

Spandrel or Fitrah? An Essay on the Relationship Between Cognitive Science of Religion and Fitrah

Spandrel mi Fitrat mı? Bilişsel Din Bilimi ile Fitrat Arasındaki İlişki Üzerine Bir Deneme

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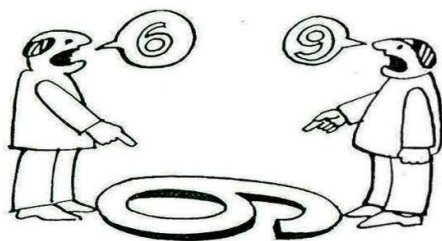
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1. Introduction

Spandrel or Fitrah? “En Essay on the Relationship Between Cognitive Science of Religion and Fitrah” written by Osman Zahid Çifçi was published by GRIN publications, an international publishing house, in 2023 as the first edition under the ISBN number 9783346840462. The work, published in the format of a scientific book in the field of philosophy of religion, is designed to deal with the concepts of spandrel and fitrah regarding human nature in the context of cognitive science of religion in 98 pages. The content is structured as an introduction and three main chapters: the source and epistemic value of religion, cognitive science of religion (CSR) and common sense principles, cognitive science of religion studies and theistic interpretations of them. Author Osman Zahid Çifçi, who continues his studies at Selçuk University as an academic, has worked in the fields of philosophy of religion, political philosophy, and Islamic philosophy. Our author has a broad background in the philosophy of religion, particularly in academic articles such as “Paul Bloom and Morality as An Evolutionary Accident” (Çifçi & Çiçek, 2015), “From Naturalist Efforts to Theistic Results (The Concept of Human Disposition in Private a Review Essay)” (Çifçi, 2015), “Paul Bloom and The Emergence with An Evolutionary Accident of The Religious Beliefs” (Çifçi, 2019) and his translations of cognitive religious sciences (Caird, 2022).



At the time of analyzing this study, our road map will be developed as follows: First, the author's purpose and method for realizing this purpose will be determined. After analyzing the author's epistemic and religious perspective, the audience of the work, language used, content of the chapters and points of this content that catch our attention, we will evaluate whether the intended purpose has been achieved and the book overall.



“I am as right as you are, as true as you are.”

To summarize the claim and content of the book, the image above will tell us a great deal about this work and the author's claims in the shortest amount of time feasible. There is data in the middle, which can be read differently depending on one's perspective. At this point, the author O. Zahid Çifçi reaches to a different interpretation based on the data presented and claims that the opposite results of the claims of those who put forward the data can be put forward from a different point of view. Following this, the author argues that his conclusions are at least as valid as theirs in terms of accuracy. In this book, the idea of Cognitive Science of Religion and O. Zahid Çifçi seem to be positioned on two opposing fronts. While CSR is generally on the naturalistic side data-collecting side, Çifçi is on the theistic side, interpreting the data that CSR presents in an opposing way to CSR's way of thinking (except for the theistic CSR thinkers). To concretize the issue, while CSR is attempting to accumulate ammunition against theism, Çifçi, along with T. Reid and raids CSR warehouses and uses the ammunition to his advantage.

To put it in academic terms, the author's main purpose in this study is to “show that human beings are born with a natural inclination to believe in God and to have moral values, and in doing so, to demonstrate that differences of perspective are a human reality.” (Çifçi, 2023, p. 8). In doing so, the author states that he will not use a naturalistic method to analyze



the data of CSR, and that he prefers to make philosophical interpretations based on religion at this time (Çifçi, 2023, p. 5).

This work, which we believe addresses the fields of philosophy of religion and psychology of religion, seems to have a style that can be understood both by academic experts and more amateur readers who are interested in the subject. The systematic approach of the author, who deals with a unique subject in his field with fluency and simplicity, is admirable. As far as we understand from the content of the book and the author's use of the data, the author's perspective on the subject is theistic in terms of faith and partially relativist in terms of epistemology. While it is typical within his social environment, profession and religious belief to form a theistic perspective, the way he interprets knowledge and human beings reveals his intellectual difference. Again, in the context of reason-belief, while including himself in the "critical rationalist" (Çifçi, 2023, p. 9) class, he states that the distinctive feature of human beings is not reason, reason is a tool and the most fundamental feature of human beings is their moral aspiration.

