

The Language of Gnosis in Contemporary Perspective

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Summary

The language of gnosis is of significant importance and a contemporary issue in the esoteric level of text interpretation. The research of inner meanings implies methods and approaches by means of which, in the communication with the text, statement or a distinctive written paper, the senses are decoded and the meaning they hold. Following research approaches are possible:

- a. A hermeneutic approach, in which the focus is on the recipient of the message rather than the speaker's intention. This is a particular kind of recipient's dialogue with the text, in order to understand the true meaning of the sentences.
- b. A semantic approach, in which the speaker's intention holds the meaning, whereas it is upon the recipient to deduce from what the speaker said and intended. Two methods are important in this approach: "methodological individualism", which deals with different verbal analogies, linguistic and syntactic principles, with the intent of structural decomposition of the text, and "methodological holism", which is deductive in nature i.e. leads from the understanding of the entirety to the understanding of individual sentences.

- c. A reciprocal method, which is engendered by the connection of two approaches, based on one sample and a research program, and where there is an interaction between the speaker and the listener i.e. the writer and the reader. The meaning of the message and the text is the result of methodological reciprocity between the recipient and the text. The speaker's intention merges with the recipient's demands. The writer's i.e. speaker's intention is revealed through an interactional relation between the reader i.e. text's recipient i.e. the statement.

Key words: the language of gnosis, signifier (*dāll*), signified (*madlūl*), denotation (*dalālat*), hermeneutic approach, semantic approach, reciprocal method

GNOSIS IS THE WAY or method which the Gnostic takes in order to reach God, with the heart. This is done through purifying the inward, soaking-out of spirit, eliminating the extraneous (*āgyār*) from the heart's interior. All of this results in "the descending" of the Friend (*Yār*) in one's heart, and eventually leads to decoration and polishing of the heart. This is a way of accurate and subtle cognition, and deep awareness, all of which results in a special sort of Divine cognition, in order to be able to further smoothen the individually chosen path to Divine closeness, with the accurate cognition and deep awareness in relation to God being the basis therefore.

Tasbīh / *tespīh* (pronouncing Subhānellāh), *tamhīd* (pronouncing Elhamdulillāh), *tahlīl* (pronouncing Lā Ilāhe Illallāh) and *takbīr* – by which everything created, man included, glorifies Allah; man's specific creation, which is the embodiment of the pronouncement "Praised be Allah, the best of all creators", draws man to making effort – as is contained in this verse from the Quran: O man! Surely you must strive (to attain) to your Lord, a hard striving until you meet Him" (Quran, *Al-Insīqāq*: 6). This effortful motion enables man to approach the valley of "special conversation" with God – a conversation that assumes a specific form through outer and inner worship, whose roots reach to a fulfilled submission of man. Worship (*Ibadah*) has a linguistic and a speech form, but is also performed through a person's body organs during worship, through humility and humbleness. *Ibadah* causes faith, firmness and the tendency to humility in man's self, which, if completely reached, form a fulfilled man.

Tawheed (monotheism) encapsulates God's oneness, integrity, and completeness. A true monotheist believes that God is one, the only and unique. He, the monotheist, sees God as "the absolute visible" and "the absolute affirmation", and perceives that everything besides Him is but a spectacle of His existence, and that layers of Divine manifestation in its wholeness of creation and existence take hundreds of forms.

Realization of oneness is the basis of all cognitions, like the cognition of prophethood and governance (*wilayah*). All cognition is a shadow of the cognition of Him, and not that the Divine Being is understood through some of His myriad traces of creation. These traces are His sign, and are comprehended through Him. Besides the Divine Being, there is no absolute and independent affirmation through which He could be comprehended. Only His affirmation is absolute, complete and integral, and will never perish. The sight of the inner eye is the one which perceives this affirmation. In his *du'a* (invocation) on mount 'Arafat, Imam Hussein says about this affirmation: "How can Your existence be proved by means of something whose existence depends on You? Do Your signs (besides You) have such an affirmation where there is no You, where they can demonstrate their own affirmation?! When will You evanesce so that there would be a need for a proof of Your existence?!"

