

HOW TO SAVE OUR IMAN IN TODAY'S CLIMATE

1

HOW THE ISLAMIC TRADITION VERIFIES TRUTH

Reading:

- See page 26 of *God, Islam and the Sceptic Mind*
- *The Greatest Universal Certainties* p 19-30

2

ISLAMIC EPISTEMOLOGY

First, it must be understood that human beings basically acquire knowledge using the following means:

- (1) the rational faculty or reason
- (2) the five basic senses⁴², and
- (3) intuition or knowledge associated with the heart and spirit.⁴³

Our sources of knowledge are basically three-fold as well:

1. The universe, including the heavens, the earth and the natural world.
2. Man—including what is within ourselves, i.e. the above-mentioned faculties, as well as that taught by Prophets and other people, both present and past.
3. God's Revelation in the form of scriptures and inspiration to individuals.

In this regard, Allah (SWT) states in the Qur'an:

3

PRINCIPLES OF KNOWING: BASIC POINTS



Science is knowing the truth as it is. As such it has to be based on a method that also relies on true realisations. Conjecture cannot produce truth, only conjecture.



The idea of 'objective research' is popularly attributed to modern science, but this popular attribution is not necessarily the truth. It needs to be tested and critiqued by examining the methodologies it adopts.



In our tradition, the motivator to seeking out an objective method for research and study is the religion itself. It is based on a command of Allah and therefore a duty. **"And do not concern yourself with anything that you have no knowledge of. Indeed the ears, the eyes and the hearts will all be brought to account"** [Al-Isrā' 17:36].



It is because of this that the scholars of *tawhid* have stipulated as a condition for a believer's faith that it be based on objective proofs of intellectual conviction and not the flawed method of following someone else.



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PRINCIPLES OF KNOWING: BASIC POINTS



A topic of research will always either be a piece of information that has been transmitted or a claim that has been made (or theory proposed).



Research into a transmitted piece of information must be restricted to verifying the link between it and its source, because the link is the object of possible perversion and doubt.



Research into a claim must be directed towards scientific proofs that are compatible with it and which by their nature will reveal the extent to which this claim is true.



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SUMMARY OF THE ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY OF KNOWLEDGE

إن كنت ناقلًا فالصحة أو مدعيًا فالدليل

“If you are transmitting, then authenticity, or making a claim then evidence.”

6

TRANSMISSION AND AUTHENTICITY

The duty to develop a systematic method for verifying transmitted information gave birth a group of sciences unrivalled in human history.

The Science of *Hadīth* Terminology
(*muṣṭalaḥ al- ḥadīth*),

The Science of Criticism and
Validation (of narrators) (*al-jarḥ
wa al-ta'dīl*),

And the Science of Biographies of
Men (*tarājum al-rijāl*)



These three sciences intersect in order to lay down a precise standard for distinguishing a true piece of information from what is otherwise, and the difference between a rigorously authentic piece of information that brings about 'probable conjecture' and that which brings about certainty.



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READING ...

'A piece of information reaches the highest level of authenticity when it is firmly established, by way of analysis and research, that the chain of transmission is joined from the one who carries the piece of information all the way back to its source, by way of upright and reliable narrators from other such narrators all the way to the source of the chain without any anomaly in its content and subtle defect in its narration. If the narration does not reach this level, because a link in the chain of transmission is missing because we do not know who it is, or there is lack of confidence in his uprightness, or a lack of certainty regarding his memorisation and his precision (in recording information), or the actual text that is being transmitted does not agree with an approved narration from someone else, then it is not rigorously authentic.'

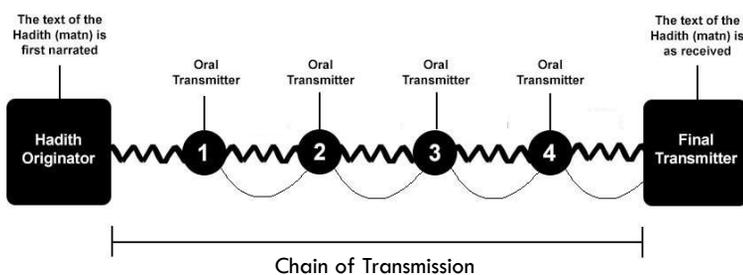


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EXAMPLE OF A CHAIN OF TRANSMISSION