The statement "Every culture looks at its own sky, every gaze creates its own sky" quoted by the author in his book reveals both his own view of the methodology of science and his criticism of the reductionist understanding of the current understanding of science. From this point of view, the author first criticizes the uniformitarianism present in the current understanding of science, then discusses the history and cycles in history that constitute this process, and then leads us to the conclusion that truth can alter depending on the environment to which people belong and the perspectives they have, and that knowledge actually has a deductive aspect. This systematic that the author follows then moves step by step towards the ground that constitutes the claim that the empirical data put forward by CSR cannot be interpreted in a singular manner and that different perspectives can express different truths.

The title of the book was conceived as "Spandrel or Fitrah?" in order to draw attention to the author's claims, to represent the content, and simultaneously to arouse curiosity, and the content is basically based on these two concepts. From this point of view, the choice of title must be considered successful. T. Reid is the most significant figure whose views



the author draws support from in the content. In particular, Reid's "common sense principles" are the greatest supporter of the author in justifying his claims. In this respect, the author makes it easier for his audience to understand the subject by explaining all these principles and concepts that he employs as arguments in his work.

Although the concepts of "spandrel" and "fitrah" in the title seem to have the same meaning, they are the product of different perspectives. Both concepts recognize the existence of certain faculties that humans are born with and claim that these faculties predispose them to believe and be moral. However, while the naturalistic perspective explains this as a by-product of evolution, the religious perspective views it as a gift from God. Here, the author takes the side of the concept of "fitrah" (Çifçi, 2023, p. 5). In the end, Çifçi links his main claim that human beings are beings of faith to a reasoning that leads to God through these faculties, based on the concept of fitrah. This objective appears to have been accomplished to a great extent within his own systematics.

2. Analysis and Evaluation

Following a general evaluation of the study in terms of purpose, method and style, we can proceed to the analysis and evaluation of the content. While analyzing the content of the study, we will try to provide both general information about the content and express our criticisms. As previously stated, the study consists of an introduction, three chapters and a conclusion.

In the introduction, the author first expresses his own epistemological understanding. In particular, he criticizes the unidirectional scientific methodology that emerged following the Renaissance and expresses the mistakes in addressing the truth using only a single method. According to the author, at the point of knowing and understanding, "when it comes to the human perspective, deduction, not induction, is essential. People look at life according to the totality (religion, ideology, etc.) that exists in their minds and make sense of what they see according to that totality." (Çifçi, 2023, p. 2) The author supports this point of view with the cycles that occur in the historical process of philosophy. Accordingly, when we analyze the history of philosophy, it is observed that the human mind is connected to three places and explains what exists according to these



places of connection. The first place to which the intellect is connected is religion (mythology) (Çifçi, 2023, p. 3). Looking at nature and oneself according to the data of religion, man's evaluations were made according to the universals he received from religion. Later, the order in nature attracted man and he attached his reason to nature on a secondary basis. The idea of seeking the Arche in nature can be given as an example. The attachment of the intellect to nature has developed a perspective that does not refer to the supernatural in terms of interpreting beings (Çifçi, 2023, p. 3). However, when man observed nature, he could not remain indifferent to the order and causality that existed there, he thought that he was more than an automaton living in this order of nature and directed his mind to a third point of connection, humanity (Çifçi, 2023, p. 4). With these hypotheses, the author argues that the truth of knowledge varies in historical processes according to the point at which human beings connect their minds, and that today's scientific perspective is the product of a mind connected to nature, as in the case of naturalists, but that this method cannot be the sole representative of the truth. It is not possible to disagree with the author, who also has independent studies on this subject, at this point (Çifçi & Şahin, 2022). As a matter of fact, even within the naturalistic understanding of science, the truth can vary from day to day. It is also impossible to say that a system with deficiencies among its parts is the only method of truth as a whole.

After expressing his epistemological understanding, the author provides explanations of the concepts he discusses in the introduction. Here, explanations on spandrel, fitrah and CSR thinking come to the fore.

The term spandrel is actually known as an architectural term. Accordingly, a "spandrel", also referred to as "arch void" or "triangular", is the name given to the triangular structures formed by the intersection of two round arches, which gradually taper. The fact that these spaces are decorated and appear to be a necessary part of architectural design does not mean that they were made for this purpose. If a dome is to be mounted on round arches, the pattern that emerges spontaneously is called a spandrel. In other words, this pattern is not an integral part of the design, but a by-product of design preferences (Çifçi, 2023, p. 6).



