

Professor Ali Fanaei

Qur'ānic Conceptions of Life, Death, and Resurrection

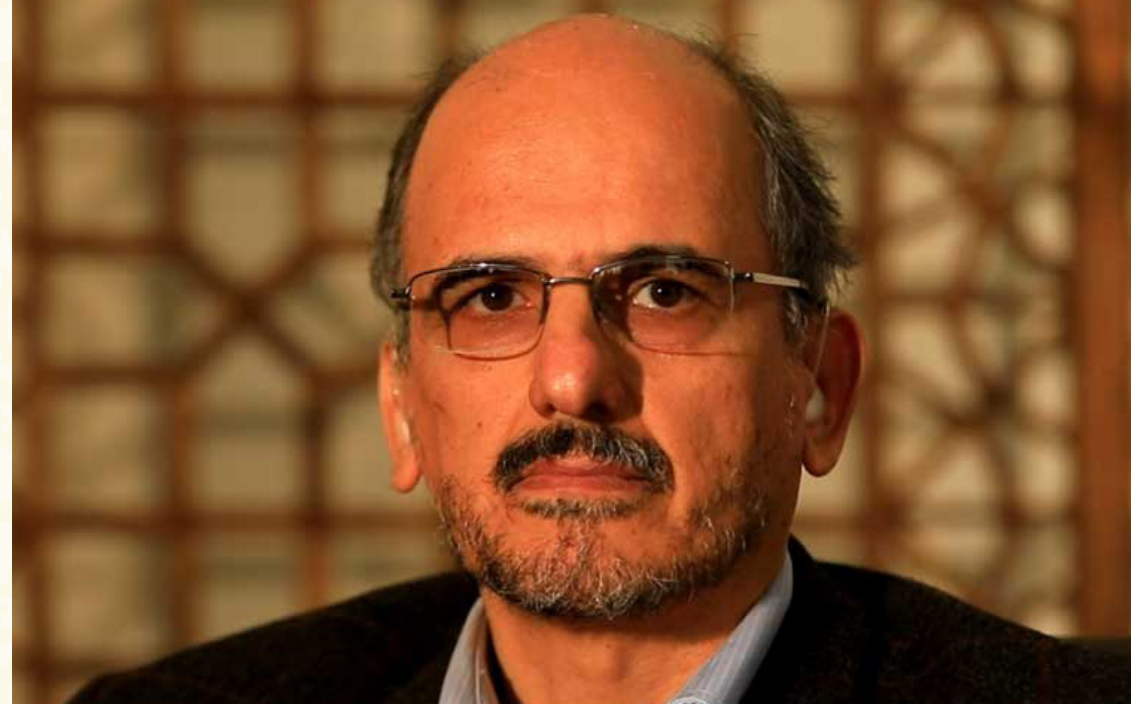
This paper aims to articulate and compare three conceptions of the relationship between the “life before death” and the “life after death”, that can be found in the Qur'ān. These three conceptions can be called “Legal conception”, “Philosophical conception”, and “Mystical conception” respectively.

The first conception portrays God as a lawgiver and humans as His subjects. Like other legal systems, divine law (*Sharī'a*) comprises of some rewards and punishments for those who abide by it and those who transgress it. But unlike secular legal systems, the main rewards and punishments are postponed until the next world. Therefore, since the relationship between positive laws and their sanction is conventional as opposed to real/natural, the relationship between what we do in this world and what we receive in the next is also conventional.

The second conception posits that the relationship between what we do in this world and the reward and punishment that are waiting for us in the next world is causal, meaning that what we do in our life on Earth produces good or bad consequences in the hereafter. Like other causal relationships between causes and their effects, this relationship is real not conventional.

According to the third conception, the relationship between our actions in this world and what we would experience in the next world is neither conventional nor causal. It is deeper than that. That is, whatever we do has two simultaneous and inseparable aspects: apparent and hidden. However, while the apparent aspect is observable in this world, the hidden aspect only becomes apparent once we die.

I explore and substantiate these three conceptions using some of the relevant verses of the Qur'ān and then argue that the last conception is the correct one, but since it is beyond the imagination and understanding of most people, the Qur'ān has had to utilise the two former conceptions to simplify the matter, so that ordinary people can have at least a vague understanding of this central and abstract religious concept.



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Prof. Ali Fanaei completed 17 years of seminary studies in the *Hawza Ilmiyya* of Qum which included seven years of al-Kharij (graduate) study. Concurrent to this, he was awarded an MA in Islamic Theology from the University of Qum, taking special interest in modern theology and philosophy of religion. He then moved to the UK to conduct research at the Department of Philosophy in the University of Sheffield, where he was awarded an MPhil for research on Moral Scepticism and Moral Realism, followed by a PhD for research regarding the epistemic justification of moral beliefs.

Alongside his involvement in training students at Al-Mahdi Institute, he has been writing & publishing a number influential works for Iranian audiences in Farsi, through which Prof. Fanaei has become known as being among a select group of *Roshan Fikri* ('Enlightenment Thinkers') whose engagement with questions pertaining to the modern world is informed with traditional seminarian credentials.