حَدَّثَنَا الْحُمَيْدِيُّ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ الزُّبَيْرِ، قَالَ: حَدَّثَنَا سُفْيَانُ، قَالَ: حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ سَعِيدٍ الْأَنْصَارِيُّ، قَالَ: أَخْبَرَنِي مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ التَّمِيمِيُّ، أَنَّهُ سَمِعَ عَلْقَمَةَ بْنَ وَقَّاصِ اللَّبْيِيِّ، يَقُولُ: سَمِعْتُ عُمَرَ بْنَ الْخَطَّابِ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ عَلَى الْمِنْبَرِ قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ:

إِنَّمَا الْأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّاتِ، وَإِنَّمَا لِكُلِّ امْرِئٍ مَا نَوَى، فَمَنْ كَانَتْ هِجْرَتُهُ إِلَى دُنْيَا يُصِيبُهَا، أَوْ إِلَى امْرَأَةٍ يَنْكِحُهَا، فَهَاجَرَتْهُ إِلَى مَا هَاجَرَ إِلَيْهِ



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READING

But the rigorously authentic itself has different levels, starting from **strong probability** to **certain knowledge**. If the chain of transmission that carries all the essentials of rigorous authenticity is comprised of single narrators who transmitted the information between themselves, then it is inevitable that it will be, by judgement of reason, be deemed probable conjectural information. If the links in the chain of transmission are comprised of two or three narrators (at each level) then it is still probable conjectural information but conveys stronger probability that is close to certainty.

If each link in the chains, happen to be such a large groups of narrators that the intellect is satisfied that they cannot be colluding in a lie, then the narrated information acquires the attribute of certainty, and it is what is called mass-transmitted (*mutawātir*) information.

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As for rigorously authentic information that is probable conjecture, the Islamic ruling does not consider it in matters of creed, because it is only probable conjecture. The Qur'ān has prohibited (in the field of studying creed) the following of conjecture. This is as you have seen. However, it is considered authoritative in the scope of practical laws, because mass-transmitted and decisive evidence exists that the Muslim—with regards to practical conduct — is legally obligated to depend on the rigorously authentic that is conjectural. For this reason, it is valid for legal rulings to be based on rigorously authentic *aḥādīth* even if they are from a singular chains of transmission (*āḥād*), and this is based on caution and prudence in the matter.

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'You may ask me: How does the researcher know the conditions for a narration to be rigorously authentic? Let us assume that he hears the chain of transmission, how can he learn about the connectivity of these narrators to one another, and that they are all trustworthy, upright and precise (in recording)?

The answer: indeed both the **Science of Criticism and Validation**, and the **Science of the Biographies of Men** have been founded to facilitate the path of this study and make easy the examination of the information that needs to be found.'

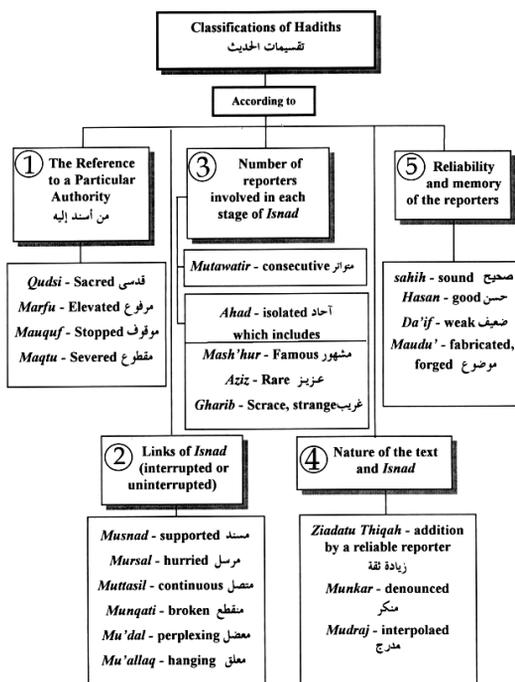
'...for in our Islamic library there are dictionaries of a different kind that have been compiled... dictionaries that accurately describe individuals and men; from them you can learn about what is false and not connected to the subject with the same ease that allows you to learn the accurate definition of a word and its explanation in the known dictionaries and lexicons of language.'