The author quotes Gould as saying that the difficulties caused by the attempt to explain everything in evolutionary biology in terms of adaptation were tried to be overcome by evolutionists which supported the spandrel explanation. The concept of spandrel is a clearer and more useful substitute for adaptation in this respect. Thus, this concept will be used to describe potentially necessary transfers that cannot be called adaptations because they do not solve adaptive issues but are nevertheless useful (Çifçi, 2023, p. 6). According to this perspective, which is also accepted by Cognitive Science of Religion (CSR), religions and beliefs in supernatural beings to which religions refer are not adaptations but spandrels. Religions and supernatural beliefs are natural, but they owe their naturalness to the preferences of evolution (Çifçi, 2023, p. 6). According to the author's statements, not all CSR thinkers have an atheistic belief system, but the vast majority of them try to explain human faculties such as the inclination to believe, morality, causality and aesthetics with an evolutionary explanation and without the recourse to the supernatural.

In the introductory part of the study, the author also touches upon fitrah as a concept, which is the author's primary argument. The author defines fitrah as "a concept that expresses the basic structure and character of beings at the moment of their first creation and their initial state that is free from external influences" (Çifçi, 2023, p. 7). Accordingly, human beings are innately aware of moral values and possess moral faculties. In addition, human beings carry the belief in an omnipotent supernatural power that organizes and designs. This belief can be suppressed under the influence of the environment (Çifçi, 2023, p. 14). As the author points out, although this is technically how fitrah is defined, a young Anthony Flew reading such a definition in his youth would agree with many naturalists that it lacks cognitive value. For instance, "Every human being is naturally inclined to like baklava, but this can be suppressed by environmental influences." A judgment such as this, interpreted similarly to A. Flew, is in a similar form to the definition of fitrah, and we do not have the data to prove or disprove either. Interpreted from this point of view, fitrah does not carry any information value beyond belief. It is at this point that the author presents the information that would prevent us from making this interpretation in the third chapter and uses the data of



CSR thinkers on the innateness of fitrah to support his argument in a way that can be verified and falsified.

We had to keep the analysis and evaluation of the introductory chapter somewhat lengthy because it contains the author's point of view and definitions of concepts. Now we can continue our analysis and criticism within the main sections of the study from the first chapter. In the first chapter, which discusses "the source of religion and its epistemological value", the author starts with the definition of religion and considers religion as an institution that is indispensable for human beings and to which they have resorted since the beginning of their existence.

From this point on, the author tells the story of the emergence of naturalism while emphasizing that science, which had been interested in the how of existence until then after the Enlightenment period, now began to be interested in the why of existence and attempted to address this why using the methods of science. In this context, the author emphasizes that understandings influenced by naturalism treat everything about the institution of religion and belief as factual and explain the source of religion in a way that is independent of the transcendent, and in this way, he comments that religion is treated as a cultural element on the same plane as law, politics, art and science. Examples of such explanations are found in intellectual and functionalist approaches. These approaches claim that religion is a structure that emerged either in the absence of science or in response to human needs. Although this viewpoint is not generally accepted today due to its reductionist attitudes, the author argues that it is perpetuated today by evolutionists and cognitive psychology, which treats the human mind like a computer (Çifçi, 2023, p. 14).

It is clear from the study that Alexander Gallus and like-minded thinkers were the first examples of the use of biological evolution in religious explanations, defining religions as adaptations that arise due to their contributions to human survival and reproduction. In addition to this evolutionary understanding, anthropic theories of religion have also argued that the human mind tends to produce religious beliefs in a specific and predictable manner (Çifçi, 2023, p. 28).

The author states that these understandings are centered around two views: adaptation and spandrel. According to the adaptation theory, reli-



gion has a rational aspect by solving a human problem, but it also contains irrational ideas. For example, while religion exhibits a rational aspect in ensuring social life and group belonging, it also brings with it an irrational aspect that requires belief in supernatural beings. The other form of explanation is seen as spandrel. According to this, although religion provides social benefits that increase group cohesion, these are not the main reasons behind the emergence of religion. Religion originates as a by-product of the most basic cognitive adaptations that will contribute to the survival of human beings in the evolutionary situation that enables them to adapt to the environment. The author advocates the idea of “Cognitive Science of Religion (CSR)” as one of the most fundamental elements of his work in this chapter and more broadly in the second.

