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FACTORS OF APPLICATION OF INTELLECTUAL EVIDENCE IN THE TAFSIR OF ABU MANSUR MOTURIDI “TA’WILAT AHL AS-SUNNAH”

Abstract: It is well known that there have always been critical views on the doctrine of moturidism, and today they are even more prevalent. This criticism is based on the view that Moturidi preferred intellectual evidence to narrative evidence. In fact, such an idea stems from a deep ignorance of the basics of moturidism. Therefore, for a correct understanding of this teaching, it is important to know the style of tafsir of “Ta’wilat ahli-s-sunna” and the features of the work of a scholar.

Key words: moturidiyya, tafsir, Ta’wilat ahli-s-sunna, Kitab at-tawhid, intellectual evidence, narrative evidence, nazar, mu’tazilites, atheists, eschatology.

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Introduction

In the “Ta’wilat ahli-s-sunna”, one can observe a peculiar style in the use of intellectual evidence. Moturidi uses intellectual evidence to support and substantiate the evidence in religious texts. The skill of the scholar is that he is also superior to them in arguing with sects that place intellectual evidence over narrative evidence in terms of mental-logical proof. That is, it defeats them in their own style. At the same time, the narrative evidence stands within its meanings and is based on the foundations of the Ahl as-Sunnah belief. Majdi Basallum states that the scholar was able to maintain a balance in this regard as well:

“What is remarkable about Moturidi's rational commentaries is that he always seeks meanings close to the appearance of the verse and does not delve as deeply into the interpretation as in mystical commentaries. It is also not limited to the appearance of the text of the verse alone, as it seems. Perhaps Moturidi looks at the verses with a meticulous and moderate gaze. He seeks the meaning that the verse is supposed to have and does not deviate it from the intended purpose” [1].

While the scholar’s aim was to establish a comprehensive justification of the Sunni faith, he provides solid evidence on every doctrinal issue in Sunni teaching. U. Rudolf says about the work “Kitab at-tawhid”:

“This work is not limited to summarizing the basic tenets of the faith and giving them favorable explanations. Its purpose was to examine the whole of Islamic theology and to show that it should be recognized as a holistic system of irrefutable evidence” [2].

The same can be said about the “Ta’wilat ahli-s-sunna”. That is, the scholar pays a great amount of attention to substantiating the Ahl as-Sunnah belief in every way, both in terms of standard narrative and in terms of intellect. Although Rudolf, like other Western scholars, was critical of Moturidi and Moturidism, he acknowledges the scholar's ability to argue.

Muhammad Abu Zahra, another scholar who is critical of Moturidi's method of proving, compares Moturidism and Ash'arism and claims that Moturidi put a lot of emphasis on reason. And he also states this:

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“However, an in-depth study of the views of Moturidi and al-Ash'ari shows that there is a difference between the two scholars' views on reason in matters of faith. There is no doubt that both of them try to present rational and logical arguments in proving the beliefs contained in the Qur'an. Although they both rely on the teachings of the Qur'an, one of them gives the mind greater "authority" over the other. For example, in the Ash'arites, it is obligatory to know Allah when one is called to the true religion, while in Moturidism, it is obligatory to understand it intellectually, even if one is not called to it. Moturidi follows the path of Abu Hanifa in this regard” [3].

Abu Zahra seeks to prove his point with similar examples. In fact, this view is widespread in the Arab world, which beliefs in Ash'arism. In denying this, it can be said that Moturidi, in his “Kitab at-tawhid”, enumerates the foundations of science, puts the mind at last, and refutes those who oppose its use as evidence in matters of faith, first and foremost, from narrative evidence. In particular, he quotes the following verses from the Qur'an against them:

“We will show them Our signs in the universe and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that this is the truth” (Fuṣṣilat: 53).

“Do they not observe the camel,[to see] how she has been created? and the sky, how it has been raised? and the mountains, how they have been set? and the earth, how it has been surfaced?” (Al-Ghāshiyah: 17-20).

“Indeed in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of night and day, and the ships that sail at sea with profit to men, and the water that Allah sends down from the sky – with which He revives the earth after its death, and scatters therein every kind of animal – and the changing of the winds, and the clouds disposed between the sky and the earth, are surely signs for a people who apply reason” (Al-Baqarah: 164).

Moturidi was also forced to resort more to reason and logic in arguments with the groups such as the Mu'tazilites and atheists, who saw reason as the basic norm to prove that they were wrong. Because, often, the evidence that proves the falsity of a mental argument is also mental:

“He who denies nazar (intellectual proof) has no proof other than nazar (intellect). This is proof that intellectual evidence is necessary for the denial of intellectual evidence. In order to understand the wisdom of creation and to understand that it is not simply done, that is, without a purpose, one must look at reason. It is also necessary to reason to prove who created the universe, or whether it existed spontaneously, or whether it was created later or eternal. All this is proof that there is no other way for other than science to look” [4].

