Religious Education and the Delegitimation of Knowledge

Seyed Mahdi Sajjadi

Abstract

The velocity of information production has increased at all levels, including the global. These expansions lead to the delegitimation of knowledge by equating information with knowledge or the predominance of information over knowledge. Given that this situation has caused epistemological challenges for the process of religious education, this article attempts to study the epistemological problems and challenges posed by information technology (IT) in this area.

Religion and Religious Education

Religion, commonly defined as a system of thought dealing with the supernatural, sacred, and divine realms as well as with the values, traditions, and rituals associated with such a belief or system of thought, is sometimes used interchangeably with *faith* or *belief system*.[1] According to some, religion is related to the inner and intuitive aspects of human life. For example, whenever religion talks about guiding humanity, it refers to internal and intuitive (revelation and compliance) guidance. From a religious perspective, intuition is defined as an internal and interior transformation that connects people to the supreme source (God) and makes them capable of receiving religious revelation and inspiration. Thus, whenever God talks about humanity being open to guidance and about the increasing level of guidance provided, He is, in fact, talking about these internal and interior transformations, about people's readiness to accept divine revelation and guidance.[2] Of course, such thinkers as Dewey believe that religion is more related to individual experiences.[3]

Seyed Mahdi Sajjadi is associate professor of the philosophy of education, Tarbiat Modares University, Tehran, Iran.

The issue of religious education raises many ideas and theories about how we should be educated religiously, what religious education should consist of, and what religious education is. The aim and content of religious education are, in essence, the imparting of spirituality and holiness, both of which might not have neutral aspects. In the process of acquiring a religious education, students are obliged to learn about their religion and implement its beliefs and ritual practices in all fields of their lives. Religious education, therefore, possesses three aspects: religious cognition, religious belief, and religious rituals and practices. Those who are religiously educated cannot be inattentive to these three aspects, particularly when it comes to applying their religious education in their lives.[4]

In religious education, there are two kinds of interaction between pupils and the religious content being studied:

> … those which contribute to pupils learning about religion, and those which contribute mainly to pupils learning from religion. In the former category are included instructional, conceptual, emphatic interactions (i.e., where pupils assimilate and accommodate the content as understood within its faith context) and in the later category reflective, interpretative, critical and evaluative interaction (i.e., where pupils assimilate and accommodate the content as understood within its faith context but then recontextualise and reconstruct it within their own self-understanding) for the purpose of values clarification, existential analysis, illumination of personal constructs.[5]

Other scholars believe that religious education contains two aspects: learning *about* religion and learning *in* religion.[6] Learning about religion means to learn about religion itself and its benefits, whereas learning in religion means to learn how to perform specific religious rituals and practices. A major trend in religious education is to approach the subject from an interdisciplinary focus based on the recognition of the need for an interdisciplinary focus that integrates not only the theological disciplines but also a working of the social sciences and centered on life issues in specific contexts.[7] Some social scientists believe that religious education is something more than merely teaching and learning about varieties of spirituality or religions: "Spiritual education is schooling children explicitly to be spiritual: to pray, to fast, to take time for solitary devotions, to think of themselves as young pilgrims."[8]

According to Laurent, religious education seeks to empower individuals to reach a higher level of maturity and thereby to become responsible and respectful citizens of the world, acquire religious literacy and understanding,

develop their character, attain a certain degree of spiritual discipline, and act for the common good.⁹ Religious education should help students acquire and develop knowledge and an understanding of religion, as well as the ability to form reasoned opinions that lead to informed judgments about religious and moral issues.

