

THE METHODOLOGY OF MUSLİM THEOLOGIANS IN UNDERSTANDING THE QUR'AN AND THE DIFFICULTIES INVOLVED

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Abstract

In this paper I am to lay down the theory of Kalam's understanding of the Qur'an, to determine the difficulties involved and to discuss the possibility of a new meaning search. When considered from this perspective, the question about the role and methodology of Kalam in understanding the Qur'an gets twofold significance. Theology gains its role it played in its earlier times the two elements, namely creed and politics should accompany each other. Confining the matter completely to the speculative nature of metaphysical realm, the traditional theology has ignored emphasizing human value and his rights. To give priority to man and his main rights must be the main concern of theology. Because we live in the world. In Qur'anic language as an individual everybody is mortal, but the idea of the world, although the universal man is a result, is constant. Theology by giving up the claim of "pure identity" which is the ferocious face of this discipline must play a role of unifying all Muslims who unify on main principles around the common interests by realizing that the scientific face of it is related to the nature of the world.

Key words: Kalam, understanding, theologians, methodology, Mutazilite

In every attempt to name *Ilm al- Kalam*, the main emphasis is made upon 'word' or 'logos' and accordingly some reasons for this naming are laid down.¹ With the introduction of revelation to human terminology, the 'word' had come to show bilateral aspects: one of them relates to the necessity of revelation being understood by humans and the other to ability of man to form a "meaning field" by speaking and discussing. When thinking the place of "word" in forming a meaning field, one can easily say that a discipline which is named by "word" is aiming a fundamental search for meaning.

When speaking of the understanding of the Qur'an, one doesn't mean to know literal meanings of verses or to be enlightened by them. For understanding is an act which involves conceptual frame, experience

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1 See. Taftazani, *Şerhu 'l-akaid*, Cairo 1988, p. 10.

and conceptual comprehension.² The act of understanding the Qur'an implies the effort of enlightening the conceptual frame of Qur'anic concepts, of determining their fields of use, their meaning varieties in the text context and in the off-text social-historical one and of setting them on an *intellectual base* by unifying the meaning obtained. The aim for our efforts to rely on the intellectual meaning of the verses rather than their literal meaning is to set up an Islamic point of view based on the Qur'anic texts. So in this paper I am to lay down the theory of Kalam's understanding of the Qur'an, to determine the difficulties involved and to discuss the possibility of a new meaning search. When considered from this perspective, the question about the role and methodology of Kalam in understanding the Qur'an gets twofold significance. Certainly to try to find the answer within the *Ilm al-Kalam* by definition is our main goal.

In the earlier period of Islam there were no diverse methods of understanding. Within the process of revelation, in fact, it was impossible to set about a fundamental search for meaning.³ For in the process of revelation the problem to be discussed was whether the verses were from Allah rather than their meanings. We can debate the phenomenon of change in the process of revelation and its being transmitted to the community by the Prophet. It is important to analyze this period together with the following questions: the prophet either transmitted the revelation by the language known, comprehended and used by the community -that's he used the conventional means of communication- or he reinterpreted the existing tradition and transformed the cultural patterns. This process is important in that it constructed the Muslim mentality, had the transformation spirit come off and tidied up the language of a culture and *forms of depiction* (ontology, epistemology and ethics or value) and it realized human's transformation from internal to the external so that they conceive and apply the revelation. In other words, since the revelation coming from the transcendent Absolute Being was being transmitted to humankind by a human through a human language and its echoes in *historical intellect* and its practice in the society on the one hand and revelation's having, though partly, some causes necessitates it to be revealed and prophet's answers to the people by revelation and moreover by using the present argumentation show that it is fairly difficult to "understand the Qoran" especially its message in social context.

With the death of the Prophet, the arising political oppositions, later controversies and their outcomes, conquest movement, in a sense the confrontation of cultural and religious patterns, and its results, dynamics implied by hasty change, the events Muslim encountered and their *cultural logic's* exposure and religious institutionalism made a search for

2 For the concept of 'understanding' see. H. P. Rickman, *Understanding and Human Disciplines*, Turkish trans.: Mehmet Dağ, Ankara Univ. Publ., 1922, pp. 4-7.

3 Mihri Hasan, Abu Sa'de, *el-İtticahu'l-akliyyun fi müşkileti'l-ma'rifeti inde'l-Mu'tezile*, Cairo 1993, p. 21.

meaning inevitable. Naturally some other types of understanding came to the fore. Right to that point we are to seek an answer to this question: What are the reasons which necessitated some other methodologies for understanding? Even there was the Holy Qur'an why was it impossible to lay down as an *unique criterion*? These questions are the main points of the issue. Is it possible to explain it by the internal and external differentiation? Certainly not. Because diversity, though on the one hand is the result of a change, a social demand and is the outcome of search for meaning on the other hand even its appearance marks a certain period and a certain case, it is beyond doubt that it has a close relation with the past, with the present trends, with the emancipations and with the intellectual mutual impact. Because Qur'an is being read within the space-time context and within the meaning frame arisen from man and within a cultural surrounding which expresses the totality of all diverse meanings. Unfortunately in all traditional disciplines the *true meaning* has been searched for between subject and object. Contrary to that, *true meaning* is existing in a view which exposes the totality of network between subject and object, which is aware of the impacts and which fits to the methodological criteria of sufficient understanding. Then what is substantial is not an *objective understanding* but rather an understanding which aims accessing at an objectivity on the base of *critical rational tradition*. Because, *critical rational tradition* is the most practical way of enlarging our knowledge. If there is not a critical debate tradition, two problems arise. First, every usual *understanding* and *imitation*, *selfish inductions* may be attributed to the Qur'an and these may be imposed upon society under efficiency of the Holy. Secondly, if there is not new information and meanings then the process of standardization is inevitable.

