The Semantic Model of the Concept of "Certainty" in Nahj al-Balagha: A Focus on Collocation and Substitution Relationships

Seyed Hossein Azimidokht[1] , Maryam Tavakolnia[2]

Abstract

The word *yaqīn* (certainty) is key to epistemological discussions in *Nahj al-Balagha*, where the word and its cognates appear thirty one times. The analysis of the semantic network of "certainty" has an effective role in understanding Imam ʿAli's (a) stance toward epistemology. In the present study, a descriptive-analytical method is adopted to identify the semantic model of "certainty" in *Nahj al-Balagha*. After a clarification of the conceptual meaning of the word "certainty," a simultaneous analysis of the content of *Nahj al-Balagha* is performed at two levels: collocation and substitution. Through this process of text comprehension, a semantic model of certainty is introduced. In light of this model, it becomes evident that certainty is hierarchical. At the primary level, certainty accompanies faith, and at higher levels, it intensifies faith to the highest levels.

Keywords: certainty, faith, semantic network, substitution, collocation, Nahj al-Balagha.

1. Assistant professor, Philosophy and Islamic Wisdom Department, Meybod University. Email: s.h.azimidokht@gmail.com (Corresponding Author).

2. PhD student in Nahj-ol-Balagheh, Meybod University. Email: maryamtavakol7@gmail.com

Introduction

Synchronic analysis is a pivotal process in modern semantics. Along with structuralism, it emphasizes the static and synchronic study of words in a fraction of time as an organized whole and a self-organized entity. In light of this analysis, the semantic value and the exact position of words in semantic networks become evident. Such an analysis of a given text can be done based on three indices: collocation, substitution, and hyponymy. Accordingly, due to the extensive application of the word *yaqīn* (certainty) and its cognates in *Nahj-ol-Balagheh*, this article seeks to extract the meaning of certainty from the religious text of *Nahj al-Balagha*.

Definition of Certainty

According to lexicographers, *yaqīn* (certainty) excludes doubt and is its opposite. It occurs after doubt and is not accompanied by it (Ibn Manzur 1414 AH, 13:457; Turayhi 1417 AH, 6:331; Ibn Faris 1404 AH, 6:157; Azhari 1421 AH, 9:246). It is based on and derived from reasoning (Boustany 1417 AH, 7; Sahib ibn ʿAbbad 1414 AH, 6:36).[1] It accords with the reality and is at the topmost level of knowledge. The very presence of certainty ousts all forms of possible errors, and it yields peace of soul and mind (Alusi 1415 AH, 1:165; Turayhi 1417 AH, 1:75).

Figurative Meanings and Typology of Certainty

Certainty is known to be of at least two types: psychological and epistemic. In the former case, a person is said to have psychological certainty only if he strongly believes in the truth of his belief. That is, he believes in it in such a way that he cannot abandon it or suspend it.

However, epistemic certainty is belief-oriented and occurs when a person's belief or opinion lies at the highest possible epistemic level.[2] Some of the

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1. This is found in the figurative meanings of the word as well. In this respect, certainty indicates a conclusion of logical reasoning. Hence, a certain person is one who endorses the final conclusion of an act of reasoning by pondering on the premises of that reasoning (Shaker 1426 AH, 269; also see Fayyumi 1414 AH, 936-38; Jazayeri 1415 AH, 175).

4 It is said that certainty is at a higher level than knowledge. There is a point here lacking in psychological certainty. In epistemic certainty, the focus is on the relationship between beliefs and facts. More technically speaking, epistemic certainty is concerned with the conditions that prove the

features of epistemic beliefs in the Eastern culture[1] are discussed in what follows.

An epistemic belief is a conviction or faith. It deals with cases of existence and non-existence. The belief in the being or non-being of things in a particular way[2] is a statement of epistemic certainty, which accords with the reality.[3] An insightful subject is well aware of the accordance of such a statement with certainty. He deems the reverse impossible; that is, he rules out the discordance of the statement with reality or the occurrence of the reverse.[4] Furthermore, such an occurrence, either the reverse or the opposite of the statement, is actually impossible.[5] Finally, the conditions required for a belief are met through the factors that innately, rather than acquisitively, depend on the occurrence of such conditions. Therefore, if a person arrives at a particular belief that meets the conditions in question but is adopted just because of its popularity or prevalence, he has no certainty and his belief is devoid of any lofty epistemic value.[6]

Avicenna and other Muslim philosophers have the same opinion about the parameters of epistemic certainty.[7] On this note, it can be claimed that the majority of Muslim thinkers have used almost the same terms and phrases to refer to the features of epistemic certainty. Those features include (a) a belief in the content of a statement, (b) impossibility of the occurrence of the reverse (dogmatism), (c) the truth of the statement, and (d) stability.[8]

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truth of a belief, whereas psychological certainty merely points to the possession of a belief by the individual.

