

**RETHINKING ISLAMIC INTELLECTUALISM
MOHSIN AL-MULK'S ANALYSIS OF
ISLAMIC EPISTEMOLOGY**

DR. ABDUL KHALIQ ABOYA
Assistant Professor,
Department of Philosophy,
University of Karachi, Karachi-75270,
Pakistan.
email: akaboya@uok.edu.pk

Introduction

Mohsin al-Mulk is among those Muslim intellectuals of the subcontinent who have shown keen interest in reviving the intellectual tradition of Islam by exploring the intellectual dimensions in the context of the epistemic framework of Islam. In this connection he stresses upon the need to draw compatibility between *mā'qūl* (rational) and *manqūl* (narrated traditional) in the perspective of Islamic theology. He tends to suggest that in order to attain the said objective one should develop an interpretive approach which may help one to represent those meanings of various concepts/terms which the revealed text intends to convey. He is of the view that such a stance will provide an impetus to develop one's understanding in accord with the will of God and help one bridge the gulf between reason and tradition, the two essential sources of Islamic epistemology. Mohsin al-Mulk tends to counter all such prevalent views which attempt to show incompatibility between the rational and traditional which may compel the Muslims to accept the traditional knowledge uncritically. He further laments that some scholars undermine the significance of interpretive/rational understanding in matters pertaining to religion on the pretext that it may distract one from the truth that emerged in the tradition.¹ He attributes such a misinterpretation to the ill-conceived relation between rational and religious sciences by the so-called traditionalists.

Significance of Traditional and Rational Sciences

In order to defuse controversy between rational and religious sciences Mohsin al-Mulk aptly refers to al-Ghazālī's pioneering work *Revival of Religious Learning* in which the author highlights the said issue in this way:

“Some think that science is opposed to religion. This is not at all correct. Such a man sets up one learning of *Sharī'at* against another. The reason is his failure to co-ordinate the two. As a result such people go out of religion. Such a man is just like a blind man who stumbles down against the furnitures of the house and says: Why has this furnitures been kept in the path way? The house owner says: They are in their proper places. It is your blindness which is responsible for your stumbling. This is also the case with one who thinks that science is opposed to religion”.²

To substantiate his claim further Mohsin al-Mulk refers to the Qur'ān which emphasizes at so many occasions, God's encouraging remarks for those who are eager to develop profound understanding of the Qur'ān as well as other worldly affairs with the help of reason instead of swaying with false assumption based upon profanation and alike. Given this fact in light, this rational attitude also helps one to explore the meanings of the revealed text in accord to one's ontological position which supersedes all other human capacities. In other words, the nature of revealed knowledge is such that it can be grasped and shared by different individuals in similar ways which reflects its objectivity and justifies the existence of a faculty called *'aql* (reason) and its significance in the discernment of truth and falsehood.³ To elaborate his point further he refers to the Qur'ān:

“Again turn thy vision a second time: (thy) vision will come back to thee dull and discomfited, in a state worn out.” (Al-Qur'ān, LXVII:4).

According to Mohsin al-Mulk and some other commentators of the Qur'ān, the said verse manifests God's assurance for those who observe and experience the minutest details of the external world in the best