Islamic Perspectives on Religious Education

Religious education has always occupied a prominent place in the writings and teachings of Muslim intellectuals and philosophers of all eras. Al-Farabi states that virtues are acquired through religious education. Religious virtues are those virtues that search for the good and follow the rational virtues, because acquiring rational virtues is the pre-requisite for acquiring moral and religious virtues.[10] According to Ibn Sina, "if someone intends to make a reform in himself, he must look into the morals of the people. He must then select those characteristics that are good, and banish those which are bad. In his view, the aim of religious education is the creation of these characteristics."[11] Al-Ghazzali considers one's character as a fixed state in the soul. Actions emanate from it easily and without any need for thinking. If one's state of character is such that only praiseworthy actions emanate therefrom in accordance with wisdom and divine law, then it is called a "good character." But if unbecoming actions and deeds emanate from it, then it is called a "blameworthy character." A well-educated character emanates from true knowledge, and true knowledge, in al-Ghazzali's view, is a knowledge of God obtained through a religious education.[12]

Ibn Miskawayh writes that temper is a disposition for one's soul that inspires one to do something without thinking and without hesitation. Morality is a subject that has been very much favored in Islam. One of the most important goals of the mission of the prophets, and specifically of Prophet Muhammad, was the cultivation of morals and the purification of souls. In his view, the aim of education is the cultivation of religious-based morality.[13]

Muhammad Abduh views education as being based on religion and considers all educational aspects to be arranged on religious prescriptions. For him, the aim of education is to acquire the technical knowledge of those modern sciences and technologies that have influenced human lives but, despite their importance, cannot on their own lead one to salvation. The essential goal, however, is to acquire the kind of knowledge that pays attention to the human soul, namely, knowledge that emerges from a religious base. Under the effect of scientific and technological advancement, Abduh tried to combine his own educational programs and modern secular knowledge in such a

way that scientific advancement could both benefit religious education and counter the threats coming from western civilization. Thus he went to al-Azhar and tried to reform its curriculum, for:

> The superiority of Islam over other religions is due to the fact that it embraces all civilizational/cultural aspects. As a result of this characteristic, Islam is not incompatible with modern cultures and civilizations. Also, the obligation of religious education is to restore basic religious principles among students or the things that were prevalent during the Prophet's time. Understanding these fundamental Islamic principles however, requires thought and reasoning. Therefore, religious education is an intellectual and rational process.[14]

Hassan al-Banna propagated his views on education by establishing the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. According to him, "education simply is not limited to the teaching and instruction of religious principles and teachings; rather, it is a political, social, and cultural process. He considered Muslims around the world as brothers (*ikhwan*) and declared such problems as race, nationality, and territory unimportant with regard to Muslims."[15]

For him, education is based on the Qur'an and the Sunnah, mysticism (purifying one's soul from impurity), politics (reforming the government and paying attention to one's honor, generosity, and freedom in the educational process), physical education (physical health is essential to reaching Islam's sublime targets), knowledge (obligatory for all men and women, for knowledge secures one's material and spiritual welfare), economy (pursuing a respectable and dignified life requires the existence of various economic activities), and social thought (to correct people's ideas and thoughts). In other words, education is a religious matter that embraces all of life's material, spiritual, social, political, cultural, and scientific aspects.[16]

In his criticism of technology's expanded hegemony over people's lives, Seyed Ali Ashraf points to the comprehensiveness of Islamic education in comparison with other secular educational systems. He believes that one of the negative effects of emphasizing technology is that technology, due to its more performative nature, stresses the material aspects of human life and ignores the spiritual aspects, whereas Islamic education takes into account all aspects of human existence (e.g., material, spiritual, social, mental, political, and economic).[17]

Islam's approach to religious education is, first and foremost, based on the conception and insight that Islam and Muslim philosophers present the world and human beings as two elements of a metaphysical discussion. These insights concerning existence, the Creator of existence, and human-

ity as the sole wise and insightful being all effect decisions about religious education programs. The Qur'an contains many verses inviting humanity to obey the divine orders and wisdom, among them: "This is the guidance of Allah. He gives that guidance to those of His servants He pleases" (6:88) and "Those were the (prophets) who received Allah's guidance. Follow the guidance they received" (6:90). Numerous other verses mention the Creator's role in directing and guiding humanity's behavior. In the discussions about Islamic religious education, many participants acknowledge the role of the Creator's will and intention in directing humanity.

