Philosophy*, Translator: Manouchehr Sanei Dareh Bidi, (Tehran: Philosophy Publications Institute, Sixth Edition, 2017 [1396 SH]), 54-60; Rouhani Ravari, Reza, Bakhshayesh, "Causality from Kant's Perspective," 666.

divine and guiding, leading humans to a rational understanding of the world and religious matters. However, this reason requires guidance and confirmation from revelation to remain free from error and reach the truth.

In contrast, Kant views reason as an independent and fundamental tool for understanding the realities of the world. However, he argues that human reason has limitations when it comes to attaining the "thing-in-itself" (absolute reality). From Kant's perspective, reason only understands phenomena and, due to its structural limitations, cannot transcend the boundaries of experience to acquire a complete and comprehensive understanding of the world. Thus, while Kant emphasizes the value of reason, he limits its scope of knowledge and closes the door to any form of absolute knowledge. On the other hand, Nasafi accepts reason as a tool for discovering truth in interaction with revelation and believes that reason, with the help of revelation, reaches all knowledge (both general and specific).

4-2. The Relationship Between Reason and Revelation

One of the fundamental differences between the views of Nasafi and Kant is how reason interacts with transcendental sources such as revelation. In Nasafi's philosophy, revelation and reason are complementary sources for understanding the truth, with faith serving as a guide for the heart and mysticism alongside reason and revelation. He believes that reason alone is insufficient to comprehend all truths and requires the completion and correction by revelation to lead humans to understand religious principles and divine knowledge.

In contrast, Kant sees revelation and religious principles as sources beyond the capacity of reason, and by emphasizing the limitations of reason, he argues that we cannot expect reason to achieve complete knowledge of God, immortality, or freedom.³¹ From Kant's perspective, these domains lie beyond the reach of theoretical reason, and reason, rather than acquiring knowledge, can only approach these concepts as moral hypotheses within the practical realm. Thus, although Kant does not completely deny revelation, he places it outside the domain of theoretical reason, in the realm of faith and ethics.

4-3. The Limitations of Reason and Methods of Acquiring Knowledge

Both philosophers acknowledge the limitations of reason, but their views on these limitations differ. Nasafi believes that reason, as a divine gift, has limitations that can be compensated for with the help of revelation and faith. According to him, humans must utilize their rational capacities but always remain attentive to the guidance of revelation in order to achieve a proper and complete understanding of religious concepts and the nature of the universe.

Kant also recognizes the limitations of reason but concludes that reason is limited to the knowledge of "phenomena" and cannot know the "thing-in-itself." According to Kant, the boundaries of theoretical reason are insufficient for a complete understanding of the world, and these limitations prevent reason from addressing some fundamental questions, such as the existence of God and immortality. Therefore, Kant suggests that instead of relying on revelation, reason should function within the realm of ethics and practical reason, fulfilling its duties and role.³²

4-4. Reason and Ethics

In Nasafi's view, reason and ethics are directly related to revelation and faith. In Nasafi's thought, ethics are based on religious principles and divine commandments that are confirmed and guided by revelation and faith. From Nasafi's perspective, reason can understand ethical principles, good and evil, but complete morality is achieved by following religious principles.³³ Kant, however, presents reason as the foundation and source of ethical principles and believes that moral principles exist in human practical reason

³¹ - Zohreh, Memari; Sayyid Hamid, Talebzadeh, "The Thing-in-Itself from Fichte's Perspective," 2.

³² - Ibid.: 1-4.

³³ - Abu al-Mu'in Maymun ibn Muhammad, al-Nasafi, *Al-Tamhid fi Usul al-Din*, (Cairo-Egypt: Dar al-Thaqafah, 1407 [AH]), 64, 143, 84.

independently of religion and revelation. He argues that practical reason guides humans to ethical principles derived from "categorical imperatives." Kant emphasizes the independence of practical reason, arguing that humans should act based on rationality, without being influenced by personal interests or even external commands. Thus, ethical principles are established on the foundation of reason³⁴

5. Critique and Review of Kant's View

A comparison of Kant's and Abu Ma'in Nasafi's views on intellectual knowledge reveals fundamental differences between Islamic and Western philosophical traditions. Although both philosophers acknowledge the value and limitations of reason, their solutions and interpretations of reason's position, especially in relation to faith and metaphysics, differ. A critique and review of these two viewpoints provides an opportunity to understand the various aspects, strengths, and weaknesses of each.