possible way. This may lead one to penetrate beyond the veil of appearance and one is likely to acknowledge and appreciate its perfection, beauty and order. As the region of inquiry is so vast and stretches beyond one's knowledge that one's eyes, aided with the most powerful telescope, will confess oneself defeated in trying to make a way into the ultimate mysteries. One shall find no defect in Allah's creation: it is one's own powers that shall fail to go beyond a certain extent. For there are some hidden aspects in God's creation and man is endowed with the power to explore them. Man's recognition of a rational faculty and its purpose is the first step in the sphere of epistemological inquiry. To make his point more vivid, Mohsin al-Mulk has differentiated between *ulūm-i 'aqlī* (rational sciences) and *ulūm-i dīnī* (religious sciences). He claims that the former can be categorized into two groups as they can be known through reason. One is necessary and *badīhī* (axiomatic) which are certain and understandable without reasoning or *burhān* (demonstration). The other one is *nazrī* (theoretical knowledge) and *kasbī* (acquisitive knowledge) attainable through reasoning. While the latter is revealed by God through His prophets (ﷺ) to mankind concerning one's '*aqā'id*' (beliefs) or *a'māl* (practices). Here Mohsin al-Mulk seems to draw an analogy between Syed Ahmed's distinction between word of God and work of God and his distinction between religious sciences and rational sciences. In fact he is interested in showing that the word of God ensures the possibility of knowledge in the sphere of religion and one's rational faculty helps one to acquire knowledge pertaining to worldly affairs. Hence the use of reason in worldly affairs as well as in religious affairs is complementary rather than contradictory, as there is an intimate relation between the two.⁴ He suggests that in order to develop a better understanding of faith one must explore a relation between religious and rational sciences which may lead one to appreciate the role of reason in religious understanding.⁵ He further consolidates his claim by referring to the following lines of the prominent Muslim thinker, Ghazālī, who states:

“This [Religious] knowledge is acquired by blind faith in the words of the prophets (ﷺ). It can be earned after studying the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* of the Prophet (ﷺ) or hearing them for salvation of soul, even though knowledge concerning intellect is necessary, it is

not singly sufficient. As for health of body, some measures are necessary, but they are not alone sufficient without their actual application. Special methods of medicines for cure should be learnt from the physicians. Only intellect is not sufficient. He who calls towards blind faith⁶ only without application of intellect is a fool. On the other hand, he who relies on intellect only after giving up the Qur'ān and Sunnah is a proud man.⁷ The two must be kept together".⁸

To do away with the misconception that revealed sciences and rational sciences are absolutely two distinct spheres of inquiry and cannot be related in anyway, Mohsin al-Mulk argues that both the sciences should not be baffled with each other as the later compliments the former. In fact, one of the major causes behind such a misunderstanding is lack of commitment on the part of those scholars who do not bother to identify the manner in which reason expresses itself as a supplementary source of revealed understanding. Moreover, there are two other reasons for such a misconception. Firstly, those sciences which do not fall within the purview of rational sciences due to their imaginary and dubitable nature are wrongly categorized as rational sciences. Secondly, those things which do not pertain to the revealed sciences and do not owe their origin in the revealed text or the traditional knowledge are supposed to be the sole concern of revelation. For instance the assumption of some of the Greek thinkers that God has no knowledge about particulars and is aware only about universals is in absolute contradiction to the Muslim belief that God is omniscient. And such a contradiction cannot be supported by any sort of rational proof as it has nothing to do with rational demonstration and is based upon mere imagination and doubt. For instance, an ignorant man's claim that the earth rests upon a cow's horn is not false for being incompatible with reason but due to the fact that one believes it to be the pronouncement of God and the Prophet (ﷺ) which is not factual.* Hence the real cause of treating rational sciences and religious sciences as rivals is not due to their intrinsic nature but due to one's inability to situate them in a proper perspective. In other words

*It was a popular explanation of Hindu mythology that the earth is held out on the horns of a cow. When she becomes tired she changes the horn and it causes earthquakes – *Ed.*

Mohsin al-Mulk tends to convey that one should not relate things with rational science which are not concerned with it and result of one's doubts and imagination. He further states that one who believes in the truth of religion and wants to transmit it to others must make scholarly efforts to demonstrate the role of reason in the understanding of the revealed text.⁹

Misconceptions Concerning the Compatibility between Traditional and Rational

Mohsin al-Mulk has identified four misconceptions that crept into the intellectual tradition of Islam, which are enormously misleading. He is of the view that such misconceptions need to be dealt with due care in order to remove all sorts of misunderstanding concerning the role of rational and traditional knowledge in the making of Islamic epistemology.

