

Prof. Hamid Vahid

Making Sense of Obligatory Faith in the Quran

It is no exaggeration to say that faith plays a, or perhaps *the* central role in the Quran when characterizing human's optimal response to God. There is, however, a central feature of faith, namely, the fact that it is not under one's voluntary control that renders its role in the God-human relationship puzzling and mysterious. The idea is that, at first glance, religious faith does not appear to be something that can be gained voluntarily. Nevertheless, it is represented in the Quran as a standard that must be attained by individuals, whose achievement is regarded as commendable and whose absence is blameworthy. In certain verses, people are required to attain faith just as they are required to give to charity. But how are we expected to acquire faith when entering such a state is not under our direct control, like giving to charity? To deal with this question, we need, however, to discuss a number of related issues at the heart of this debate, such as an investigation of the concept of faith and a description of doxastic freedom and agency. In this article, I shall suggest two distinct solutions to the puzzle of obligatory faith depending on whether or not 'belief' is taken to stand for the cognitive aspect of faith. One, less basic, derives its plausibility from the plausibility of a specific analysis of faith, and so its fate very much depends on whether the analyses in question could withstand critical scrutiny. However, the second, more fundamental solution is an outgrowth of the larger discussion of whether epistemic norms are hypothetical or categorical in nature. To explain, I begin by providing an account of doxastic freedom to show why the involuntary nature of belief poses no threat to epistemic agency. This also addresses the question of whether epistemic reasons are categorical and binding. Finally, I briefly discuss how the Quranic perspective on faith acquisition can be made sense of in light of the conceptual framework provided.



Prof. Hamid Vahid

Institute of Research in Fundamental Science

Professor Hamid Vahid is a member the School of Analytic Philosophy at the Institute for Research in Fundamental Sciences (IPM) in Tehran. He works mainly in epistemology, philosophy of Mind, and philosophy of religion. His work has appeared in such journals as *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, *Nous*, and *Faith and Philosophy*. His most recent book, '*The Dispositional Architecture of Epistemic Reasons*,' was published by Routledge in 2020.