Pure gnosis or gnosis as mirage

Pure gnosis is sublime, and mirage gnosis is vain; pure gnosis accepts responsibility whereas mirage gnosis denies it; pure gnosis is binding, and mirage gnosis is irresponsible; pure gnosis encourages engagement whereas mirage gnosis sabotages it; pure gnosis is "real" whereas mirage gnosis is "bogus"; pure gnosis is "esoteric" and the Gnostic's appearance is representative of his inner beauty whereas "mirage gnosis" is "exoteric" and its "esoteric" is imaginary and alien; pure gnosis is "hope and longing", and mirage gnosis is "hopelessness and despair"; pure gnosis leads "fulfillment" whereas mirage gnosis leads to a chasm of "deficiency and backwardness"; pure gnosis promotes "modesty and steadiness", and mirage gnosis promotes "extremism and egregiousness"; pure gnosis guides whereas mirage gnosis leads to wrong; pure gnosis brings joy, and mirage gnosis brings misfortune; pure gnosis creates "vigilance" whereas mirage gnosis leads to "dullness and apathy"; pure gnosis is

“bliss” and “zeal”, and mirage gnosis is “poetry” and “empty phrases”; pure gnosis is “light”, and mirage gnosis is “fire”; pure gnosis is “pith” and “core” whereas mirage gnosis is “husk” and “crust”; pure gnosis is produced by “sincerity”, and mirage gnosis leads to “deceitfulness”; pure gnosis accepts social involvement whereas mirage gnosis accepts isolation; pure gnosis is “epopee”, “struggle”, “effort”, “diligence” and “devotion”, and mirage gnosis is “empty phrases”, “static”, “conformism”, “apathy” and “disorientation”.

By debasing selfhood and neutralizing natural instincts, negative forms of gnosis endeavor to create a “celestial spiritual selfness”. One such example we can find in Indian religions such as Buddhism. Great commentator of Rumi’s *Masnavi*, Allameh (scholar) Mohammad Taki Dža’feri (*Mohammad Taqī Ġāfarī*) says about this gnosis: “Instead of achieving harmony between aspects of mans being, they steer themselves to “benumbment” of some of its aspects and potentials.” Based on what we have said, in negative gnosis the traveler (*sālek*) escapes from problems of individual and social life, which represent the source of pain. Nuisances and problems engendered by the inability to fulfill one’s own wishes at times can lead a person to view everyday life negatively, and with the aim to escape, seek shelter in the inner self. However, taking into account the secret hidden in the soul, we will see that, just like nuisances and troubles are in disharmony with the soul because they darken it, so is normal joy and delight incompatible with the soul because they hide the secret of the soul. Consequently, the Gnostic must be conscientious to hardship and nuisances, just like to joy and delight.

Discussion on types of analysis and research in Gnostic texts

Gnostics had searched for a language that would enable them to explain their specific subject, and symbolic expression helped them do so. The language of symbols, rich in ambiguities, that Gnostics applied in order to express their world view has strengthened the idea that, in these works and writings, besides the speaker, the recipient also has his role in the creation of meaning. These works hold something that obliges the recipient to research thoroughly, and even actuates his imagination by which he finds something that – it is possible – the author himself didn’t have in mind. Hāfiz Shīrāzī’s *Divan* offers clear examples of this.

The world that Gnostics “portray” with the language of symbols consists of two spheres: the invisible and the visible; moreover, before events manifest in the visible world, the plan of their development is prepared in the invisible world. The connection with the invisible world means being informed about the process of events from the future; events that are determined to be manifested in the objective world, it is deserving, that it be first revealed to the ones chosen by God, with His permission. One fact is clear in this respect i.e. this language can be studied and researched on the esoteric level.

By the study on the esoteric level we have in mind methods and approaches which are used to describe, contextualize and clarify some problems, through the communication with the text, statement and action. This kind of study encompasses a variety of means and methods. There are, among others, methods of commenting in respect to exoteric meaning; hermeneutics in respect to esoteric meaning; a comparison of theological, philosophical, Gnostic and scientific exact methods of commenting, and Gnostic, literary, scientific and symbolic means.

This method of study can develop through three levels: the hermeneutic level, the semantic approach and the reciprocal method.

Hermeneutics

Paul Ricoeur believes that each text consists of four elements: fixed meaning (sense); detachedness from the author’s intellectual intent; manifestation of unclear arguments; full inclusion of the recipient (*Hermeneutik wa ‘olūm-e ensānī*, pg. 210). This approach is explained through the recipient’s relation to the text and message, and his needs that he finds within the text. The text is, indeed, the recipient’s “interpreter” and his “indicator”. The hermeneutic method is to be seen as a natural reaction the widespread methods in the humanities after the Renaissance, that is, reactions to Positivism which, as a dominant approach in natural sciences, recommends objectivism, experimentalism, and interpretation based on the exact method (see Tawassolī 1374: 51–52). Diltheyev’s hermeneutic method, which was based on the differences in source and content of the humanities and on considerable thematic/methodological differences in respect to natural sciences and physics, confirmed that each of these sciences ought to follow its own method (for further reading see: Sārūxānī 1377: 68, 71–72; Farwand 1362: 74–75; Būxansakī 1354: 132).