Epistemological Foundations of Islamic Intellectualism

In the intellectual tradition of Islam one may observe that most of the scholars as well as lay men influenced by them are of the view that human reason cannot cognize everything with perfection. But such a view does not refute the possibility of utilizing one's faculty of reason in the understanding of the revealed text. Although it gives an impression that rational understanding is dubitable. While some scholars are of the view that tradition consists of God's message in the form of revealed scripture and the *Sunnah*, is not open to the slightest doubt and relating the former which is indubitable with the latter which is dubitable may result in various subtleties. Scholars who follow the strict principle of dichotomy between reason and tradition and tend to argue that reason has no role in the making of tradition and whatever has been conceived by the philosophers and intellectuals so far in their research cannot survive the testimony of reason mean that reason is unable to grasp the true nature of things and may compel one to commit an error. Hence to conceive any relation between revealed sciences and rational sciences is tantamount to relating the just with the unjust.¹⁰

Mohsin al-Mulk here seems to suggest that the problem is neither

with tradition nor with reason but it lies in treating them as two absolutely isolated epistemological spheres of inquiry incapable of contributing towards the growth of knowledge simultaneously. In fact he tends to convey that in the intellectual tradition of Islam there is a sufficient room for rational understanding. He argues that one is certainly aware of the fact that almost everything one attempts to cognize can be characterized as which possess inner as well as apparent reality. As mentioned earlier, man is endowed with *qūwwate madārik* (rational faculty) and deserves to go beyond the apparent meaning and can explore inner reality of the things to the extent granted by God.¹¹ Mohsin al-Mulk has aptly referred to al-Ghazali in order to highlight the significance of human reason and the possibility of knowledge, who says that:

“The attribute of man which makes him man and distinguishes him from non-humans and reflects willingness to pursue knowledge in the field of theoretical sciences and prepares one to intellectualize about the hidden nature of things is known as reason which everyone possess. For reason is the source of all the sciences. One who is not willing to utilize one’s rational ability awarded by God does not deserve the title of man. Hence the excellence and rise of one’s intellect is dependent upon hard work and research as it leads one towards meaningful life”.¹²

Mohsin al-Mulk states that God has also emphasizes at many places in the Qur’ān upon the need to explore the inner nature of things and encourages those who engage themselves in such an intellectual pursuit as they deserves high reverence.¹³ Referring to the Qur’ān which he believes to be the firm evidence which reflects man’s capability to explore the hidden reality of things says that:

“Contemplate the (wonders of) creation in the heavens and earth, (with the thought)”. (Al-Qur’ān, III:191).

It implies that man’s thought concerning salvation provides an opportunity to relate all these glories with one’s own being. Otherwise man would be a miserable and disgraceful creature among these beauties and wonders of nature. It is due to one’s rational faculty that man is

destined towards salvation and can be lifted even higher than these glories. In other words man's ability to reflect on God's creation leads him to imply that man is the finest creation of God.

Taking into account the epistemological foundations of research, Mohsin al-Mulk tends to convey that there are at least two mindsets which may set the pace for research in two different directions. He argues that the first kind of research is one in which except religious evidence (revealed truth) there is no other way to understand anything unerringly with the help of sense perception, investigation or experience. It means that the cognitive faculty possessed by man does not play any active role in the understanding or construction of knowledge. The second kind of research is one, which beside religious evidence is also supported by observation, investigation as well as experience. Thus in the case of the former one may commit an error whereas in case of the latter it is unlikely to do so. It implies that whatever one conceives on the basis of reason and experience alone is not necessarily true, similarly what one understands through revelation alone is not necessarily untrue.¹⁴ In fact, Mohsin al-Mulk like Syed Ahmed, is interested in showing that human reason plays a significant role in the understanding of the revealed text which is not against the spirit of Islam as it provides an opportunity to convince others argumentatively. But it does not rule out the possibility of committing an error. While it appears that in case of the latter (tradition) the possibility of committing an error is far reaching as it relies upon imitation rather than reason or experience. Although one cannot undermine the importance of tradition for want of reason and empirical evidence. It means that reason as well as tradition mutually play a significant role in the interpretation of the revealed text.