That the Qur'an uses a human language and nature of the language which contains diverse meanings lead to different understanding. So, we can say that the reason for understanding Qur'an differently arises from the peculiarities of Qur'anic expression.⁴ Here from *peculiarities* we mean inimitability and other unique traits of the Holy Book which separates Qur'an from other text. But it must be stated that the Qur'anic text which exposed by the language and which has the potentiality of being generalized can be understood. However, the Qur'anic language about different realms of knowledge and beings, its transition from phenomenon to noumenon, the Qur'anic expression on social field, as Fazlurrahman⁵ points out, necessitates a hard effort to understand the Qur'an. Nevertheless, this effort per se which is implied by society, language and cultural components denies the thesis of objective understanding. This is the reason why Qur'an is not clear-cut and unilateral. So everybody is *understanding* the Qur'an peculiar to him. Because meaning has a direct relation with the collective knowledge of one. Even though what a text states

4 See Ali Harb, *en-Nas ve'l-Hakika*, Beirut, pp. 33-34.

5 See Fazlurrahman, *Islam and Modernity*, çev.: Alparslan Açıkgenç, Ankara 1993.

literally is its *first meaning*, we undertake to clarify this first meaning by a holistic approach to the Qur'an. As *Nasr Hamid Abu Zayid* puts it, the objectivity which is possible to realize on the part of verses is a cultural objectivity which is depended on space and time.⁶ This means that the thesis that theological schools understood the Qur'anic texts objectively and commented them with an absolute certainty is far being true.

In traditional *Ilm al-Kalam*, dogmatic matters are conceived as theoretical matter which are demonstrated by rational proof, hence it is said that "These matters are not the realm of diversity, but only one point is true."⁷ Once the main proposition is put forward, then it is normal that one insists his idea being right and others are wrong. Regarding the inferences absolute, rational and objective, in the latest analysis, divided the society into small groups. This conception is intellectually, methodologically, practically and dogmatically racism.⁸ Whereas logical proofs, while enforcing one to accept the certainty in objective knowledge (phenomenological realm), they play only a speculative role in subjective knowledge (metaphysical realm). Therefore, they urge man to contemplate it deeply rather than to enforce him to accept it.⁹ This is the main reason why theological schools that exposed dogmatic matters as absolute and so to speak, regarded as beyond history fed the opposition and even the conflict. This is also the reason for theological crisis on meaning. What was of significance is that the tradition of criticism be revitalized and that the meanings put forward be accepted as subjective opinions thereby approaching objectivity, but unfortunately as the result of objective approach, the idea that "As the truth is one in rational matters, so is in dogmatic ones"¹⁰ came for. This opinion got a priority because the meaning was related to the creed. Whereas different meanings are related to the 'scientific' side of the matter. Moreover opposition, if considered as proof and disproof in relation to the mutual equality conditions, it is difficult for the ideas to oppose each other in rational and priori matters. The solution of this problem, in our opinion, is to separate between what is *dogmatic and scientific*. For instance the existence and unity of God is dogmatic matter. This is true and beyond the history. But the evidences put forward are scientific. Also belief in angels is a dogmatic one, but whether angels are natural laws or something beyond the nature is scientific matter. To search whether the idea put forward is consistent in the context of main references in the light of critical rational tradition is more plausible than to say that ideas concerning the scientific aspects are all true, or to say only one of them is correct.

6 Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, *Mafhumu'n-nas*, p. 271.

7 Şahristani, *al-Milal va'n-nihal*, Beirut 1992, vol. I, p. 4.

8 Hasan Hanefi, *at-Türas va't -Tacdid*, Cairo1980, p. 41.

9 Alparslan Açıkgöç, *Bilgi Felsefesi*, İnsan Pub., İstanbul 1992, p. 12.

10 Şahristani, *al-Milal va'n -Nihal*, vol. I, p. 5.

This kind of interpretation, especially theological meaning can be subject of every understanding which impedes human conscious. Man's effort to be and his tendencies, the genetics of will lying on the basis of social event, the reality of existence, the desire to live, and their meanings for *change*, the will emancipating its expectations come true and its diverse echos, human instances who keeps different points in social events, power-society relation which is the natural outcome of will differentiation, the last and present cultural world and its being explained and this type of explanation and the epistemic nature of intellect at that point; all these are obstacles to accessing the objective meaning of the Qur'an. The unique way of accessing to somewhat relatively an objective meaning is to be aware of these factors. This awareness shows us the ideological orientations, the efforts made by those who have the power to keep the religious understanding within the boundaries of their understanding, the traits of criteria observed in understanding and explaining, the nature of elements which cause the community to change and the meanings that change involves. Only by this way of understanding can it be possible to prevent excessive understandings. Actually this case shows to us that a sufficient understanding has some problems. Naturally this does not exclude the probability of realizing objective meaning of any religious dogma. For, denying the objectivity, in fact, is not but making it stable. An objectivity which has the possibility of being realized within the meaning of dogmas is cultural one, depended upon space and time. Not an absolute objectivity, which is only a fantasy. Beyond doubt *cultural objectivity* can be realized by reader's using the whole analyzing methods and ways to make out the meaning of dogma as well as by contemplating deeply on its meaning. If ways and methods are changed and improved later ages then interpreter has an excuse. Without doubt the mobility of dogma in space and time is not other than *the mobility inherent in a living ever growing event*. So making out new meanings from the verses does not underestimate the ones made out previously.¹¹

To understand the Qur'an from theological perspective has a peculiarity among others. We may call theological understanding of any text as *macro interpretation*. Theological understanding together with implying all efforts aiming at understanding the religious texts, at the same time, by trying to understand such transcendental matters as revelation and The Last Day, it does its best.¹² Theology which considers the literal explanation of transcendent realm and reference of phenomenon to noumenon as the starting point for the understanding of oral and natural signs (verses) by making intellect a main basis for the act of understanding. Since Theology, essentially, regards man as a competent being in understanding and speaking about it.