Accordingly, the basic thesis of Cognitive Science of Religion (CSR) is that the source of religious beliefs should be sought in human nature, not in a supernatural force (Çifçi, 2023, p. 22).

“Cognitive Science is an interdisciplinary field that investigates the structure of the mind, how it functions, and the interrelationship of the processes resulting from this function with the contributions of disciplines such as psychology, neuroscience, computer science, religious sciences, anthropology and philosophy. Cognitive Science, which attempts to analyze the human mind on the basis of the developments in computer sciences and makes use of evolutionary psychology in doing so, yields results that pertain not only to the study of psychology but also to a variety of human-related fields, particularly theology. The Cognitive Science of Religion (CSR), which reveals many findings on the origin and nature of religious beliefs and whose findings are generally analyzed from a naturalistic perspective, is the reflection of Cognitive Science in the field of theology. The Cognitive Science of Religion (CSR), which emerged as a third alternative to the intellectual and functionalist explanations of the source of religious beliefs outlined above, is a form of explanation that elucidates the origin without reference to the supernatural. According to this theory, religious thoughts, like other thoughts, are the product of the human mind and no supernatural forces are necessary to explain them.” (Çifçi, 2023, p. 18).



Emphasizing that the balance of weight of the ideas that knowledge is innate or acquired has changed from time to time in the historical process, our author defines Plato and his followers as dogmatists, while John Locke and D. Hume are examples of the post- enlightenment view that knowledge is acquired. He also presents evolutionary psychology as the evolution of the center of gravity in favor of the existence of innate knowledge. However, contrary to Plato and Descartes, those in evolutionary psychology seek knowledge not in the soul but in the physical structure of the living being.

According to foundationalism, which the author traces back to Descartes, there are two categories of knowledge: fundamental and inferential. Foundational knowledge comprises beliefs whose truth is self-evident and does not need to be substantiated. Inferential ones, on the other hand, are beliefs that need to be justified, require evidence to be verified, and are reached through reasoning. Which beliefs should be considered fundamental beliefs and on what basis? This query is answered by T. Reid, the most influential supporter of our author in this study.

Reid, who identifies fundamental beliefs and refers to them as “commonsense principles”, argues that these beliefs emerge nonreflectively and that humans possess cognitive faculties that enable their emergence. At this point, the author pairs T. Reid’s “common sense principles” and foundationalism’s “basic beliefs” and builds the entrance to the path that will lead him to the innateness of the concept of fitrah. Reid’s claims that fundamental beliefs emerge without reasoning and thinking and that there are cognitive faculties present in humans that enable their emergence and that the beliefs produced by these cognitive faculties should be accepted as true unless there is evidence to the contrary constitute the exact support the author is looking for. From this point forward, the author’s use of fitrah as a synonym for a basic belief or a common sense principle frees him from the need for any reasoning or experimentation regarding fitrah and enables him to claim the innateness of fitrah until the contrary is claimed and proven. In this way, religious beliefs can also be explained through fundamental beliefs, and the information they provide can be accepted as true until proven otherwise. This path followed by the author can be seen as an attempt to open a door from fundamental



beliefs to religious epistemology. However, can many beliefs that cannot be proved or disproved be included in the same class of values? Wouldn't an attitude of acceptance in the face of situations that cannot be falsified lead us to fideism? These questions may occasionally arise in the mind of a reader of "Spandrel or Fitrah".

In the second part of the study, following a discussion of the history, methodology and intellectual characteristics of CSR thought, T. Reid's commonsense principles are given and the similarities and distinctions of these two thoughts are expressed. In this section, the author agrees with CSR thought and Reid's idea that human beings have innate abilities, but states that he is on Reid's side regarding the reality of these abilities and being able to trust them. So, what is the aforementioned CSR thinking, what are the principles that T. Reid defines as common sense principles? Should we trust in these principles, or should we reject them because they do not follow the process of rational reasoning? We can elaborate on these issues in the context of the book.