SCIENCES OF
CRITICISM
AND
VALIDATION,
AND THE
BIOGRAPHIES
OF MEN

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THE DISCIPLINE OF ḤADĪTH TERMINOLOGY

As we have in our library a specific discipline that has been compiled in this regard, and it is what is called the discipline of ḥadīth terminology, and this technique includes all the various essentials for substantiating transmissions and pieces of information in accordance with a unique scientific method.



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Isnad

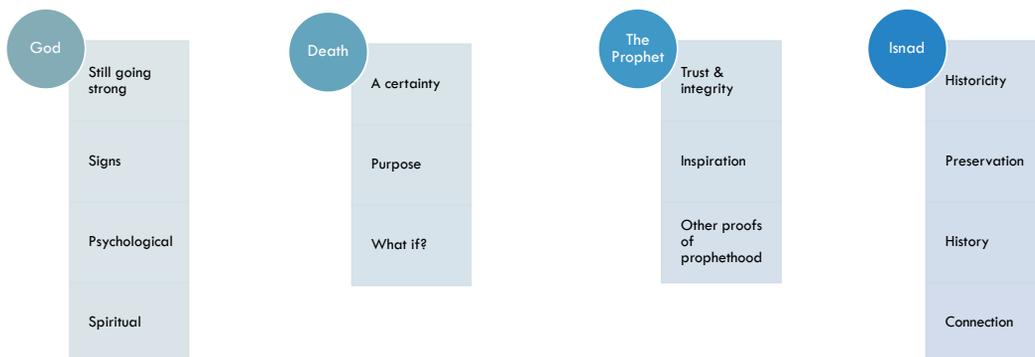
Only qat'iyyat can demand certainty and faith

Dhanniyat demand probability and compliance

This is the best that man can do. It is the best system that exists.

It had to be about trust and integrity. Otherwise nothing can be true.

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WHAT LEADS US TO FAITH

17

NON TRANSMITTED CLAIMS — TANGIBLE MATTERS

- When proving claims, theories, and hypotheses, there is no single method, the proof has to be appropriate to the claim.
- When proving something physical and material, empirical analysis and experimentation is used.
- Islam does not hesitate to adopt anything that has been definitely established by this means, such as many scientific findings.
- Science cannot present to us, even today, any scientific reality that contravenes any particular of Islamic theology.

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READING ...

'Furthermore, nothing in the Book or the Sunnah has made us legally responsible for any clear, specific information connected to the material things in existence around us. Rather, the Book and the Sunnah have given us expressions that indicate them and prompt us to think about them and reflect on them, more so than giving us information about them, and this is by relying on the means and apparatuses that Allah has provided man with and which are the natural tools for removing the veil of ignorance from every material reality in existence.'

'This is the secret behind the Qur'ān not going into great detail with regards to the scientific laws that are connected to that which is tangible and observable. If the Qur'ān had done that, it would have thus become obligatory upon people to believe in these details, and that in turn would have burdened human minds with having to adopt scientific realities without arriving at them by way of the proofs that are compatible with them, i.e. experimentation and empiricism. The Qur'ān has not burdened anyone with this task, and this is in order to honour the intellect and give it the freedom to use its natural method of unveiling tangible realities.'



19

READING ...

This is why, in these matters, you find the Qur'ān doing no more than pushing those endowed with intellect towards exploring and investigating by using their scientific, means of investigation. As for what it contains by way of information about the unseen, it has undoubtedly gone into great detail, because there is absolutely no way for experimentation and empiricism to arrive at that information. The only way to arrive at certainty in these matters is through Allah's Book, Mighty and Majestic is He, or the mass-transmitted Sunnah.



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NON TRANSMITTED CLAIMS — THE UNSEEN

- If a claim that is about the unseen (al-ghayb) which cannot be verified by the senses, then such a claim is of two types
 1. that which you find in the Book or the mass-transmitted Sunnah by way of a clear text
 2. that for which you do not find in either of them any clear account
- In the case of the former, if it is mass transmitted (mutawatir) like the Qur'an and some of the mutawatir sunnah, and the meaning of the particular text is not open to acceptable interpretation, then its veracity is indisputable as being from the Qur'an.