11 See. Hasr Hamid Abu Zayd, *ibid*, pp. 271-272.

12 See. Werner G. Jeanronds, *Theological Hermeneutics*, Macmillan, no date, pp. 8-9.

The problem of understanding the Qoran had been discussed in traditional Theology, even if not sufficiently. Theologians had dealt with such methodological aspects of understanding a text as interpretation, hermeneutics, commentary, etc. For instance the work of Al- Ash'ari(d.324) *al-İbane an Usuli'd Diyane* is about commenting the *methodology of religion*. In the introduction, Ash'ari emphases that he left Mu'tazile and went back to the way of Predecessors (*Salaf*) with reference to Ahmad b. Hanbal.¹³ What was the way of *Salaf* ? Revelation was essential in their way and intellect had a subordinate role to play within the boundaries revelation determined. Ash'ari who limited intellect by revelation but interpreted revelation by intellect set up a new method. This method starts from Qur'anic verses and tries to understand it within the limits of epistemological explanations.¹⁴ Consequently, Ash'ari by using intellectual patterns comes nearer to Mutazilite thought. Absorbed the patterns used by Mutazilite, Ash'ari benefited from this much in his works. Later on the methodological affinity between two schools must be thought on.

Mutazilite thinker Kadı Abdulcabbar¹⁵ in the introduction of his *Şarhu usuli'l-hamse* lay down the epistemological bases of a true understanding and exalts intellect in transforming subsidiary to the essential. But intellect, in the late analysis, is in the service of the Qur'an and Sunnah not an alternative counterpart but a device. Therefore *Theological intellect* comprises the essential (*asl*) which was consisted of reason, senses, language and social experience and the subsidiary(*fer'*) which was consisted of research and reasoning. Eventually the intellectual methodic process is the same.¹⁶ What is understood from above is that in understanding the Qur'an the two leading schools(Mutazilite and Ahl al-Sunnah) virtually used the same criteria.

Kadı Abdulcabbar clarifies the thesis on understanding the Qur'an and discussed them. When discussing the idea that "It is impossible to know what Qur'an means externally", Abdulcabbar makes following expose:

There is no problem about falsity of this idea. Because *the aim of the word* is explaining. Other aims are subject to explaining. If the word is not related to that aim then the word is absurd. Just as human refer to the literal meaning of the Qur'an order to learn such judgements as lawful or unlawful. Where it not possible to make out the literal meaning of the Qur'an then they would not refer to it. In addition, one of the matters known to us about religion that we know the judgements and pray accordingly. Its fairly obvious that the Book of God is the primary source to refer to for all these questions. If we didn't know what meant by the Qur'an

13 Aş'ari, *al-İbane an Usuli'd-Diyane*, Madina, 1975, pp. 4-5.

14 See. *İbid*, pp. 6-7.

15 See. Kadı Abdulcabbar, *Şarhu Usuli'l-Hamse*, Cairo 1988, pp. 39- 45.

16 See. Muhammed Abid al- Cabiri, *ibid*, p.166.

then the responsibility of performing all these judgements would be futile. Those who defend this baseless idea rely on this verse : "...but nobody knows its interpretation but God. And those who have a profoundness in knowledge say "We believed in it. It all from God"".(Al-i İmran 3/7). Yet the conjunction "and vav" in this verse is correlative. So those have profoundness in knowledge understand it.¹⁷

Kadı Abdulcabbar expresses the second thesis about the impossibility of understanding the Qur'an as follows: " Qur'anic words may refer to different meanings. It may refer to the general or special. So until we differ what is general from what is special it is inevitable to wait.¹⁸ Discussing this matter, he goes on:

Here the evidence that show its falsity. First; the companions of the prophet would not refer to the literal meaning of the Qur'an and wouldn't wait for the evidence to come up. Secondly : this idea frees Qur'an from its attributes such as guidance, expression, healing, light, etc. Thirdly; this idea is contrary to this verse: "We left nothing missing in this Book." Because there is no more missing than mentioning the words that are not known in meaning. When an evidence needed it must be a word. How can we know what is meant by this word? You reply, by its literal meaning or by any other evidence. If you say by literal meaning then why don't you say the same thing for the Qur'an in order not to need any other evidence? ¹⁹

Advocating the possibility of understanding the Qur'an, the author says that one who desires to understand Qur'an must have some characteristics. These are:

Its not enough for a scholar to know Arabic. He must additionally know grammatical points , narration and law which is the pile of religious verdicts and causes. Because to comprehend the verdicts of religion and causes behind them one should know al-fiqh. In addition, he must know the unity of God, His justice, His necessary attributes and what is good and what is bad for God and also what is possible and impossible about Him if he is to understand the Qur'an. Only after learning these one can differ what is certain from what is not, etc. Unless one know these sciences he can't attempt to interpret The Book of God only by relying on grammar and morphology.²⁰

These excerpts shows that *İlm-al Kalam* had appeared as the result of the efforts of understanding the Qur'an. The organic relation between political conflict and epistemological controversy in Islamic thinking prove that the tendency of theological understanding was at the outset in the form of displaying Islamic point of view. But later on, when Theology de-

17 Kadı Abdulcabbar, *ibid*, p. 602.

18 *Ibid*,pp. 603-604.