5-1. The Dependence of Reason on Revelation and Faith: Nasafi vs. Kant

Nasafi's View:

Abu Ma'in Nasafi believed that human reason is a divine gift that plays an important role in understanding the truth, but it is not capable of discovering all truths on its own. According to Nasafi, reason can grasp general and religious concepts, but in metaphysical realms and fundamental religious principles, it requires the guidance of revelation. Revelation, as a source beyond reason, provides a more precise and profound understanding of the fundamental issues of life and divine principles, complementing human reason.

Kant's View:

Immanuel Kant, although recognizing the importance of reason, views it as severely limited and argues that reason alone cannot achieve full knowledge of the transcendent world and metaphysics. He does not completely deny revelation but confines it to a domain independent of theoretical reason. In other words, Kant, in criticizing pure reason, separates it from the domain of revelation and religion, arguing that the realms of metaphysics and faith are beyond the reach of theoretical reason³⁵

Critique and Review of Kant's View:

A comparison of these two views reveals that Nasafi sees reason and revelation as complementary, believing that reason, guided by revelation, can reach a more complete understanding of the truth. This perspective allows Nasafi to incorporate reason into areas that Kant deems inaccessible and beyond the scope of theoretical reason. In contrast, Kant, who emphasizes the independence of reason from revelation and religion, confines reason to the realm of practical ethics, asserting that reason cannot attain absolute truth. These differences highlight the fundamental philosophical divergences between Islamic and Western thought; while Nasafi acknowledges the role of faith and revelation in completing intellectual knowledge, Kant draws strict boundaries between reason and religion.

5-2. The Limitations of Reason in Understanding the World and Metaphysics

Kant's View:

Kant, emphasizing the limitations of reason, argues that reason is incapable of achieving a complete and comprehensive understanding of the world, and only has access to "phenomena," not to the "thing-in-itself." These limitations arise from the structure of the human mind, which lacks the capacity to grasp realities beyond experience. Kant sees this as an inherent limitation of reason and believes that we must accept the boundaries of reason and, instead of attempting to uncover metaphysical principles, focus on ethical and practical principles³⁶

Nasafi's View:

³⁴ - Rouhani Ravari, "The Relationship between Faith and Knowledge in Kant's Thought," 147-148.

³⁵ - Ibid.: 145-148.

³⁶ - Ibid.: 148; Zohreh, Memari; Sayyid Hamid, Talebzadeh, "The Thing-in-Itself from Fichte's Perspective," 4

Nasfi also acknowledges the limitations of reason, but offers a different solution. He believes that reason, with the guidance of revelation, can approach an understanding of the truth. From Nasfi's perspective, revelation assists reason in achieving a deeper understanding beyond sensory experiences, paving the way for the comprehension of divine principles and religious doctrines.

Critique of Kant's View:

By limiting reason to the understanding of phenomena, Kant essentially shuts the door to metaphysical discussions and fundamental ontological issues. Although this view seems realistic, from the religious and theological perspective that Nasfi presents, ignoring the possibility of revelation guiding one towards complete knowledge is seen as a kind of limitation. Kant attempts to restrict reason to ethical and experiential issues, but Nasfi, acknowledging the divine capacities of reason, sees it as an instrument for a fuller, more comprehensive understanding of the world, provided that revelation guides it.

Reason and Ethics: Moral Independence in Kant vs. Connection with Religion in Nasfi

Kant's View:

Kant believes that ethical principles are independent of religion and revelation, and that human practical reason can establish ethical principles as "categorical imperatives." In other words, Kant presents practical reason as the main source and foundation of ethics, independent of faith and religious teachings. For Kant, humans must adhere to rational, impartial ethics, without regard for personal interests or even religious commandments.