1. This is not to say that such features have been ignored in the Western culture.

2. Absolute certainty is to believe in something that is such or not (Farabi 1410 AH, 350).

3. He agrees that it is a counterpart to the existence of the object, from outside (Farabi 1410 AH, 350).

4. And he knows that it is identical (Farabi 1410 AH, 351; also see Makarim Shirazi 1416 AH, 4:200; Tusi 1425 AH, 85).

5. It is not possible for it not to match it or to oppose it (Farabi 1410 AH, 352).

6. Moreover, it can never oppose it (Farabi 1410 AH, 352).

7. Avicenna (or Ibn Sina) says: "And surely to believe in the thing that such and believe [either in action or by a force close to action] it can only be such a belief in its occurrence in terms of its removal" (Avicenna 1404 AH, 58-71, 256). Also see Qutb al-Din al-Razi (Razi 1420 AH, 2:241), Haji Sabzawari (Sabzawari 1422 AH, 1:323) and Muhammad Rida Muzaffar (Muzaffar 1408 AH, 3:314). For certainty, Ibn Sina's ternary features are mentioned, along with a fourth feature, truth.

8. No need to say that such a perspective about certainty and insight arises from the particular intuitive view of Muslim thinkers toward insight.

The Concept of Certainty in *Nahj al-Balagha*

Now that it is clear what certainty means to philosophers, it is time to discuss the concept in the text of *Nahj al-Balagha*. A semantic analysis of certainty and a detection of the corresponding semantic network can open new horizons and provide deeper insights. For this purpose, we seek to derive a clear meaning of certainty by using the semantic relationships of collocation and substitution.

As Imam ʿAli (a) says, "I define Islam as no one has defined it before. Islam is submission, submission is conviction, conviction is affirmation, affirmation is acknowledgement, acknowledgement is discharge of obligations, and discharge of obligations is action" (Hadith no. 125). Through synonym substitution, one may believe that faith or Islam in this hadith equals surrender. This is confirmed by the phrase structure repeated to create emphasis. Hence, it can be claimed that faith and surrender either have exactly the same meaning or one has priority over the other, i.e., if one exists without the other, we should doubt its existence. In fact, Islam or faith in Islam is impossible without surrender. There are two possible interpretations in this regard. First, when there is faith, it ends in surrender; that is, faith occurs at a prior stage, and surrender is its result. Second, without the occurrence of surrender, no such thing as faith can occur.[1] The content of the hadith seems to favor the second interpretation. Before elaborating the issue, it seems necessary to discuss the source of religious certainty.

Apparently, from a religious perspective, certainty is an outcome of revelation and religious teachings, and certainty in God's word entails certainty in other affairs. In principle, no certainty can be found by man himself. Certainty completely derives from faith, and is guaranteed by God. A religious person is truthful, and this truthfulness stems from faith. To be strengthened, faith requires no logical reason. From this point of view, a believer in a religion is truthful by virtue of his or her faith, and such a truth is guaranteed. The guarantor of the certainty-induced truth is both metaphysical and physical. In the metaphysical aspect, God has created man with faith. Certainty-induced truth springs from this very fact. As soon as one comes to have faith in a religion, he is certain that there is a God who has offered certain precepts. Certainty follows revelation. Hence, truth is understood via faith-induced

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1. Supposedly, the Imam (a) has explicated the occurrence of faith in one's psyche.

certainty. Religious certainty has a physical or natural guarantor too. Man is fully sure about physical or natural light. When he thinks about God and his creatures, his mind is enlightened too. That is why the thinking power or intelligence is granted the light of God, and a religious man is sure about the truth called certainty (Pazouki 1413 AH, 56).

On this account, it is wrong to attribute the concept of certainty to the past or to think that the certainty discussed in religious texts is a truth based on logical reasoning. It is the certainty of the modern era that is based on logical reasoning. In this type of certainty, a non-religious person seeks independence from religion to show that the content of religion can be supported by religion-independent reason. Even thinking in minimal terms, certainty in Islamic religious texts does not seem to be like that. It seems that certainty in religious texts is not the result of logic and reasoning but that of revelation.