In Islamic religious education, religion and whatever humanity receives through it are considered the foundations and bases of life. The most essential differences between the Islamic and other religious education systems are these stable and antecedent foundations. The lack of these foundations in the religious education systems of other nations causes their religious education approaches and directions to be slanted toward liberal and value-free principles, which leads to a departure from systematic religious teachings. Religious education in Islam, however, is based completely on religious and divine values. By referring to religious texts and divine verses, Islamic theologians, interpreters, and philosophers attempt to find religious foundations for their own interpretive approaches to religious decrees and propositions. Accordingly, they argue over the necessity to preserve religion as the foundation of religious deeds, decrees, and decisions.

Under the influence of modern technological advancements, especially as regards IT and the consequent delegitimating of knowledge,[18] contemporary religious/moral theories of education have tried to abolish any authoritative source and model-based principles of religious/moral education. Post-modernism is the latest movement based on this approach. In contrast, the Qur'an and the Sunnah, which Muslims consider authoritative sources and religious models, enjoy a special place in Islamic religious/moral education. Our principal way of accomplishing the overall goal of religious education programs is to study the Qur'an and do whatever it commands us to do. In the case of Islam, all advancing movements in religious education refer back to powerful, authoritative, and authentic sources. The fact that God says "But you will not, except as Allah wills" (76:30) indicates God's presence in our acts and decisions. In addition, "Allah enjoins them to the right and forbids them from the wrong" (16:90) indicates the presence of a powerful source in our acts and deeds. As a result, accepting moral and educational behaviors and deeds leads to the idea of paternalism (i.e., model-based principles) in moral education. The Qur'an's allusion to humanity's obedience to Allah, His Prophet, and his Companions and Followers, as well

as the guardians of people, further confirms the principle of paternalism in moral education.

Accordingly, the relationship that holds between the educators and the educated, or the teachers and the students, in the domain of religious education is a vertical and hierarchial one. This, of course, does not deny the students' independence; rather, it is a necessity for religious and Islamic education. That is to say, the teachers assume a specific role model in the process of imparting religious education, and the students should attempt to educate themselves morally by focusing upon appropriate and suitable models (e.g., the Qur'an and the Sunnah). The fact that the Prophet is introduced as a role model of virtue emphasizes the role of models in religious education.

Knowledge and Information

Ever since the creation of humanity, the search for knowledge has been people's main concern. Since the days of classical Greece, philosophers have devoted themselves to finding out what knowledge actually is. Early philosophers, among them Plato and Aristotle, were followed by Hobbes, Locke, Kant, Hegel, and then by such more contemporary philosophers as Wittgenstein, Popper, and Kuhn, to name but a few of the more prominent western philosophers. Today, the issue of knowledge and information is a top priority for various research programs, especially as regards educational, psychological, philosophical, and sociological research.

There are many definitions for knowledge and information. According to Stenmark, there is a difference between a description and the object being described. For example:

> [When we say:] I cannot describe how to do it; one often means that one cannot describe it sufficiently for someone else to fully understand it. Understanding requires familiarity with both the concepts and the context into which they normally belong. This understanding, which is tacit, gives meaning to the words and thus is all knowledge basically tacit.[19]

A study of the literature dealing with knowledge reveals the existence of two separate tracks: the commodity view and the community view. In the commodity view, knowledge is a thing for which we can gain evidence, and knowledge as such is separated from the knower. This view, which is rooted in the positivism of the mid-nineteenth century, remains especially strong in the natural sciences:

> The community view is rooted in the critique of the established quantitative approach to science that emerged amongst social scientists during the

1960s. These scientists argued that a reality (knowledge) should be understood as socially constructed. According to this tradition, it is impossible to define knowledge universally; it can only be defined in practice, in the activities of and interactions between individuals.[20]

Polyani, who emphasizes the importance of knowledge in this age and divides it into internal and external knowledge, believes that a more interesting debate is whether we should focus on improving the internalization of knowledge by individuals (viz., the acquisition of tacit knowledge – personal knowledge rooted in individual experience and involving personal life, perspective, and values) or the more effective sharing of explicit (recorded or formal) knowledge.[21] He creates a sharp distinction between tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge: "Those who emphasize explicit knowledge often stress making the individual's knowledge explicit – for example, in the form of documents – and sharing it more effectively among members of the organization."[22]

Like Polyani, Stenmark distinguishes between two kinds of knowledge, for "all knowledge is tacit and explicit knowledge is, in fact, information."[23] Knowledge is a state of preparedness built up partly by personal commitment, interests, and experiences, and partly by the legacy of the tradition in which we were raised.