Nasfi's View:

From Nasfi's perspective, reason and ethics find meaning within the framework of faith and divine revelation. He believes that ethical principles are confirmed and completed by revelation, and that moral behaviors reach their perfection through adherence to religious teachings and the guidance of revelation. In this context, revelation plays a significant role in guiding ethical and rational principles for humans.

Critique of Kant's View:

Kant's view on moral independence grants reason a special place in ethics, but from Nasfi's viewpoint, this is limited; without divine guidance and revelation, ethical principles could fall into relativism or individual biases. On the other hand, Nasfi's perspective might be seen by Kant as a limitation on individual autonomy, as it considers reason and ethics to be dependent on revelation. This fundamental difference in their views stems from their differing perspectives on human nature and the relationship between humans, the world, and the source of morality. Kant defines ethics as independent of religion and centered on human reason, while Nasfi sees ethics as connected to revelation and religion, which provide direction and legitimacy to reason. According to Nasfi, the source of ethical obligation is rooted in revelation and its teachings.

Conclusion

The following conclusions can be drawn from the perspectives of both thinkers:

The views of Kant and Nasfi on intellectual knowledge reflect deep differences between Islamic and Western philosophies. Nasfi, emphasizing the interaction between reason and revelation, offers a comprehensive solution to the limitations of reason and believes that, with the guidance of revelation, reason can achieve a more complete and profound understanding of the world and metaphysical issues. In contrast, Kant, by limiting reason to the realm of experience and practical ethics, adopts a more cautious and restricted approach to knowledge. Generally, it can be said that Kant's approach separates reason from religion and revelation, respecting its independence, but at the same time, this independence becomes an obstacle to reaching the complete truth. On the other hand, Nasfi, by combining reason and revelation, provides a way to link reason and religion, which, according to him, leads to a fuller and more comprehensive understanding of the truth.

1. **Acceptance of the limitations of reason in both views:** Both thinkers, Abu Ma'een Nasfi and Immanuel Kant, acknowledge the inherent limitations of reason in understanding the truth and

believe that reason alone cannot achieve a complete understanding of metaphysical matters and absolute truth.

2. **The completion of reason with revelation in Nasfi's view:** Nasfi believes that reason, as a divine gift, can reach a more complete and comprehensive understanding alongside revelation. He sees reason and revelation as complementary, with revelation aiding reason in accessing fundamental truths and religious principles.
3. **Independence of reason from revelation in Kant's view:** Kant regards reason as independent from religion and revelation, limiting it solely to the understanding of phenomena and moral issues. From Kant's perspective, reason cannot grasp the "thing-in-itself" or the essence of things, and operates only in the empirical realm and practical ethics.
4. **Different approaches to ethics:** Kant believes that ethical principles are established by practical reason independently of religion, while Nasfi sees reason and ethics as valid within the framework of guidance from revelation, believing that ethics reaches its perfection through revelation and that the source of moral obligation is rooted in revelation and Islamic teachings.
5. **Cultural and philosophical differences between the views:** This research shows that the cultural and philosophical differences between these two thinkers result in a divergence in the way reason interacts with religion and faith. Nasfi accepts reason in interaction with revelation, while Kant limits reason to a specific domain and separates it from religion.
6. **The importance of examining trans-experiential sources alongside reason:** This research emphasizes that diverse views on the interaction of reason with trans-experiential sources (such as revelation and faith) can contribute to a deeper understanding of epistemology and provide various ways to use reason in understanding the world.
7. **Offering two solutions to the limitations of reason:** Overall, Nasfi and Kant each propose different solutions to the limitations of reason: Nasfi emphasizes revelation as a complementary source to reason, while Kant emphasizes the independence of reason in the realm of ethics. These two perspectives reflect different attitudes toward the role of reason in the path to understanding the truth.

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