The author traces the philosophical foundations of CSR back to the philosophers of the Enlightenment and names Francis Bacon, Benedict de Spinoza, David Hume, Immanuel Kant, Edward Burnett Tylor and Claude Lévi-Strauss.

Following the philosophical background of the CSR idea, naturalism, evolutionary psychology and computer science are stated as the theories that paved the way for the formation of this idea. According to the author's interpretation, from the beginning of the 21st century onwards, the idea of Cognitive Science of Religion has become an ideology in which atheist theses find a source (Çifçi, 2023, p. 28). This can be seen in the following statements of the author:

"The idea of the Cognitive Science of Religion (CSR) has an ontological naturalistic point of view, which we have identified as becoming an ideology. Physicalism and scientism are presuppositions. However, scientism and physicalism cannot explain their own existence using the methods they demand. From this viewpoint, it is necessary to distinguish between the data put forward by the Cognitive Science of Religion (CSR) and its evaluations of such data. The data of the Cognitive Science of



Religion (CSR) can be evaluated not only from a naturalistic point of view but also from other perspectives.” (Çifçi, 2023, p. 24)

In the study, it is asserted and criticized that Darwinism, which forms the basis of CSR thinking, has turned into an ideology rather than a scientific claim like CSR thinking. In Darwinism, the expression “by-product” is used as a synonym for spandrel. They do not contribute to the survival or reproduction of the organism. They arise in relation to adaptations and are transmitted along with the adaptations with which they are associated. Based on this, CSR thinking considers religious beliefs as spandrels and explains the universal prevalence of religion in this way (Çifçi, 2023, p. 24). Accordingly, religion is spandrel and not adaptation. Boyer gives the example of musical talent to illustrate this situation. Musical talent is not an adaptation because it is not an element that ensures human survival or facilitates life and reproduction. The auditory system as one of the five senses is an adaptation, and musical talent is a by-product of this adaptation. According to this view, religious beliefs, which do not have a cognitive system of their own in the mind, are a by-product of our cognitive abilities we use in our daily work and have no special status (Çifçi, 2023, p. 29).

The author criticizes CSR thinking for being reductionist on these points. According to the author, these claims ignore the theological, environmental, cultural, psychological and social processes that led to the emergence of religion and attempt to make the metaphysical claims of religions the subject of experimentation. An approach that says that religion does not exist, that it is composed of baseless beliefs and that it emerged by chance in the evolutionary process should not forget that scientific thoughts can also be evaluated as spandrel. This is because scientific thinking is not an adaptive product for survival or reproduction (Çifçi, 2023, p. 30).

According to CSR thinking, humans have a system adapted to non-reflectively identify agents. Religious ideas, and in particular the idea of God, are a spandrel of this human agent determination system. CSRs are not opposed to this agent determination system but claim that this system fails from time to time and that the idea of God is an unrealistic product of these failures. Accordingly, as a survival-oriented creature,



human beings, in the evolutionary process, preferred to act as if there was an agent rather than pretend that there was no agent and lose their lives (Çifçi, 2023, p. 33). The author opposes CSR's view on the idea of God with the following statements:

"If our HADD system is to be accepted as a faulty system and frequently sends false warnings, it will not be considered a successful adaptation and will not be selected according to evolutionary theory. As such, this system does not seem to serve a purpose in the survival of humans and contradicts natural selection." (Çifçi, 2023, p. 34).

If it were a system that consistently generated false alarms, as the author's objection suggests, then perhaps CSR thinkers would view this criticism as justified. However, from a CSRist point of view, it is not hard to imagine that these alarm failures would not be accepted as a continuum but would explain them as incidental. A security system installed in the home that occasionally gives a false signal is not dismantled and thrown away as long as it is thought to eliminate any major security weakness. If there is evolution, proponents of this understanding can claim that adaptation continues to progress, and that selection will eventually take place in its most perfect form. In this sense, we know that evolutionists' greatest weapon in their defense is the long-time intervals in processes. The author criticizes why CSRists consider the innate ability to search for an agent to be acceptable and safe when used for survival but change course when it comes to the concept of God, stating: "Their other caveats are correct, but in the case of religious beliefs there are naturalistic assumptions rather than a satisfactory explanation for the fallibility of this system." Indeed, if CSR thinkers think that nonreflective knowledge is formed in the evolutionary process of human beings, and if they claim that this knowledge has emerged over a long period of time as a product of human beings' struggle for survival, and if they consider agent-seeking knowledge to be a human faculty, then it should not only be based on delusions but also have a reality dimension to it. However, the existence of the ability to search for an agent does not mean that there is no agent. If they accept physics as a science, we observe in nature that there can be no reaction to anything that has no agent or effect. If there is a reaction, there is an effect, and if there is an act, there is an agent. It must be said that the



ability to search for an agent corresponds to a reality in human beings, whether it is innate or acquired, and that the effort to search for an agent is quite natural. Indeed, the claim of a non-existent agent is intellectually weaker than the claim that an agent must be sought behind the act.