In the light of the above discussion Mohsin al-Mulk claims that it is obligatory upon every dedicated and true Muslim in general and researcher in particular to work out the positive side of rational sciences. And if finds any compatibility with the teachings of Islam; one must act out of prudence and give up a prejudiced attitude towards it. This may help one to at least neutralize the antagonism between religion and rational sciences and may pave the way for progress. He further attempts to construe his argument by drawing a distinction between the rational speculative methods of the wise men of Greece in ancient times and

bounded rationality. He believes that the former is not directed towards any ultimate reality in a religious context and is erroneous due to the absence of Divine providence. While the latter is purpose oriented and can guide one about the various interpretation of the revealed text in which reason and experience play an encouraging role. This may help one to realize that reason and tradition are intimately related. He further states that if one thinks that the authenticity of religious knowledge can be measured merely on the basis of reason and experience one commits a blunder. By doing so one proves oneself as *mūqabir* (unreasonable contender). Mohsin al-Mulk opines that it is the foremost duty of a genuine research scholar to identify which ideas are compatible with the intellectual tradition of Islam and those linked with it unjustifiably in a historical process. This may prove beneficial in doing away with all the baseless accusations leveled against Islam by its critics regarding the possibility of progress in Islam and revive the true image of Islam.¹⁵

Mohsin al-Mulk argues that the contemporary Muslim mind cannot afford to ignore the rapid development of the prevailing sciences (modern sciences) due to their broadening scope, as they tend to explore researches in various fields. He contends that although some of them contradict some of the Islamic ideas and one's accepted convictions, it does not imply that one should give up such perusals. For Islam itself emphasizes that it is *fard-i kifāyah* (collective duty) of the community of researchers to preserve the intellectual tradition of Islam by removing such contradictions. It means that it is not sufficient on the part of Islamic scholars to identify such contradictions and they are bound to work them out in order to show what is beneficial and what is detrimental for the growth of Islamic intellectualism. Thus, it is not sufficient to engage oneself in mere lip-service by declaring some of the sciences as *ḥarām* (forbidden) for two reasons. Firstly, that this era is not ruled by a caliph like *Mu'taḍid Billah* (35th caliph of 'Abbāsīd dynasty) where one will give up the pursuit of rational sciences and philosophy on the basis of *fatwā* (religious opinion). Secondly, if one thinks that the modern sciences may have negative impact upon the intellectual tradition of Islam then one should critically evaluate this claim and establish it argumentatively in a convincing manner. Because it requires a strong argument based upon tradition rather than any heresy

to refute or accept anything. Otherwise one is not likely to get rid of the confusion regarding the compatibility between the rational and the traditional. For in the present era one cannot undermine the importance of modern sciences which play a pivotal role in the making of knowledge.¹⁶

Relation between Modern Sciences and Revealed Sciences

Mohsin al-Mulk argues that some scholars are mistakenly of the view that pursuing knowledge in the field of modern sciences such as mathematics, geometry and physics, and analyzing them in the context of the revealed text is an activity in vain, if not forbidden. They are reluctant to evaluate the legitimacy of modern sciences in the light of tradition through research. Such scholars are of the view that inclination towards modern sciences does not necessarily result in atheism but is not fruitful either. Mohsin al-Mulk is quite critical of such an unscholarly attitude and considers it to be a hurdle for the intellectual growth of Muslims. He is of the view that it is the style of the Qur'ān in which most things are described explicitly along with certain principles and guidelines. Beside this, God in the Qur'ān also mentions some thought provoking delicacies of *'ajā'ib* (curiosities) and *gharā'ib* (rarities) which need reflection. And for this reason Mohsin al-Mulk appreciates those who think and contemplate about the implicit meanings of things. Thus, the more one is inclined towards the knowledge of the *māhiyyat* (nature, essence) of creation and explores the depths of heaven and the earth one understands is more likely to be strengthened by God's grace. It appears that here Mohsin al-Mulk wants to convey that the audience of the Qur'ān can be classified into two groups. One are those interested not only in the apparent meanings of the text but are also keen to explore the interpretive meanings as well. Others are interested only in the apparent meanings of the text. He further consolidates his argument by referring to Imām Rāzī's commentary of the Qur'ān in which the author explains the said issue by saying that the diction of the Qur'ān is such that it invites one to explore the interpretive meanings as well as intricate details of the text instead of relying merely upon the apparent meanings. He believes that this will lead one to explore the spirit and greatness of the revealed text which is necessary to the progressive dimension of Islam.