19 *Ibid*, p. 604.

20 *Ibid*, p. 605.

defined as discipline confined itself to laying down the evidence as regards to religious dogmas and to defend them²¹ gave rise to limiting its research scope by *dogmatic judgments* and its goal by *understanding and apologetics of dogmatic judgments*. The statement of " Proving the dogmatic judgments " is directed to eliminating different interpretation in dogmatic matters. Naturally in this case every sect would defend his opinion claiming it as beyond- history and curse on other which he sees contrary to that beyond-history and proved idea. In this case he is right, the other is wrong. This approach easily contributed to the sects to proclaim adversaries as infidels. Because the main aim here is not to understand the Qur'an but to get some evidence from Qur'an to support their opinion. *Theological intellect*, though puts itself as the defender of the certain knowledge, it is evident that its approach has caused but separation.

It is not possible to persuade man of hermeneutics to discuss the methodological problems of theory of understanding. Hans- George Gadamer²² while opposing to any methodological application to the act of understanding, he, in his ongoing efforts, emphasized that any text would reveal itself to the competent and diligent reader. According to Gadamer the understanding of any text is not the outcome of applying elaborated methods but the result of the truth's expousing itself to the reader. Paul Ricoeur,²³ on the other hand, is among those who think *the discussion on methods of sufficient understanding* necessary for a true understanding. Like Gadamer, Ricoeur, too doesn't desire to depict purely what we conceive. Rather, he wants to promote our understanding of man and to look for ways protecting man from *possible deteriorations*. His efforts are directed to protecting human understanding that echos theological tradition which has been trying to provide a criterion as to much truer interpretation of texts. The thinker's words about *methods for sufficient understanding and providing a criterion for a true understanding of the text* presents us the signs which lead us from 'fantasy' field to that of 'intellect'. So any approach that denies the necessity of a criterion for true understanding of any text is doomed to be called a sophisticated attitude and ideology of miserableness. On the other hand the extreme point of objective approach that's "pure identity", since it is an identity not capable of seeing, tears the reality and feeds the opposition. As the dogmatic and political sects are "pure identities", as Ali Harb puts it, they are;

In Theological circle it was possible to accept each other. Because 'blind identity' is another face of ferocious opposition. Who adheres to a pure identity, then he began to announce others ugly in a way. This ferocious opposition leads to hate, becoming distant, controversy and fight.

21 Taftazani, *Şarhu'l -Akaid*, p.3; Adudiddin al- Ici, *al- Mavakif*, Beirut, no date, p.7; Tahanevi, *Keşşafu ıstilahatı'l-funun*, pp. 31-32.

22 Hans- George Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, London 1981, pp. 235, 238.

23 Werner G. Jeanrond, *Ibid*, pp. 9-10.

The division monotheistic projects have seen can simply be explained by this approach."²⁴

It is possible to call any attitude that considers his understanding "the proven truth" as the ideology of conflict.

Ilm al- Kalam starts with the theory of knowledge. This theory of knowledge primarily determines principles which are necessary to know something and identifies methodological approach to dogmatic matter. For to have an idea about knowledge is possible only by knowing the knowledge itself, its principles, evidences and thought assumptions.²⁵ The conceptual frame that forms knowledge is made up from knowledge, supposition, imitation, and ignorance. The *common meaning* which lies on the intersecting and departing points forms the meaning field of knowledge. But we should know that how the principles that are necessary in this process change according to the knowledge and being spheres is not clear. Moreover, traditional theological approach had mostly ignored the key concepts concerning the dogmatic matters. This discipline lacked in analyzing the dogmatic matters, in promoting their theoretical relations, in enlightening the truth more effectively and in unifying the key concept's meanings. Whereas, the theory of knowledge has to critically analyze the concepts concerning the world. This is, partly, the problem of analyzing the present usage and partly the problem of promoting it or replacing it by a more effective one. Lastly, the theory of knowledge must relate key concepts on dogmatic matters to each other systematically. However, even though theology uses senses, experience, observation and newsin accessing the knowledge, its epistemological basis is : Intellect. That intellect is essential and revelation is subordinate is taken for granted by theology.

Faruddin Razi (d.606) and Aduddin Ici (d.756)'s ideas on the essentially of intellect and subordination of revelation are as follow:

The revelation expresses supposition not certainty. Because to know revelation is depended upon knowing its decree and will behind it. This can be realized by language, grammar and morphology. To understand a verse is depended upon not being there a narration, common meaning, a metaphor, an implication, a confinement, a precedence or a deferment. But these all are possible.²⁶

The idea of Kadı Abdulcabbar about reason- revelation relationship is as follows:

Intellectual competence is to have a power for reasoning. So intellectual evidence precedes Qur'an, Sunnah and Consensus. Because except

24 A.Harb, *ibid*, p. 34.

25 Hasan Hanefi, *İslami İlimlere Giriş*, Turk. Tr. Muharrem Tan, İnsan Pub. İstanbul 1994, p. 59.

26 İci, *ibid*,p.40; Razi, *Mealimu usuli'd-din*, (İslam İnancının Ana Kaynaklar), Türk. tr. Nadim Macit, İhtar Yay. Erzurum 1996, p.12.

for rational proof , others are not essential in knowing God, His monotheism and his attribute of justice. If we try to provide proofs concerning God except for rational proofs, then we try to make the subsidiary an evidence for the essential."²⁷