Therefore, internalism and externalism are two major theories about knowledge, that information is more related to externalism or, as mentioned above, explicit knowledge. Externalism rejects the view that there is a requirement on knowledge to the effect that one knows that one's beliefs are the result of reliable cognitive processes. The current general usage of externalism to characterize this position can be traced back to Armstrong:

> According to "Externalist" accounts of non-inferential knowledge, what makes a true non-inferential belief a case of knowledge is some natural relation which holds between the belief-state ... and the situation which makes the belief true. It is a matter of a certain relation holding between the believer and the world.[24]

Many epistemologists have argued that externalism, in terms of epistemology, involves a revision of our classic concept of knowledge.[25] Cruz and Pollock also hold the view that "the appeal of externalism is ... illusory."[26] In the same vein, Chisholm writes:

> Some of those authors who profess to view knowledge and epistemic justification "externally" are not concerned with the traditional theory of knowledge. That is to say, they are not concerned with the Socratic questions,

"What can I know?", "How can I be sure that my beliefs are justified?" and "How can I improve my present stock of beliefs?" Indeed, many such philosophers are not concerned with the analysis of any ordinary concept of knowledge or of epistemic justification. Therefore, their enterprise, whatever it may be, is not that of the traditional theory of knowledge.[27]

Now, the relation between knowledge and information and the differences between them are the main subject. Stenmark believes that there is a close relation between information and knowledge because information seeking, information interpretation, and information creation are actions that describe the interaction between knowledge and information.[28] Some thinkers believe that knowledge is dependent on and based on information, that the relation between knowledge and information is vertical, and that knowledge is a transcendent stage of information. Although information and knowledge are related, information *per se* contains no knowledge; however, knowledge can contain information. On the value of information, Choo says: "The value of any given pieces of information does thus reside in the relationship between the user [user's interpretation] and the information. On its own, the information is useless."[29]

There are many other views about the relations and differences between information and knowledge. For example, Nonak and Takeuchi believe that information is more factual, whereas knowledge is about beliefs, commitment, and action.[30] In Davenport's view, information is data that has relevance and purpose, while knowledge is valuable information from the human mind as well as values and insights.[31] Wiig believes that information consists of facts organized to describe a situation or a condition, but that knowledge is truth, beliefs, perspectives, judgment, know-how, and methodologies.[32]

Some thinkers who divide knowledge into tacit and explicit believe that information is more related to explicit knowledge, for both of them are based on documents, research, patents, and software codes. Tacit knowledge, however, is based on understanding, intuition, and the aim to practice. As regards tacit and explicit forms of knowledge, Foskett says: "Information has collective aspects, and everyone shares in it. However, knowledge has a personal aspect. Knowledge is what I know, but information is what we know."[33]

Information is anything that we are capable of perceiving, such as written and spoken communications, photographs, art, and music. All of these characteristics of information show that knowledge has both a conceptual and a subjective aspect, that information has a perceptible and an objective aspect, and that sharp distinctions exist between tacit knowledge and explicit information. The main characteristics of both are shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1: THE MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION

Knowledge	Information
Tacit, intuitive, and internal	Based on document, patents, and software
Equal to understanding	Explicit, external, and factual
Conceptual and subjective	Perceptual and objective
Rooted in individual and personal experiences and the human mind	A shared, collective, and plural commodity
Related to beliefs, values, perspectives, insights, and commitment	Includes written and spoken communications
What I know	What we know
Can contain information	Can be interpreted by knowledge
Reasonable	Perceptible