After discussing CSR, the author devotes the second chapter to the ideas of T. Reid and expresses his epistemology as one which he is in support of. Reid's epistemology and understanding of common sense, which the author gives in detail, basically accepts the idea that human beings are born with certain abilities like CSR thought, but unlike CSR, it is based on the evaluation of this knowledge as real and reliable unless otherwise demonstrated. "Reid's epistemology begins with trust, not doubt. The method of reaching the truth by doubting everything we see in Descartes is replaced in Reid by the acceptance of what exists as true until proven false." (Çifçi, 2023, p. 40). According to him, common sense is the cognitive faculties/principles that the laws of our nature lead us to believe in, that we accept as true under certain conditions and in common matters of life, without feeling the need to reason about them, that are at least as reliable as reasoning and do not require rational justification. Not all beliefs are like the beliefs provided by our cognitive faculties. Other beliefs that require justification are built on the basic beliefs that our cognitive faculties provide directly. We lack the data to establish that some faculties are reliable, and others are unreliable. Thus, in determining our attitude toward these faculties, we must, for the sake of consistency, either accept them all as reliable or reject them all (Çifçi, 2023, p. 41). Reid's position, which the author supports, can be criticized on some of its points. For example, for the sake of consistency, can we trust all the entities that we believe or are inclined to believe to exist spiritually? Not all innate faculties in humans are equally reliable. Reason and intuition can both be described as innate faculties, but intuition is not as reliable as reason. Reid's suggestion that we should trust every innate faculty in the same way can be viewed as an interpretation that goes beyond the expectation of coherence. While consistency is expected to exist within the same system, an expectation of consistency between two different domains of cognition such that if one is considered reliable, the other should also be accepted, may be misleading.



Reid, who claims that human beings have an innate ability to distinguish between the product of design and random things and that this ability is not acquired through reasoning or experience, sees design as a commonsense principle, argues that God's existence can be proved based on this design principle and refers to this argument as the "argument from final causes". The argument is divided into premises as follows:

Premise 1: The design and intelligence in a cause can be deduced with certainty from the traces or signs in the effect.

Premise 2: In fact, in the works of Nature there are the clearest signs of design and wisdom.

Premise 3: The works of Nature are therefore the effects of a wise and thinking cause. (Çifçi, 2023, p. 51).

In the study, it is mentioned that the first part of this argument is not criticized by atheists, but the second part is rejected in this sense, and the first premise can be criticized according to Hume's thought. Hume's criticism would be in the same way as his criticism of the teleological argument that a situation that has not been observed in the context of cause and effect cannot be described in a chain of cause and effect. From this point of view, it does not appear simple to distinguish Reid's argument from the argument from purpose and order, or to understand what Reid is proposing in addition to it. Additionally, another criticism can be brought to the first premise. A design may be too weak for the potential of the designer, and the designer may develop a sloppy design. This artifact would mean that the design and intelligence of the cause cannot be conclusively inferred from the traces or signs in the result. Therefore, the first premise is not as precise as stated.

In the remainder of the work, Reid's "common sense principles" are given in detail with their explanations. However, it would be appropriate to mention the principles in general terms and continue without delving into excessive detail. These can be listed as; design, the idea that everything that begins to exist has a reason, respect for authority, interpreting gestures and mimics, distinguishing thinking beings, distinguishing right from wrong, human power in action and will, the need to trust our senses, clear memories are related to reality, the reality of things that are consci-



ous, predictability of human behavior, and having foresight about natural events.

In the third and final part of the study, the research of scientists, mostly psychologists, who produce ideas within the idea of Cognitive Science of Religion (CSR), identify cognitive faculties that exist prior to experience. According to them, these cognitive faculties are innate, and while some are adaptive, others are spandrels which are by-products of adaptations.