Consequently, certainty in the religious text of *Nahj al-Balagha* may be taken as something attained by faith or by Islam. It is tantamount to faith. Faith brings along surrender and certainty. This is attested by hadith 114: "we have faith in God, a pure love which will eradicate polytheism and doubt." Faith entails certainty, which in turn impedes doubt.

Through this analysis and by considering the fact that the concepts that can substitute "Islam is nothing but surrender" mostly describe the human psyche, one can take the following interpretation of this hadith almost as true.

Islam, as an attribute of the religious man's psyche, means surrender; it is a mental and psychical state in which man lives peacefully with his psyche, i.e. in peace of mind. Such a mental state is achieved only when a person has certainty. There is no need to provide any reason for such a certainty. Having this certainty is the same as endorsing religious doctrines. Under such a condition, the person in peace with himself should admit the truth of something that he has endorsed, i.e. religious contents. A religious man's psyche should also accord with his language and speech. Language and psyche should, in turn, accord with action. In other words, no duplicity or discordance exists between action and speech or heart-felt beliefs.

Therefore, to explain the semantic model of certainty, it can be said that this is a concept in religious discourse, which does not spring from reason. It is not the result of logical reasoning either, but it is a mental state that is

primarily a result of revelation, and secondly collocated with the approval of the truth in religious scriptures. Certainty-induced truth denotes the approval of the content of revelation, not due to reasoning and logic but because of faith. Certainty entails accordance of psyche, language, and action. In the Imam's hadith, it is to be considered a result of faith. Once faith arises, certainty ensues. Certainty is, indeed, tantamount to faith.

In religious contexts, ideal certainty is the base for action. Based on the Quran, certainty with such a role is ideal, "This is the scripture whereof there is no doubt, guidance unto those who ward off evil and believe in the Unseen." The holy Quran does not expect the believer to achieve certainty after survey or research. Faith or belief in "Who believe in the Unseen" refers to undisclosed affairs; namely, those beyond the scope of thought and sense. In this holy verse, what comes after faith is action. It means that believers, namely those who have certainty in their hearts and psyche, should act as well.

The second feature of the semantic model of certainty can be illustrated through an example. A yoga coach talks to you about how soothing to mind yoga is. You get prepared to attend the class. As soon as you accept that yoga is good, you should act. If you wait to think more, it will lead to doubt, which will in turn impede you from attending the class. When you ponder upon the fact that yoga is good but your objectives could be reached by trying other sports, you have done away with certainty, and you are subject to doubt and inaction. Religious faith and the certainty that follows it are exactly like what occurs in this example. With certainty, faith will be attained. If you act, you will definitely achieve your goal. As a maxim states, "with certainty one achieves salvation, which is the ultimate goal".

This is acknowledged in the Imam's words: "Adam sold out his certainty to doubt and his determinacy to indeterminacy." As it implies, when doubt walks in, certainty walks out. If one shows frailty, faith will be over. Adam sold out his certainty to doubt and his firm determination to Satan's indeterminate words. Doubt definitely eradicates the certainty that springs from faith. Such a certainty, contrary to that of the modern era, does not follow doubt; it follows faith, and it is only doubt that can eradicate this kind of faith-induced certainty.[1] This leads us to claim that certainty sometimes springs

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1. Apparently some thinkers have been led astray by failing to note the fact that religious certainty springs from faith. Falaturi says that, in this terse and concise phrase, the Imam (a) hints at the origin

from faith and at other times from knowledge. The certainty in the context of faith is the result of revelation and faith, which can be undermined by doubt and uncertainty. The certainty springing from knowledge has its roots in doubt and is attained when doubt settles down.

Another example of word substitution, which confirms the above construal, can be found in the hadith: "For a Muslim, there is nothing wrong with being oppressed, as long as he does not doubt his religion and certainty." This hadith shows that doubt in religion is, in fact, doubt in certainty. This is because certainty springs from religious faith and doubt in religion actually entails uncertainty.