It is clear from this that Moturidi's extensive use of intellectual and logical evidence does not mean that he prefers reason to the narration. Perhaps this was to

give a reasonable rebuttal to those who preferred intellectual evidence, or to support the narrative evidence [11, 12, 13].

One of the contemporary scholars, Muhammad Fazl Muhammad Abu Jabal, says the following about the role of reason in the scholar's style of interpretation:

“Imam Moturidi often refers to reason in his commentary. The reason for this, in short, is that the scholar followed the representatives of the "Iraqi school", that is, the "Ahl al-Ray". This school was founded by the great Companion Abdullah ibn Mas'ud (r.a.), after whom many famous scholars raised the flag of this school. The most famous of these is Abu Hanifa Nu'man and his two disciples: Abu Yusuf and Muhammad. They had a great influence on the intellectual and scientific life of Islamic civilization. Imam Moturidi was also a representative of this school, but also one of the leaders who formed its foundations. However, he was not just a follower and imitator, but also the one who added unique, special and new features to it” [5].

At a time when attempts are being made to misinterpret the Islamic creed, it is important to study Moturidi's debates with those who prefer the intellect to the evidence in the divine texts. Because they have sensible solutions to many of the problems raised by modern Mu'tazilites and atheists.

The following commentary on the sura “Al-Nahl”, verse 70, also shows Moturidi's skill in logical reasoning: “Allah has created you, and then causes you to die. And some of you are left to reach the most feeble stage of life so that they may know nothing after having known much. Indeed, Allah is All-Knowing, Most Capable.”.

“Allah reminds us that He has made human deaths different. The wisdom behind this is to want them to be always in fear and hope. Because if people's deaths were the same, they would be at peace because they knew exactly when they would die, and they would continue to sin until then, seeking repentance before death” [6].

“There is a time for every nation: when their time comes, they shall not defer it by a single hour nor shall they advance it” (Yūnus: 49). In the interpretation of this verse, the scholar says:

“That is, when they die, they cannot delay it, nor can they advance it beyond its term. It is also not permissible for a person to ask to a delay and speed it up. Because when death comes, it will not be postponed, and nothing will happen without its expiration. There is strong evidence in this verse that no one can without death being destined for him. This verse also refutes the Mu'tazilites' statement: “Whoever kills a person, he has killed him before his fate” [7].

As can be seen from the examples above, Moturidi cites the intellectual evidence to support the

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narrative evidence. This does not allow any objection from the other party.

Even in the time of Abu Mansur Moturidi, there were many atheistic views formed under the influence of Ancient Greek philosophy. Speaking of different groups of atheists, the scholar says:

“They agree on the primacy of the foundation of the universe, but differ in their views on what and how it came into being” [8].

If we pay attention to Moturudi's refutations of the atheists' views on eschatology, we can see that the scholar gave very perfect answers for his time, defeating the atheists who claimed reason and logic in his own way:

“Indeed those who defy Our signs, We shall soon make them enter a Fire” (Al-Nisā: 56).

In the interpretation of this verse, the scholar says:

“Atheists and those who deny the resurrection like them say: “The whole universe, that is, animate and inanimate beings, came into being at once. At the heart of existence is power, and then the action”. How can they deny the resurrection when the first creation is evidence against them?” [9].

That is, Moturidi says that the atheists' own hypothesis about the emergence of the universe would be sufficient evidence that the resurrection is true. It can be seen from this example that the atheists believed that the universe was created gradually, that is, not in an evolutionary way, but suddenly. From this

point of view, they differ from materialists, most of whom are Darwinists today.

In the commentary on this verse, the scholar also says:

“A group of atheists said: “The reward that will be given in the Hereafter will not be given to this body that eats and drinks and does various deeds. But it will be given to a soul whose original ore is light”. We say: “The life of the body is tested in the world by actions such as eating and drinking, it is surrounded by various imperfections and calamities. If the body is able to avoid guilt and shortcomings in spite of all the obstacles that stand in its way, there will be great blessings and a great reward for them” [10].

It seems that during the time of Imam Moturidi, some atheists did not completely deny the Hereafter. Perhaps they were only against certain beliefs that did not fit their beliefs.

Based on the above, it can be said that the information contained in the “Ta'wilat ahli-s-sunna” is important not only in the struggle against the modern followers of heretical sects such as Mu'tazilism, but also in preventing atheistic ideas in the form of missionary and proselytism, as well as popular culture. This is because in this work, the scholar was able to answer the questions of various misguided sects and members of the faith that condemn Islam on the basis of irrefutable evidence of the conspiracy questions that cast doubt on the Muslims and the misconceptions about Islam.

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