Muslim Theologians, in order to improve a methodology in dogmatic field, tried to analyze the meaning of *istidlal (reasoning)* and *nazar (contemplation)*. Theologians , who gave priority to rational proof, define evidence as something to prove matters which need to be proved. Their way of reasoning are *analogy, istikrâ (exemplification)* and *tamsil (comparison)*. Just as Kadı Abdulcabbar introduces his *Usuil-I Hamse* by asking this question, what is the first necessary thing God ordered to man? And replies it. This way that leads to know God is *nazar*. Because God can not be known by necessity and by way of seeing. So man can know Him only by contemplating. When analyzing this concept he emphasizes that *nazar* is contemplation by heart.²⁸ Calling *nazar* as contemplation by heart, he makes emphasis on heart, the center of all knowledge capacity. By this idea Abdulcabbar underlines an important point from epistemological perspective. It is that: Islamic reasoning is not transformation of things into intellectual patterns, but giving meaning to natural and human phenomena in conformity with rational laws. The reality of knowledge, to him, is not but relaxing the soul and feeling relieved by heart.²⁹ This definition Islamic language shows that the main aim is to set man free from the deadly ruins of life. Necessary knowledge is defined as the one that leaves no doubt about certainty.³⁰ Though promoting knowledge from natural and linguistic stage to a stage of heart and contemplation is a positive approach, it hinders its promotion to an uppermost point by limiting it only by *kıyas, istikra* and *tamsil*. Because Qur'anic emphasis on intellect goes far beyond this limitation.

Qur'anic encouragement on contemplation and thinking (Yunus 10/107, A'raf 7/185, Nahl 16/125) and its warning man by revelation through human language shows that the primary goal of the Qur'an is to make emphasis on the necessity of accessing to linguistic structure of revelation. Because the laws, even those of absolute world, are explained in human categories and conceptions so that human understands them. The main aim of revelation is man and man is the part of this world of experience. Then what is the power man has to use in ontological level and to think about what is not present in experienced world other than his ability to conceive the metaphysical realm?

Man with his natural stance is weak and forgetful one. He is affected by what surrounded him and by his ambitions. If he were free from these

27 Kadı Abdulcabbar, *Şerhu usuli'l -hamse*, p. 88.

28 See Kadı Abdulcabbar, *ibid*, p. 39.

29 *ibid*, p. 45.

30 *ibid*, p. 46-51.

effects and lived by his uppermost faculties then he would not need any divine guidance. Then the knowledge the Qur'an presents to humans is a special one and aims leading human beings to reality. Therefore this knowledge, because it leads to reality, is called in Islamic literature as *marifah* (*gnosis*). It is of importance that the lack of faith in Qur'anic literature is associated with the deterioration of intellect not will.³¹ The Qur'an proposes man to contemplate (*taffakur*) as a way of thinking to decrease the effects that hinder man's intellect and conscious. Because *taffakur* turns all mechanism that hinder human conscious.

When Muslim theologians before Ghazali were discussing the bases of creed they relied on "the meaning" which was inherent in the Qur'anic language and operating in conformity with some rules. That the act of understanding has a direct relation with the Qur'anic principles of understanding is discussible. That Ghazali made Aristotelian logic the basis of religious sciences and legalized it by relying on religious texts³² (Şura42/17, Rahman55/9, Isra17/35, Şuara26/102) gave rise to explain religious passages with the patterns of Aristotelian logic. Searching for the knowledge within the boundaries of logical propositions, melted such essential matters as "epistemology" and "ontology" within the limitations of traditional logic.³³

While Muslim theologians from the beginning on claimed that there were no universal concepts in external world, with Ghazali they gave up this idea and began saying, as did Aristotle, that universal concepts are present both in intellect and in the external world.³⁴ Even though it is possible to talk about the possibility of relative beings of universal concepts in the intellect, it is impossible to say that our knowledge by experience is universally necessary. For instance Razi in his *Mealim-i Usuli'd Din* puts that to arrive an unknown conclusion we need to propositions, and if these propositions are certain their conclusion is also sup positive.³⁵ If one of the two-known is evident and certain its reference to all its individuals is evident, and repetition is not necessary. If not so one can not make analogy with a proposition that needs to be ascertained. Then something that is known by logical analogy can, also, be known without it. Something that is not known without analogy can not be known by it.³⁶ It is clearly understood that two values logic of Aristotle can not contribute us in understanding the dogmatic matters whatsoever.

31 See S. Hüseyin Nasr, *Ideals and Realities of Islam*, London 1989, p. 21.

32 Ghazali presents logic in an Islamic form. The criterion for science, absolute and unailing measurement, main criterion, and similar statements prove his approach. See . *Mi'yarul-ilm fi'l-mantık*, Beirut 1990, p. 32.

33 İzmirli İsmail Hakkı, *Yeni İlm-I Kelam*, İstanbul 1342 AH, vol. I, p. 82.

34 See. M. Oıkbal, *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, Türk. Tr. Ahmad Asrar, İstanbul 1979, p. 19.

35 Razi, *Mealimü usuli'd-din*, p. 26.

36 Ibn Taymiyya, *ar-Radd ala'l-mantıkiyyin*, Bombay 1949, p. 88.

Analogy is compounded word which necessitates another word when it is accepted as true with regard to the given propositions.³⁷

Being the way of inferring judgments, analogy has three kinds: Practical, rational and methodological. It has various forms. For example making inference from two arranged propositions.

Every created not free from creation is created

The world is not free from creation

Then the world is created.