As noted above, certainty in religious thoughts follows faith, and any amount of doubt can spoil it. "I swear to God that, whenever doubt enters, certainty is gone. Whatever guaranteed for you so far seems to be obligatory, while the obligations appear to be void." In the presence of doubt, certainty springing from faith fades away. This can be understood by considering the relation of contrast between certainty and doubt. Certainty is the prerequisite of faith, and doubt can, in the long run, undercut certainty, eradicate faith, and replace it with polytheism.[1]

The next feature of the semantic model of certainty is achieved through another part of *Nahj al-Balagha*, which reads: "knowledge showers on their insight, and they are embarked upon a spirit of certainty." This means that

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of man's knowledge by saying "selling out certainty to doubt"; i.e. priority of certainty over doubt, which means selling our certainty to doubt. The Imam (a) specifies different phases of man's knowledge, the first of which is certainty and the second should automatically be that of doubt; otherwise, selling certainty to doubt does not occur. The result of deviation from certainty will be doubt. Accordingly, certainty is the origin of knowledge (Falaturi 1422 AH, 105). It should be pointed out that certainty in this particular part of the hadith is the result of faith, and such a certainty cannot be the base for knowledge. This certainty is not included in the process of knowledge. In the process of gaining knowledge, doubt is the starting point.

1. A careful consideration of collocations can also help us to appraise the conceptual model of certainty. This semantic model is used in the case of antonyms. Opposition of meanings is an organized feature of language (Safavi 1420 AH, 136-137, Omar 1428 AH, 102-104). Since the elements of a text are interrelated, finding the opposite meanings of a word can help us to find its real meaning. Hence, by scrutinizing the passages of *Nahj al-Balagha*, and based on the principle of "one can learn about something by learning about its opposites," we can learn facts about certainty. Doubt has been viewed as the opposite of certainty in different hadiths: Doubt frustrates faith. It extinguishes the light of the heart, the fruit of uncertainty. Most doubts corrupt religion, and a continued doubt results in polytheism.

certainty is hierarchical and is accompanied by epistemology and knowledge. Knowledge showers on saints and penetrates into them. In the presence of knowledge, they attain the highest level of certainty. In the above extract, certainty is deemed a graded concept that gives saints eternal knowledge and provides them with the highest level of certainty; namely, the well-established certainty. Accordingly, one can believe that certainty in this instance has a higher level compared to that of the previous instances. Such a certainty stems from knowledge and might have passed through doubt. It can also be claimed that the highest level of certainty is achieved only after theoretical and practical thinking. This will not be achieved without piety. In other words, this kind of certainty is in line with the different forms of knowledge that shower only on the pious. Close association with the essence of certainty is not achieved by all, but only by those who are immersed in knowledge.[1]

Note the saying: "a doubted issue sounds like a truth. The enlightening thing for the friends of God in the case of doubt is certainty. However, the enemies of God are pushed into darkness by doubt and blindness. Those afraid of death will not achieve salvation, and those favoring this material life will not stay there for long."

The point is that doubt probably besets the believer, and his certainty—i.e. the primary level of his certainty—is ruined. Saints, however, possess such a certainty, at such a high level, that does not let any doubts into their hearts. Of course, this is only the kind of certainty that serves as an enlightenment. Certainty, at its primary level, is tantamount to faith and, at its highest level, consorts with saints and the pious. The first form of certainty should not be exposed to doubt. It is the second form of certainty that eradicates doubts and enlightens.

As evidence for the hierarchical relations of certainty and in order to complete its semantic model, it is good to evaluate part of a sermon on the pious: "One feature of the pious is that they have a strong faith in their religion. They are stubborn but malleable. Their faith is accompanied by certainty. They are eager to gain knowledge, and their knowledge is accompanied by patience".

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1. Here, the question is: What kind of knowledge comes toward the individual and not vice versa, i.e. what is the kind of knowledge that individual gains without having pursued it?

The pious are those that are strong in faith, in their malleability they are consistent, in their certainty they have faith, and in their knowledge they are eager. Finally, in their patience they have knowledge, the proof of which is their faith in certainty. Apparently, the faith of the pious, in this particular case, springs from certainty. The higher level of certainty is to be sought in the heart and mind of the believer, making it a different form of faith. Actually, the relationship between certainty and faith is intensifying. Faith, in its primary phase, brings along a primary sort of certainty and, when certainty comes to its highest level, faith adopts a different form. This mutual enhancement reinforces the religion of the pious and provides them with a faith full of certainty. This lofty role of certainty is pointed out by Imam ʿAli (a): "I have been verily granted a form of well-established certainty by God which ousts all forms of doubt and uncertainty."