Çifçi evaluates the data obtained from these experiments through Reid's "common sense principles" and the concept of fitrah, which he uses with reference to religion. Touching on the content and methods of these experiments, the author argues that some of the faculties that can presented within the concept of fitrah have been confirmed through these experiments. For example, in one of these experiments, it is concluded that moral axioms and knowledge of good and evil are innate. In these studies, conducted on infants who were not yet mature enough to acquire experiential knowledge, it was observed that infants defined puppets as good and bad and acted accordingly. Once again, in these experiments, it is stated that babies exhibit a caring approach towards those who think like them and a punitive approach towards those who do not. At this point, the author concludes that the ability to distinguish between good and evil is innate and evaluates this situation as fitrah (Çifçi, 2023, pp. 66–70). However, from the same experiment, it can also be interpreted as a preference arising from the categorization of self and other, as opposed to the good-bad preference. Human beings may categorize themselves into self and others based on their innate fight-or-flight instinct, define friend and foe, show interest in those who think like them and react to the other whom they perceive as an enemy, all of which may have nothing to do with moral preferences. In other words, the infant may differentiate good and evil according to its own position. The author seems to explain this point more clearly in another study (Çifçi & Uçar, 2022). The perspective variable that the author frequently emphasizes seems to be present here as well.

Another innate ability that emerged from these experiments conducted by CSRists is that people have the distinction between body and



mind without any experience or reasoning. In these studies, it was concluded that 5-month-old babies were very aware of the distinction between inanimate objects and human beings. Although they were only 5 months old, infants were able to know the difference between inanimate objects and humans. In studies on this subject, there are several supporting data that the ability to distinguish between physical and mental states is innate (Çifçi, 2023, pp. 71–73).

In addition to other experiments, research is conducted on the human condition in relation to design. Here, it is investigated whether people are born with the assumption that everything has a purpose and whether this assumption is innate. In this study, it was found that children's teleological explanations differed according to their ages. While younger children emphasized purpose more, the emphasis on purpose decreased as they grew older, but still persisted. In the experiments on order, a tendency towards intelligent design was detected.

Again, children were more inclined towards creation theory than evolution (Çifçi, 2023, pp. 71–73). The study concludes with the data revealed in these experiments and the interpretation of these experiments in terms of fitrah.

3. Discussion and Conclusion

In conclusion, the author claims that human beings possess certain innate faculties, and that although they are referred to as basic beliefs and common sense principles, they are in fact faculties bestowed upon human beings by God as their "Fitrah". Although he does not view religious beliefs as fundamental beliefs, he states that the fundamental beliefs that will lead to the existence of religious beliefs through reasoning are innate to human beings. The question of whether the innate knowledge in infants revealed in the data of the CSR experiments arises from fitrah, based on an essence that has existed from the very beginning of the creation of humanity, or from a process that develops through evolution and heredity does not seem to be able to provide a definitive answer from the current experiments, and it seems that it would be erroneous to interpret these abilities from a single point of view. In this respect, the issue of spandrel or fitrah is still an area that requires deeper and more developed studies. The effects of religions, social environment, geography and nutrition on



these abilities can be further analyzed separately and in successive generations where these variables are constant.

The author believes that these faculties in human beings are endowed upon them by God as a matter of fitrah and makes his explanations through the data provided to him by the religion, he believes in. CSR thought, on the other hand, defines them as inexplicable by-products of an evolutionary process, while actually admitting that its own theses are based on belief rather than knowledge. At this point, the situation of the author in terms of accepting a belief and the situation of CSR thought, which claims to defend scientificity, do not seem to be very distinct. While the author believes in these faculties by explaining them with religious data, CSR thought seems to have a more ambiguous belief than the author by displaying an image that believes in inexplicability.

Even the presupposition that spandrel is a by-product is based on a belief. Indeed, as Descartes put it, if we think of the concept of God as God's signature on the human mind, then everything can be for the spandrel. In short, everything conceived can be for the emergence of that little triangle. In other words, we can say that God reveals the secret and meaning of all existence to human beings through that little triangle.

With such an important, original and beautiful work, the author makes an important contribution to our world of science. As an academic of philosophy of religion, I owe it to myself to congratulate and thank the author.

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