Another form of analogy is division (*sebr*). It is a kind of knowledge that is obtained by dividing what is not conflicting into two or more parts in the intellect. So the evidence cancels one of the two parts. Like something being not both eternal and created.³⁸ Ghazali explains the same method in his *al- Iktisad fi'l I'tikad* as follows:

Giving evidences has many forms. One of them is division (*sebr*). As *sebr* means confinement it takes the name of division. We can simply put it as follows: We divide our claim into two opposite sides. Then we cancel one of them. By canceling one part we prove the other. For when one of the conflicting part is cancelled naturally the other part is proven. For example;

The world is either created or eternal

That the world is eternal is impossible

Then the world is created.

Here we cancelled the "proposition saying the world is eternal". When we cancelled this proposition the second proposition came true. For there is no third option. The proposition we obtained is inferred from two separate proposition. But to give rise to third proposition the two main propositions need to be harmonious. Harmony, opposition in the first premise that makes up the exclusive logic, must be between something and its opposite or something and some other thing that equals to its opposite.³⁹

Another way is obtaining the unknown by two propositions, one of them in conditional proposition the other is a given one. This given or accepted proposition is mentioned in the first premise either by itself or by its opposite. There is a proposition of exclusion between them.⁴⁰ As in this example:

If the world is created it has a creator

But it is created

37 Ghazali, *Mi'yarul-ilm fi'l-mantik*, p. 12.

38 Bakillani, *Tamhid*, p. 38.

39 Ghazali, *al- Iktisad fi'l-I'tikad*, Beirut 1983, p. 13.

40 Ghazali, *Mi'yarul-Ilm*, p.112; *Mihakku'n-Nazar*, p. 38.

Then it has a creator.

Some another way is to take up the rival's proof to make it a proposition together with another evidently true proposition and by using them to infer a conclusion which is evidently wrong. In this way we realize that there is a false proposition among premises. Ghazali presents it as the way of the Qur'an and gives this verse: "Say! If you are true bring your evidence"(Bakara 2/111).

The way of analyzing all parts in order to arrive a conclusion is *istikrâ*, which has not a frequent usage in *Kalam*. Accepting it as the way of realizing sup positive knowledge, Muslim theologians preferred the way of *tamsil*, which is the method of comparing the unknown to known or noumenon to phenomenon. This method may be defined as proving something with the accuracy of its similar.⁴¹ Zamakhsheri summaries it saying that " The Qur'an informs us about unseen by using what we see by experience."⁴² Kadı Abdulcabbar in his work *al- Muhit bi't Taklif* defines phenomenon as something which is known necessarily and noumenon as unknown but possible to be known by reference. But he puts two conditions for the reference of phenomenon to unseen. First, they must have a common reference and secondly they must have a common cause.⁴³ The methodology of theology is that it refers to rational premises about known field and refers to the Qur'an about unknown. By comparing two each other which are common in reference and cause theology arrives a conclusion. Muslim theologians who don't see it a necessity for a normal knowledge to have a reference, as far as the origins of the evidence are concerned, they see it necessary.

Attempts on accepting sensitive realities and experiences gained in society as real references and subjecting the subsidiary (*fer'*) to this reference makes the intellect the main source of religion. But this comparison arises from the nature of the language of revelation. Moreover schools of Muslim theology made some epistemological principles of phenomenological realm as dogmatic ones. Even the controversy between Mutezila and Ahl al-Sunnah was intensified on rational premises. This is the main reason why The People of Sunnah later took refuge to Aristotelian logic.

All these are enough to show that theology regards religion only the totality of rational and logical propositions rather than those of supra rational belivings. The trend to consider Qur'anic concepts as texts to be transferred into rational ones led to the conclusion that the method of "true understanding" is possible only by *logical validity*. Theologians who cut off the relation between intellect-nature, intellect-history have increasingly headed towards abstract realm and intensified on speculative discus-

41 Ghazali, *Mi'yarul' -Ilm*, p.154; Aduddin el- Ici, *ibid*, p.35; Bakillani, *ibid*,p. 38.

42 Zemahşeri, *al-Kaşşaf*, Beirut,no date, vol.II/290; M.Abduh- M.Reşid Rıza, *Tafsiru'l -Menar*, Beirut , no date, vol. III, p. 52.

43 Kadı Abdulcabbar,*el- Muhit bi't-Taklif*, Cairo, nd., p.167

sions. Besides theology which was not able to pass through the daily problems of man couldn't go beyond saying that what was necessary to be said had already been said.

Analyzes of language and their consequent meanings and results based on logical premises are presented as *proven realities*; basing revelation on reason is accepted as a principle but satisfactory knowledge about reason is not given. In epistemology, reason is spoken about together with sense, observation and experience. It is said that is a base for revealed evidences. Talking always about the fallibility of senses, theologians convincingly detriment the confidence to the senses.

But the problem here is that: Seeing that the *reason* theologians meant here is not pure reason, then the practical reason can't do without the collective build up of the day and of the last. It is a reality that every reason is formed within the culture. In this case the proposition that the reason is the base for revelation has not got any validity. As is known by experience that thinking is determined in a way, then how can the reason that is formed by the data of experience be a base for revelation. These questions show that "understanding" has a direct relation with culture developed within space-time process. Interpretation takes its colour from this cultural environment.

It is right this understanding that remarks the process. But this is self-verification of reason. This understanding may shed light on some kinds of knowledge. Therefore any understanding based on the two-value logic is by definition an "objective understanding" and not but a repetition of some known matters. All forms of analogy we mentioned above are essentially repeat knowledge. Moreover dogmatic matters in traditional Muslim theology has been narrated by logical inferences. Yet this method which is not but repetition has been outdated.