Contemporary Developments

Legitimate knowledge in the computerized and digitalized society of the twenty-first century is confronted with fundamental challenges. Even educational philosophers are anxious about how to regain the lost legitimacy of knowledge. Stressing this issue, Lyotard says: "Cybernetics (computer and telecommunication systems) has come to dominate society and economics since World War II … The major question is how knowledge gets legitimated itself.[34]

According to him, one must pay attention to what he calls *performativity* in order to access legitimate knowledge. In the cybernetic arena, knowledge gains its legitimacy through performativity and, as such, must avoid meta-narratives and pay attention to little narratives based on the principles of "might makes right" and that anyone can create truth and meaning.[35]

According to performativity, knowledge is, to a certain extent, a tool and something produced for sale. Such knowledge, however, cannot be based on any religious considerations because then it may be *a priori*, metaphysical, and non-applicable. This is why Lyotard equates knowledge with information and information with "phrase regimes,"[36] and, similarly, why Foucault, who emphasizes what he calls "regimes of truth,"[37] opposes every kind of *a priori* knowledge. Both of them also oppose the metaphysical principles of religion and meta-narratives, which they consider totalitarian and hegemonic and, therefore, inapplicable to such things as "phrase regimes" and "regimes of truth."

Of course, al-Farabi, al-Ghazzali, and other Muslim philosophers reject such concepts as "regimes of truth," "performativity," and "little narratives"

and deny meta-narratives and *a priori* metaphysical and religious knowledge. In their view, one goal of education is to combine learning with practical action, for knowledge is something to be applied and perfection lies in knowledge being transformed into action: "Whatever by its nature should be known and practiced, its perfection lies in it actually being practiced."[38] If the sciences cannot be applied to practical reality, they would have no meaning and are thus void and useless. The real practical sciences "are those which are linked to readiness for action,"[39] and absolute perfection is "what the human being achieves through knowledge and action applied together."[40] Moreover, if the speculative sciences are learned without having the opportunity to apply them, then this wisdom is marred.[41]

Like Lyotard, al-Farabi believes that knowledge should be applied. But there is one important difference: Lyotard considers performativity as representing a denial of meta-narratives, whereas al-Farabi views real knowledge as being based on divine knowledge or religious meta-narratives. Al-Farabi holds that the first aim of knowledge is to know about God and His attributes, a type of knowledge that has a profound effect on people's moral conduct and helps them find the way to the ultimate aim of their existence, while indirectly arousing their intellect so that it can achieve wisdom. For him, this is the highest level of intellectual attainment that people could achieve in this life.[42] Indeed, he sees education as a religious process, because all of its related activities can be summed up as the attempt to acquire religious or moral values, knowledge, and practical skills. The goal of education is to lead individuals to perfection, since they were created for this purpose and the goal of humanity's existence is to attain happiness – the highest perfection, "the absolute good."[43]

Al-Ghazzali also says that "awareness and knowledge are the most important characteristics of man. In his view, the real knowledge in not necessarily the performative one." True knowledge can be unveiled only after the self has been cultivated through learning and exercise, so that what is engraved on the Well-Guarded Tablet (the contents of the Qur'an) can be imprinted upon it. The more the self comprehends such knowledge, the better it knows God, the closer it draws to Him, and the greater is one's happiness.[44]

As a scholar and a teacher, al-Ghazzali was interested in the problem of knowledge, namely, its concepts, methods, categories, and aims. In his view, true knowledge is the knowledge of God, His books and prophets, the kingdoms of Heaven and Earth, and knowledge of the Shari`ah as revealed by the Prophet. Such knowledge is thus a religious science, even if it includes the study of certain worldly phenomena. As opposed to Lyotard's view about

knowledge, performativity, and the denial of meta-narratives, al-Ghazzali opines that education is not limited to training the mind and filling it with information; rather, it involves all aspects – intellectual, religious, moral, and physical – of the student's personality. It is not enough to impart theoretical learning; that learning must be put into practice, for the purpose of knowledge is to help people achieve plenitude and attain true happiness – the happiness of the hereafter – by drawing close to God and gazing upon His countenance."[45] Seeking knowledge is, in his view, "a form of worship."[46]