Rāzī is critical of those who undermine the importance of reason in the understanding of the Qur'ānic text. He explains this fact with the help of analogical reasoning. He states that one's belief that a particular book is of high worth for the reason that it is authored by a great scholar is more convincing when such a claim is supported by research. Applying this analogy to God and the Qur'ān, Rāzī wants to convey that without any doubt one's conviction based upon understanding will be unyielding to any misgiving and one is more likely to be convinced about the greatness and *jalāl* (magnificence) of its Author.¹⁷

Significance of Research in Islam

Mohsin al-Mulk states that some people believe that whatever is conveyed to mankind by God in the form of revelation through the Prophet (ﷺ) is absolutely true and does not require any endorsement and research.¹⁸ They are probably of the view that any attempt to interpret/understand the text is tantamount to challenging the authority of God, which is based upon false assumptions. Responding to their claim Mohsin al-Mulk explains that there is no doubt in the truthfulness of the message sent by God through His Prophet (ﷺ) and the way it is interpreted by the Prophet (ﷺ). But any attempt to understand the said message does not imply that one is susceptible towards it as the purpose of any academic/research activity is to improve one's own understanding which leads one to grasp the meanings of the text in a way willed by God. In fact the point he seems to convey is that in every age it is one of the most foremost duties of religious scholars to develop an understanding compatible with the originally intended meanings suppressed in the course of history due to distortion and the finite nature of man's intellect. Mohsin al-Mulk is of the view that reason and tradition are the two important sources of interpretation and one needs to ascertain the compatibility between them at least for two reasons. Firstly, by way of earnest research one is likely to clarify all such concepts which are wrongly associated with Islam. It may help one to evolve a clear perspective of religion and minimize the possibility of misinterpretation and pave the way for the making of a genuine intellectual tradition of Islam. Secondly, research based knowledge prepares one for appropriate responses to all such criticism leveled by the critics against Islam. It

seems that here Mohsin al-Mulk is pointing towards the possibility of creating an atmosphere conducive for an inter-cultural dialogue,¹⁹ which may in turn help one do away with all kinds of misconceptions. He believes that some of the scholars of Islam are not interested in exploring the meaning of revealed text in a way intended by God due to lack of knowledge and an antagonistic attitude towards reason.²⁰

He argues that those who are skeptical concerning the compatibility between reason and tradition are not aware of the true meaning of tradition and the constructive role of reason in the making of religious knowledge as well as tradition. Such people claim that because in the past great scholars of Islam paid no heed to the said issue then what has prompted some people in the present time to raise this issue. They might believe that to draw any compatibility between reason and the word of God and the sayings of the Prophet (ﷺ) (*Tradition*) is a necessary condition to establish its authenticity which is an error. Contrary to this due to the penetration of *masā'il ḥakīmīyyah* (philosophical problems) people began to criticize *āqwāl-i dīnīyyah* (religious sayings) which needs clarification. Thus it is the need of the time to portray the true picture of Islam by drawing from the tradition with the help of reason instead of any other external source. Mohsin al-Mulk further states that by establishing an argument that tradition and reason can go together in a way granted by God, one may be able to disprove those rationalists who do not value tradition. Hence in the contemporary world it is a collective duty of the scholars to explore the possibilities of drawing compatibility between reason and tradition.²¹ To substantiate his claim, he aptly refers to the great religious scholar of the subcontinent, Shāh Wālī Allāh who explains this point in this way:

“The concern with rationality in religious discussions develops and the doubts in the principles of practical beliefs manifest in such a way that the issues concerned are led towards the establishment of the rational arguments in accord with the traditional texts. Furthermore, the coherence between the traditional and the rational and between the perceived and the interpreted on the ground of the essence of faith and one’s subjective efforts has been a prevalent norm among Muslims as well as all the great scholars of world”.²²

Disagreement Concerning Literal and Metaphorical Interpretation of the Text

According to Mohsin al-Mulk some religious jurists are of the view that the prevalence of rational sciences and its amalgamation with religious sciences may shatter one's belief in the apparent meanings of the Qur'ānic verses and the sayings of the Prophet (ﷺ) as it provides room for metaphorical interpretation. For this reason 'ulamā-i zahīrī (a group of scholars who prefer the literal meaning of verses over metaphorical meaning) prevents the use of *isti'ārāt* (metaphors), *tashbīh* (comparison) *tāwīl* (interpretation) in the explanation of the revealed text. He believes that the cause of such a disparity can be attributed to the sect existing in some period of history known as *bāṭinīyah firqah* (a group of scholars relying only on the interpretive meanings of the verses).²³ He further states that any attempt of the scholars to explain the text interpretively does not mean that one belongs to the sect which has absolutely forbidden the apparent meanings of the text. Such an assumption has no room in Islam as it necessarily compels to construct interpretive meanings of the text without any justification which defeats the sole purpose of interpretation in the context of tradition and reason. It encourages formality and artificiality. That is to say, there is no strict law which bounds one to explain the revealed text in either of the two ways mentioned above. Mohsin al-Mulk seems to suggest that both the approaches in isolation of each other are contrary to the teachings of Islam and detrimental for Islamic intellectualism. For this reason, due to the limitations of man's cognitive faculties, the style of Qur'ān is adaptive to both metaphorical as well as literal explanation of things. For instance God's saying that 'huge angels carry my throne', is the manifestation of His power and should not be taken in a literal sense as it is not an expression of a fact. And the responsibility for any such misunderstanding rests with the individual alone and not with the *Sharī'ah* (Islamic law).²⁴

Mohsin al-Mulk opines that too much reliance upon the apparent meanings of the text is detrimental as it distances one from the spiritual aspect of religion which guides man towards a higher form of civilization. Mere dependence upon the apparent meanings tends to convey that Islam as a guiding principle facilitates one only in the attainment of physical well being and apparent cleanliness and ignores the essential

aspect of one's being, that is the soul, which is the major cause of various disagreements among scholars as well as lay-men. To clarify the said issue concerning the significance of soul, some of the scholars, such as al-Ghazālī attempted to explore the underlying principles and reality of the Islamic law which persuades one for the flourishing of soul. Hence, al-Ghazālī believes that those sciences rooted in tradition are such universalities which are indubitable and never lead one astray from the light one receives concerning the essence of things.²⁵ It appears that here Mohsin al-Mulk tends to consolidate his argument regarding the legitimacy of the interpretive understanding of the text. On the other hand, the prevalent view is contrary to this approach according to which some ignorant people and a few scholars mistakenly believe that whatever has been associated with Islam justifiably or unjustifiably should be accepted unquestionably.²⁶

Conclusion

This paper aims to establish that Mohsin al-Mulk is interested in emphasizing upon the need to rethink a sort of amalgamation between the rational and the traditional with the help of hermeneutics, which are the two fundamental sources of Islamic epistemology. He is of the view that apart from confining oneself to the apparent meanings of the text, another error committed by some of the scholars is that in addition to the revealed text and the sayings of the Prophet (ﷺ) they have also begun to rely upon the sayings and writings of some famous people. This was a big blow to the intellectual tradition of Islam. For such a tendency provides room for false stories which are being intermingled with Islam making it a religion of stories. The most important remedial measure, suggested by Mohsin al-Mulk to counter this problem is based upon the method adopted by the philosophers of Islam in the past who were keen to pursue knowledge on the pattern of their Greek predecessors. He believes that it is obligatory upon the Muslims of the subcontinent to pursue knowledge in the realm of modern sciences to the extent attuned with tradition. For this reason he stresses upon the need to realize that anything which reaches us in a historical process in the name of tradition has to be scrutinized rationally. This may help one to distinguish between tradition proper and the so-called tradition.