The world is changeable
Every changeable is created
Then is the world created.

As there is a mutuality between proof and proven, the conclusion "Then the world is created" is certainly right. Yet the word "changeable" is used as a predicate in the first premise, the word "changeable" in second premise is substratum as it used in classical logic. These two haven't got any additional meaning. In other words, it hasn't got any meaning beyond inductive field. The conclusion, also, has not got any ore additional meaning than premises and there is no any extension in knowledge. In fact this is not but tautology.

Logic has a great contribution on human thinking. But it hasn't got this much in understanding the matter of facts which the Qur'an presents to the attention of human beings. This kind of logic has nothing to do with the realms of being and knowledge in understanding the language of the

Qur'an on these different realms. As Fritjof Capra puts it just as is always done with regard to the world of living beings when we cling to the spherical chain of causality the use of logic involves us to paradoxes.⁴⁴ It is more suitable to use all intellectual processes. Because with this processes the universal net of mutual relations comes together. Having a meaning is the main characteristic of conscious, understanding, on the other hand, is within the sphere of logic. But this logic must, starting from the prepositional structure of science, surround the whole in its uppermost level relying on its trait which is relating meaning to the objects and logic must be the conscious of the meaning. The dialogic method which is used to attain the meaning is the best example of this. The aim in this method is not to repeat what is known but get the point of the meaning. Every meaning I the grammatical structure of a language has a logic. Similarly the Qur'anic language together with its peculiar structure and the meaning of this structure has its own logic. Then the problem is to impose on logic more function.

We can summarize the methodical criteria of a true understanding of the Qur'an and the matters to be paid attention in theological understanding in this act as follow:

I. Introduction of revelation to human terminology means meeting transcendent horizon with human one. Actually God's addressing to man through human language implies His message's potentiality of being understood. The credibility of linguistic approach to the understanding of the Qur'an arising from this phenomenon. But understanding the Qur'an in linguistic level makes attitude of the subject more effective. This is why the interpretation emphasizes only one of the social, cultural and political realms. To approach the text and to disclose its secrets begins with the first reading. But it necessitates some conditions. First of all the Qur'anic language varies according to the realm it is applied. For example its language with regard to phenomenological and social field is much easier than the language with regard to unseen, history and ethics in which it frequently uses symbolic (comparison, metaphor, parable, allegory, etc.) language.⁴⁵

To put this different language on philosophical base in the context of "episteme and being" realms, it's necessary to determine the words that developed and differentiated and even lost, to some extent, their original meanings in the historical process and to shed light on the contents of they concepts. The main effort here is to shed light on the content of Qur'anic words and to turn the words which lost their original meanings back to their essential meanings. This is inevitable, because obscurity in meaning means the lack of meaning. This process makes up the first stage of understanding.

44 Fritjof Capra, *Yeni Bir Düşünce*, trans.: M.Armağan, Ağaç Yay. İstanbul 1992, p. 94.

45 See İlhami Güler, "Hermenötik Açından Kur'an'ı Anlama ve Yorumlamanın Sorunları", *2th Symposium on Qur'an*, Bilgi Foundation Pb., Ankara 1996,pp. 298-299.

II. After turning the concepts which the Qur'an uses in many fields back to their original meanings, it is possible to put them on a philosophical base by taking the integrity of the Qur'an into consideration. This stage is necessary for putting a way of life into practice. Actually to come closer to the verses and to disclose their meaning necessitates the second stage called *analytic reading*. To make out subtleties of verses and reference of meaning and to conceive them can be realized only by this way.⁴⁶ This second stage involves the attempt to redefine the Qur'anic concepts into a scheme to form Qur'anic point of view. This point of view can not be recognized in the *first meaning* of Qur'anic passages. But it is possible to form a world of view by lightening the essential concepts and by putting them on a philosophical substratum. This includes the transcendent realm. Because this field addresses our some informative faculties by obtaining the knowledge of this field we can get an integrity of knowledge. For, the transcendent realm is the appearance of the absolute realm. Seeing that faith is a kind of knowledge of transcendent realm we can define it as its appearance in man.⁴⁷ This face of faith or knowledge is formed by human nature, his place in society and his way of life which is developed through his dependence on knowledge. We call this field which has wholly ignored by traditional theology as a world view. *World view is a way of life formed by the principles that refer to all aspects of life.*

III. To perceive the nature of reality of change. Because society has a structure that changes constantly. This change is not only in the economical, social, daily life areas technological and scientific fields but also in the mentalities of the individuals, their ways of thinking and in their point of view to the world.⁴⁸ And even in the social change process the most effective point is scientific and intellectual activities. Especially this latter makes significant changes through adding new concepts to man's meaning fields such as God, man, society and nature, all which form world views of humans.

Just as Toshihiki Izutsu⁴⁹ shows by examples that as a result of intellectual influences theological concepts have lost their original meanings. Then the interpretation, on the one hand, has to perceive losses meaning in the Qur'anic statements and has to give new meanings to these statements by conceiving the reality inherent in the concept of change.

IV. It is quite wrong to limit the function of theology to laying down some rules but ignoring practical life. Creed is not pure idea but method of life. Longing for an action can not be thought without the heart that perceive the matters. This must be so order that the goodness not to turn out to badness and virtue not to turn out to malicious action. The criticism of

46 See. Nasr Hamid Abud Zayd, *ibid*, p. 270-272; W.E Jean Round, *ibid*, p. 161.

47 Açıkgenç, *ibid*, p. 224.

48 F. Rahman, *Islam and Modernity*, Turkish trans.: A. Açıkgenç, H. Kirbaşoğlu, Ankara Okulu Pub., Ankara 1996, p. 81-282.