It is to be concluded that there are several levels of certainty. The certainty mentioned in the last case lies at a high level, but the certainty resulting from faith lies at the primary level and is the weakest form. The first level may collapse with doubt, but the high levels are immune. The kind of certainty, which is subject to collapse through doubt or other seditions, may be what Imam calls newly established certainty. It is the one at its early stages. As he puts it, "seditions enter bitterly through wishes and destroy certainty."[1]

By considering subordination and collocation, as two forms of semantic relationships, and by focusing on instances in hadiths, we are led to insights into new features of religious certainty. Religious certainty seems morally advisable. To explain further, certainty, as a mental state, seems to have its roots in one's psyche. It also seems to be passive rather than active. Certainty is within us, and we are merely its abode. However, if it is really passive, why has the Imam (a) recommended it as in the statement: "Do not turn your

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1. This point can be understood only if we look at the substitution relation, which is a linear opposition. In this kind of opposition, there is a form of contrast that shows some kind of linearity (Ale-Bouyeh Langroudi 2011, 28). In this case, there is a sharp contrast between the two opposite words, sedition and certainty, which are used simultaneously in the same sentence. The point is that, though certainty and sedition may not appear as opposites on the first look, when one considers the result of sedition and chaos, it becomes clear that sedition can lead to no more than doubt and uncertainty. Upon finding the contrast relationship between these two concepts, it becomes clear as why the Imam (a) says that, once sedition enters, certainty is over. Therefore, the point that Imam (a) has in mind here is that certainty is a primary form of knowledge embedded in all of us. The entry of seditions is a deviation from certainty and leads to the entry of doubts inside us (Falaturi 1422 AH, 5).

knowledge to ignorance, and do not turn your certainty into uncertainty. When you gain knowledge, practice it and when you are certain, step ahead." Hence, it is something active. We may imagine that, in the first place, certainty is the result of religious faith. Such a certainty is passive and is a result of faith, but it is the lofty state of certainty that is mentioned here by the Imam (a). The placement of such a certainty next to knowledge shows that the certainty in question is definite and is different from the one that was said earlier to spring from faith. As mentioned before, the maintenance of the faith-arising certainty occurs through avoidance of doubts. It means that one should not get exposed to doubt but should be active. The other kind of certainty, however, is the result of training and avoiding doubts. It thus becomes real and comes to be known as the highest form of piety: "the best piety is to abstain doubts."

Another point about certainty is the possibility of its substitution and collocation with knowledge and insight. "He was given the ability to distinguish between right and wrong" (Sermon 1). Based on this statement, one of the main tasks of intuition is to distinguish the right from the wrong. Certainty is also said to be the highest form of knowledge. In other words, certainty is that level of epistemology that is impermeable by doubt and uncertainty. It is also enlightening for the pious. Accordingly, when a person gets to the highest level of intuition, which is certainty, he is able to distinguish the right from the wrong easily. A concept that can replace certainty in the interpretation of *Nahj al-Balagha* is intuition. This serves as an additional proof that the certainty of the pious, which is enlightening, emanates from intuition and is different from the primary form of certainty, which is achieved only through faith.

To find the semantic network of certainty in *Nahj al-Balagha*, consideration of the strong collocation relationships can also be of help to comprehend the intended meanings. This form of collocation relationship is a form of conceptual relationship between two words with common semantic features, which help and strengthen each other (Salman Nijad 1434 AH, 16). As pointed out before, "a sign of the pious is that they have faith in their certainty." Bearing this point in mind, one can also consider the statement: "I attest that there is no deity but God, an attest full off faith, certainty, purity, and compliance". Regarding this hadith, there are points that need to be discussed.

First, bearing testimony in religion proclaims epistemic similarity and accordance; it is, indeed, the proclamation of the unity and consistency of the self. This means that the mere utterance of the unity of God is not much valid. True testimony rests on two bases. One has to do with bearing the burden of testimony, which is related to the past, and the other entails taking the responsibility for it, which is related to the future. When a person attests to something, it means that he or she proclaims that his or her "self" has been in a condition to witness the occurrence of that thing. In addition, the person takes the responsibility of bearing witness for that occurrence. This process is also involved in the testimony borne for the unity of God. At a higher level, a person proclaims that his or her very self has achieved faith in the unity of God, as if that self had an inferior look at itself in the past and proclaimed that it had achieved faith.

The second point is related to the collocation of concepts such as faith, certainty, purity, and proclamation. It is quite possible to consider all these concepts as mental states of an individual. Given this, that person can claim his very "self" has experienced faith, certainty, and purity in the past. By this, the Imam (a) might have meant to say that, taken together, behavior, heart, mind, psyche and speech constitute a unified and consistent whole. He might also have meant to say that his self has achieved faith in the past, followed by certainty. The self is thus embedded with purity, which results from certainty.[1] Testimony in religion is valid just because of the fact that the person announces his unified being by proclaiming unity and compassion through heart, speech, and behavior.