Notes and References

1. Mohsin al-Mulk, *Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq*, Munshi Mohammad Fadluddin Publishers, Lahore, 1895, vol. I, p. 133.
2. Imām Ghazālī, *Revival of Religious Learning*, Tr. Fazl-ul-Karim Darul-Ishaat, Karachi, 1993, vol. III, p. 22.
3. Mohsin al-Mulk, *Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq*, Munshi Mohammad Fadluddin Publishers, Lahore, 1895, vol. I, p. 134.
4. Mohsin al-Mulk, *Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq*, Munshi Mohammad Fadluddin Publishers, Lahore, 1895, vol. I, pp. 134-135, and Imām Ghazālī, *Revival of Religious Learning*, Lahore, Tr. Fazl-ul-Karim Darul-Ishaat, Karachi, 1993, vol. III, p. 20.
5. Mohsin al-Mulk, *Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq*, Munshi Mohammad Fadluddin Publishers, Lahore, 1895, vol. I, p. 136.
6. This debate by Ghazālī regarding the revealed understanding with reference to faith and reason remind me of St. Augustine's classical axiom "*Credo ut intelligam*," "I believe that I may understand," which emphasizes the importance of reason in religious understanding, see Joe Park, *Selected Readings in The Philosophy of Education*, New York, The Macmillan Company, 1958, p. 342.
7. Here one can see a parallel between Ghazālī's approach towards understanding of the revealed text and the one expounded by Aristotle in the context of ethics known as the 'principle of golden mean'. The former is epistemological in orientation, according to which, one is not supposed to rely solely upon reason in an attempt to understand the revealed text as it may deviate one from the true path. Nor one should absolutely give up the use of rational faculty and follow faith without understanding as it defeats the sole purpose of the Divine message. It entails that the religious understanding has to be aided by reason. While the latter is ethical in nature which focuses upon one's moral development by practicing the principle of golden mean or moderation guided by reason. In other words in order to live a moral life one should avoid extremes such as excess and deficiency. For instance wisdom is a means to cunningness (excess) and simplicity (deficiency), see Joe Park, *Selected Readings in the Philosophy of Education*, New York, The Macmillan Company, 1958, p. 4.
8. Imām Ghazālī, *Revival of Religious Learning*, Tr. Fazl-ul-Karim Darul-Ishaat, Karachi, vol. III, 1993, pp. 21-22.
9. Mohsin al-Mulk, *Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq*, Munshi Mohammad Fadluddin Publishers, Lahore, 1895, vol. I, p. 136-137.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 138.
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 138-139.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 139-140.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 140-141.
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 141-142.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 143.

18. This point is very well highlighted by the twentieth century Islamic scholar Fazlur Rahman in this way: “The Qur’ān and the *Sunnah* were given for intelligent moral understanding and implementation, not for rigid formalism”. See Fazlur Rahman, *Islamic Methodology in Islam*, Islamabad, Islamic Research Institute, 2009, p. 74.
19. Here Mohsin al-Mulk seems to be inspired by the research oriented work produced by Syed Ahmed Khan, known as *Al-Khuṭbāt al-Aḥmadiyyah*, in the history, as a response of William Muir’s book *Life of Mohammad*, in which the author raised baseless objections against the Prophet (ﷺ). See Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, *Al-Khuṭbāt al-Aḥmadiyyah fil ‘Arab wal Sīrat-ul-Muḥammdīyyah*, Lahore, Idarae Dawat-ul-Furqan, 2003.
20. Mohsin al-Mulk, *Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq*, Munshi Mohammad Fadluddin Publishers, 1895, vol. I, p. 144.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 144.
22. *Ibid.*
23. *Ibid.*, p. 145.
24. *Ibid.*
25. *Ibid.*, p. 146.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 146-147.