49 See. Toshihiki Izutsu, *Kur'anda Allah ve İnsan*, Kevser Pb., İstanbul 1979, p.45-50

the existing order, which was operating in favour of tyranny and exploitation process shows that faith and action are not separate ones, on the contrary they are dimensions feed each other. Just as the Qur'an analyzes it:

Can you imagine one who denies all moral values (religion)?

Then such is the man who repulses the orphan.

And encourages not the feeding of the indigent

So woe to the worshippers

Who are neglectful of their prayers

Those who(want but) to be seen (of men)

But refuse to supply even neighbourly needs. (Maun 107/ 1-7)

We again say that creed is not only an idea but life itself. Then the method of theology starting from faith pillars passing through the world of thought , the problems of action, the rulers of life must lay down some bases to close the gap between faith and action. In other words theology must construct a world view. Theology , by being aware of its face which degenerated the thesis of "pure reality", must give up its habit to evaluate the differences in scientific field by the criteria of faith or denial and must try to unify the power of Muslims. It must be understood that there is no use increasing tensions by repeating the ex-conflicts and oppositions, all of which are the results of isochronal history.

V. To question the reason which is the epistemological basis of theology. The meaning imposed upon the reason in Islamic theology is not clear. *Theological reason* is defined as something to know the *essentials of the evidence*, the matters concerning the evidence and the rational premises.

This kind of definition shows that theological reason is a conceptual and logical one. Theological reason filled up with the sense data and narrations, actually, has a potential to pave way to a new understanding. The historical event, human's place in historical context, social change, powers that stimulate humans, all these cause the *interpretation to be subjective*. Narration existing in the center of theological reason must be replaced by the philosophy of history. That the divine revelation is revealed in a historical surrounding, that there were some causes asked for revelation and that some cultural matters were answered by revelation are the matters that necessitate this process to be analyzed carefully. In a milieu in which historical and social thesis are discussed, it's interesting that theology still engages in old time problems and repeats them with the same language again and again. This problem must replace the field of historical sensitivity of Kalam by "diverse sensitivity types"⁵⁰(historical, anthropological, critical methods). Only by this way can we overcome both the sophistic

50 See Anthony Giddens, *Sosyolojiye Eleştirel Bir Yaklaşım*, Tur.tr. R.Esengün, İ. Öğretim, İhtar Pub., İstanbul 1993,p.23-24

attitude and subjectivity, "the ideology of miserableness" as we call it , nihilism in its new version and "false conscious", the ideology of conflict, which claims that what had to be said had also been said with the thesis of "pure identity" and "proven knowledge".

VI. The conditions the interpreter must have: When counting the conditions the interpreter must have Kadı Abdalcabbar puts forward, it's not sufficient for the interpreter to know only Qur'anic language, he additionally, must know the structure of language, the methods of understanding, causes of religious judgments and theoretical bases of religion.⁵¹ Though I agree with all these argumentations, it must be pointed out that this approach underestimates components which intensify the subjectivity of meaning. First of all, the interpreter must determine his own position for the text. He must be competent not only in traditional sciences but in all other sciences which will help him in conceiving the truth. The effort to understand the Qur'an doesn't mean seeing it as an object. What makes Qur'an an object is the aim of regarding it a source of all ambitions, populist interests by revitalizing the -false conscious-. The intellect of interpreter must be fed from original form of Islam so that the intellect that has the main role in hermeneutical act conceives the act of original conceiving. The interpreter (theologian) has to perceive the course of events in history and the direction of the future in order that he plays an active role in this course. He must have the sensitivity of realizing the efforts of official religious expression which attributes itself a sanctity and absoluteness, and the actions through which those who have the power trying to legalize their performances in order not to be in the category of "servant ulema of the power", the example of which are abundant in our history.⁵²

We can say as a conclusion that in order that theology gains its role it played in its earlier times the two elements, namely creed and politics should accompany each other. Confining the matter completely to the speculative nature of metaphysical realm, the traditional theology has ignored emphasizing human value and his rights. To give priority to man and his main rights must be the main concern of theology. *Because we live in the world.* In Qur'anic language as an individual everybody is mortal, but the idea of the world, although the universal man is a result, is constant. Theology by giving up the claim of "pure identity" which is the ferocious face of this discipline must play a role of unifying all Muslims who unify on main principles around the common interests by realizing that the scientific face of it is related to the nature of the world.

51 Kadı Abdalcabbar, *ibid*, p. 605.

52 See. Nasr Abu Zayd, *ibid*, p.271-272; Hasan Hanefi, *ibid*, pp. 46-49 .

Özet

Biz bu yazımızda kelamın Kur'an'ı anlama kuramını ortaya koyacak, buna ilişkin sorunları belirleyecek ve yeni bir anlam arayışının imkanını tartıştık. Meseleye böyle bir perpektiften bakarsak, Kelamın Kur'an'ı anlamada yeri ve önemi nedir? Sorusu daha da bir önem kazanır. Kelamın İslam'ın erken dönemindeki rolünü yeniden kazanması için, başlangıçta dayandığı iki temel unsur, akide ve siyaset, birbirine eşlik etmelidir. Kelam, iftilafın vahşi yüzünü gösteren saf kimlik iddiasından vazgeçip, bunun ancak salt itikadi ilkelerde mümkün olacağını, fakat meselenin ilmi yönünün, bilginin ve yorum evreninin niteliği ile bağlantılı olduğunu görüp, temel ilkelerde birleşen bütün müslümanları ortak amaçlarda birleştirici bir çaba içine girmelidir.