However, advancements made during the last fifty years in the fields of industrial technology, communications, and cybernetics have had a profound impact upon the quality and essence of knowledge. Ever since the Renaissance, knowledge has been based only on rational and spiritual principles; in traditional religious cultures, knowledge had always been sought for salvation as well as for moral and spiritual guidance. But due to the modern era's progress and the conceptualization and reconceptualization of knowledge, rational and spiritual growth have given up their place to the needs of the workplace and the market or, in other words, performativity. As seen above, performativity leads to the delegitimation of knowledge.

Today, the domination of information over knowledge is considered a challenge for any type of religious education based on rational, spiritual, and eternal principles. According to Lanham: "We are awash in information, oceans of it, to the point that it is hardly a scarce commodity, as it once was. The Internet is vast ocean of shared information. What in this ocean is worthy of attention?"[47] In this vast ocean, we are confronted with new waves of information that are liable to be produced and made accessible to humanity. But access to real knowledge and understanding has hardly been taken into account. Information is neutral, explicit, external, perceptual, and relative,[48] whereas knowledge is conceptual, implicit, and internal.[49] In Emerson's view, knowledge is more important than information, for "knowledge is the same as a 'gleam of light' which flashes across the mind from within."[50]

Many questions that are not concerned with information crop up in our minds: What can we know? What is the nature of religious knowing? How can we be sure that our religious beliefs are justified? How can we improve our present stock of religious beliefs?

Arcillas warns us that spirituality and morality are weakening due to the domination of information:

> Our culture has truckled to the times – to the senses. It is not man worthy.
> If the vast and spiritual are omitted, so are the practical and the moral. It
> does not make us brave or free … We aim to make accountants, attorneys,

engineers, but not make able, earnest, great-hearted man. But education should be commensurate with the object of life and be a moral one.[51]

Another epistemological outcome of IT is the domination of quantitative epistemology over learning and the educational processes. Quantitative information, as such, is identified as the only authoritative form of scientific analysis, and the result of this epistemology is the externalization of knowledge. This externalization minimizes the ratio of the knower's obligation to whatever one knows, and separating the knower from the known, along with the absence of any obligation, deters the creation of one's internal development.

Lyotard believes that defining knowledge as equal to information, which itself arises from the information revolution, ruins the legitimacy of knowledge. This problem of legitimacy has two aspects: (1) externalized knowledge, which does not involve any internal transformation in the knower, and (2) externalized knowledge also establishes power for political systems.[52]

On the other hand, religious education is based on a kind of judgment. The teachers' task is to make their students capable of judging between right and wrong, good and evil, and ugly and beautiful deeds. Similarly, both teachers and students are obliged to justify their beliefs and deeds. Along with the abilities to judge and justify, they need to possess qualitative epistemology, namely, understanding, insight, reasoning, and critical rationality. Religious education achieves its goal by inculcating these abilities.[53] The logic of information is hegemony and dominance manifested in such a way that everything decays to the level of information[54] and causes the role and place of knowledge in the process of religious education to be denied. Information is an explicit[55] thing that everyone possesses,[56] whereas religion is a system of beliefs and attitudes based on intuition, thought, and rationality,[57] a kind of internal obligation.

The process of religious education also contains the evaluative, conceptual, and interpretative aspects,[58] as well as the spiritual one,[59] all of which seek to strengthen spiritual growth, create religious discipline,[60] and, finally, engender the growth of reasonable and rational judgments about religious matters.[61] Therefore, it can be said that the role of knowledge in religious education is vital; however, we also need information, especially when our goals are to transfer information about religion[62] or to discuss inter-religious issues.[63] But religious education does not merely seek to impart religious information to students, because there are people who have an abundance of religious information and yet feel no obligation to implement religious and moral principles. As a result, they cannot be called religiously educated peo-

ple.[64] One's sense of obligation to religious belief can have roots only in religious knowledge,[65] because such knowledge is subjective, implicit, intuitive, internal, conceptual, and equivalent to understanding.