The intensifying relationship between these concepts can most likely take place in our thoughts as well. There are four facts about this relationship; as faith grows, certainty grows too; the more intense certainty is, the more the faith grows, which is true about the other two concepts as well.[2]

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1. ʿAli (a) says, "certainty leads to purity."

2. Another account of this reinforcement relation is given by Bahrani: collocation with faith, purity, and proclamation. After attesting to *tawhid* (God's unity), Imam ʿAli (a) also recounts four features for it as follows:

1. An endorsement is tantamount to faith, an endorsement that is full of heart-felt belief.
2. This endorsement is out of certainty, a belief arising from certainty.
3. This endorsement comes out of purity, i.e. the belief is cleansed of whatever is not Him.
4. This endorsement comes with confession, which is, in turn, the result of purity and perfection.

To complete the semantic model of the concept of certainty, it is noteworthy to mention that the collocation of certainty with knowledge teaches us some other valuable points. Consider the two hadiths "No doubt you will not achieve all your wishes or live longer than your time" and "Be certain that God does not require his servants of more than they can afford, no matter how strong their resources and desires are." Neither of these two statements uses certainty at its highest level, i.e. intuition. The content of neither bears any trace of intuition-induced certainty, which is the loftiest form. There is the fact that you will not achieve all your wishes or receive more than what is predestined for you, but this fact cannot belong to the intuitive certainty arising from logical reasoning. In both of these cases, the speaker is probably trying to say that "take my advice and have faith, you won't achieve all your wishes and won't live longer than your time, etc." Hence, the primary form of certainty is apparently tantamount to faith. More importantly, though certainty in both of these statements is not devoid of intuition, it does not belong to that kind of intuition that belongs to a loftier level of knowledge.[1]

The last steps to complete the semantic model of certainty are based on hadith (or maxim) no. 31 in *Nahj al-Balagha*, where the Imam (a) speaks about faith: "Faith has four bases: patience, certainty, justice, and jihad. Certainty also rests on four bases: insight, wisdom, learning lessons from the past, and awareness of traditions. Whoever has insight will certainly achieve wisdom, and whoever achieves wisdom will learn lessons from the past and gain awareness of traditions."

It was mentioned earlier that certainty, much like faith, is hierarchical or graded and subject to doubt. By faith in this case, the Imam (a) means thorough and complete faith. As stated, "Islam means surrender and surrender leads to certainty." In this case, what is meant is the primary form of certainty, which is a counterpart of faith. In the other case, what is meant is the mature faith. It seems that a higher level of faith is achieved by the confluence of patience, justice, jihad, and certainty; not the certainty tantamount to faith but the loftier kind of certainty, which springs from thought. For such a state of certainty to

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(Bahrani 1407 AH, 3:782)

1. Concerning this hadith, some believe that the certainty in question here is on a loftier level than knowledge and intuitive knowledge, i.e. the kind of knowledge that has led to certainty (Mostafavi 1402 AH, 263; Rahmati 1385 Sh, 1:800).

realize, all the four parameters should be present. In fact, after performing faithful acts, a believer can reach this kind of certainty only by possessing or practicing insight, wisdom, learning from past events, and traditions. In other words, the believer should learn to be sharp and intelligent. Maybe, such sciences as logic, epistemology, and philosophy are helpful in sharpening one's mind. Through such sciences, secrets of facts are revealed for the believer. Besides, studying history can bring him historical insights and teach him lessons. On the side of historical facts, one should also cherish certain truths that have been handed down from the past. To attain certainty and reinforce faith, one should actively practice the four precepts introduced above.

Conclusion

To comprehend the passages of *Nahj al-Balagha*, it is helpful to employ approaches which examine the linguistic aspects of the book and to draw a semantic model of the concept of certainty. Through contemplating on hadiths derived from *Nahj al-Balagha*, it emerged that certainty is an abstract, multilayered, and hierarchical concept. At its primary levels, it is tantamount to faith and born along with it. In its early phase, certainty is susceptible, and the most important challenge posed to it is uncertainty or doubt. Imam ʿAli (a) has emphasized that believers should avoid doubts and strengthen their newfound certainty through action. At its higher levels, however, maintenance of certainty requires sharpness, intelligence, taking lessons from the past, and awareness of traditions. This type of certainty can lead to higher levels of religious faith and turn it into mature faith.

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