Information is based on documents, patents, and software. In other words, it is explicit,[66] external, factual, perceptual, and objective; a shared, collective, and plural commodity[67] that includes written and spoken communications. Information is what we know and can be interpreted by knowledge. Religious education is a system of beliefs and attitudes, divine and spiritual truths, that are associated with a system of thought.[68] It refers to revelation, compliance, and commitment to religious beliefs; is based on conceptual, emphatic, reflective, interpretive, critical, and evaluative interactions[69]; contains religious cognition, beliefs, and practices[70]; is equal to spiritual education[71]; seeks to empower individuals to strive for greater maturity, become responsible and respectful citizens, acquire religious understanding, develop their character, undertake spiritual discipline, and act for the common good[72]; and, finally, seeks to develop one's ability to form reasoned thoughts that, in turn, lead to informed judgments about religious issues.[73]

Religious education, of course, also needs some information, especially when it has to provide students with more information about religion[74] or discuss issues that have an inter-disciplinary[75] or an inter-religions focus. What is important in the process of religious education is not merely giving information about one's own religion or other religions, because many people have a great deal of information about religions but are not religiously educated. Information can only be seen as a commodity[76] used to fulfill the goals of religious education. Given that information is a neutral and external quality, those people who have only religious information do not belong to or have any commitment to religion. Commitment to religious beliefs,[77] values, and practices can take root only in the presence of religious knowledge, because only religious knowledge is tacit, intuitive, internal, conceptual, subjective, and equal to understanding. According to the characteristics of information, reducing knowledge to the level of information means to weaken the above aspects of religious education.

Information, being neutral, is a non-transcendental, non-directional, and non-rational phenomenon. Therefore, it needs to be interpreted. Feinberg believes that rationality in religious education can bring stability to a person's behavior because it has a reasonableness aspect.[78] On the other hand, information can be used as a means of indoctrination, conditioning, and socialization, and thus any process of religious education based solely on information can act as a conditioning or indoctrination process. Carr believes that empha-

sizing rationality in any program of spiritual education will enable us to focus on knowledge instead of indoctrination, understanding instead of conditioning, and reasonableness instead of socialization.[79]

Finally information, especially organized information, has a collective and shared aspect, meaning that everyone who has the same information has some of the same types of behavior. If information encounters some changes, shared and common behaviors also encounter some changes, regardless of whether these common behaviors are religious or irreligious. Therefore, according to information's continuously changing and flexible nature, all religious behaviors based on information are also changeable. Given this reality, those people who behave in a religious manner cannot have any stability, even though one of the main aims of religious education is to create stability in each person's deeds according to religious teachings.

The interaction between innovative IT and religious education is often perceived as contradictory, for IT results in some outcomes that are considered challenges to the process of religious education, namely, delegitimating knowledge; equating information with knowledge; weakening the principle of vertical/hierarchical epistemic lines between people, as well as the principles of religious representation and religious discipline; weakening the role of the author in religious texts and strengthening the role of the reader by emphasizing the hypertext beside the text and, consequently, weakening the role of the sacred text in religious learning; and, finally, weakening the teacher's role as the transmitter of religious information and knowledge.

Conclusion

This paper focused only on the challenge of IT's delegitimation of knowledge vis-à-vis the process of religious education. By studying such problems and challenges, we have realized that these challenges and problems are useful for correcting various shortcomings, especially those found in traditional and fundamentalist societies. Today, religious education in such societies is confronted with problems in the areas of principles, methods, and contents – problems that could be cleared away by IT– as well as the appearance of new spaces created by IT in the area of religious education. It seems that this positive view of IT's consequences may also create some problems by negating various principles and goals, without which the process of religious education would be meaningless. Any attempt to explain and analyze the nature of such challenges and problems laid out by IT, especially as regards the educational system in religious societies, is the main responsibility of educational experts and planners.

Endnotes

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