For methodologists in hermeneutics, knowing a humanistic phenomenon is not possible without taking into account context, text, the environment and time of origin. Every segment of a socio-humanistic phenomenon ought to be interpreted with respect to circumstance, time, structure and context in which it emerged. Having this in mind, the historical aspect of each phenomenon should also be taken into account, in that the consecutiveness of events indicates a connectedness from the past to the time of interpretation (Sārūxānī 1377: 63–64). On the other hand, intentions, motives, and requirements that form a socio-humanistic phenomenon ought to be a means which gives prominence to the researcher, in his subject of study. This will enable the researcher to delve into interpretation of causes that gave rise to a certain form of behavior, or certain humanistic phenomena.

The hermeneutic method has assumed a variety of forms: conservative, moderate, radical, and critical (Gallagher 1992). Conservative and traditional hermeneutics, or as interpreted by Bontekoe (1996), the hermeneutics of romanticism was topicalized by Shelayar, Dilthey, and Hirsch. Through devoted analysis and application of the right method, in this hermeneutic approach, the commentator can reach the author's intention and the objective reality that is related to the work. This approach emphasizes the distinction between knowledge on the basis of cognition, and knowledge on the basis of explanation. The interpretation means reaching the true meaning of the text. A real interpretation necessarily requires reaching the author's intentions.

Moderate hermeneutics emerged with Gadamer, Paul Ricoeur and Betti. According to this approach, interpretation is always creative in its nature, and always assumes a dialogue between the interpreter and the author. Therefore, in this approach, objective reality or meaning the author had in mind are out of question, but, according to Gadamer, in the best case establishes a "fusion of horizons" between the interpreter and the author, a fusion which does not come either from the interpreter nor the author.

Paul Ricoeur gives a critical review on the distinction between cognition and explanation, which is treated in Dilthey's traditional approach, and like Mari Hesse (1980), rejects suppression of explanation from the sphere of hermeneutics, because, in such a case, hermeneutics becomes merely a sort of "psychological intuition" by which the interpreter intends to reach the text's meaning. Ricoeur thinks that there exist

three aspects in respect to meaning, and three levels of interpretation (Bāqerī 1382: 79):

- a. Explanation, in terms of structural analysis of the text by means of semantic principles of language;
- b. Cognition, by which effort is made (in understanding of the text itself) to reach the author's intention based on previous stages;
- c. Accepting, in terms of placing the meaning of the text in the context of one's own life, by which the text receives a special meaning.

Radical hermeneutics was promoted through Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault and Jacques Derrida. According to this approach, due to the creation present in the interpretation, there exists doubt that the interpreter can establish a connection with the text's primary and true meaning. Therefore, all meanings extracted from a text are both possible and relative.

Afterwards, critical hermeneutics gained scientific prominence. Its representatives are Jürgen Habermas and Karl Otto Apel. On the basis of this modern approach, by means of critical thinking a better understanding of the relation to tradition can be reached, and hence stay "immune" to deviations from ideological and socio-cultural tendencies. However, it is not possible to completely free oneself from such deviations. Habermas calls the freeing from such deviations an unfulfilled "unreal condition".

Analysis of the hermeneutic method

The hermeneutic methodology, like any other method, has constraints and deficiencies stemming from its nature. Some deficiencies of the hermeneutic method are: rejecting of the empirical, distancing from moderate criteria, unsusceptibility to analysis through others due to extreme esoteric nature and a qualitative view, the existence of irresolvable discrepancies due to recommendation of letting aside one's own values and reasoning the behavior of others based on other people's values, and finally, ascertaining the hermeneutic sphere of unconscious meanings of our consciousness and a variety of interpretations stemming from it.

In other words, in the hermeneutic method, the researcher is advised to analyze human values in order to comprehend the behavior of people, letting, however, one's own values aside. In order to reach the meaning of the other's behavior, the researcher needs, on one hand, to put oneself in the other person's position, and on the other hand, suppress one's own values. How is this possible since, according to advocates of hermeneutics, a major part of our interpretation goes back into the sphere of unconscious meanings in our consciousness, which we will not become aware of, but which are a determining factor in our interpretation, and they are a basis for a variety of interpretations.

This being the fact, the researcher needs, on one hand, to put himself in the place of the subject of his study in order to fully permeate different horizons, and on the other hand, free himself from thinking about one's own values. According to advocates of hermeneutics, what we perceive holds earlier meanings and senses stored in the sphere of the unconscious (Ahmadī 1371: 200–205). That is to say, even the researcher intends to free oneself from his own values, he merely frees himself from the sphere of conscious values, and the classification of his conscious values intermeddles with the unconscious when it comes to comprehending and interpreting of research.

Semantics

The semantic approach represents a sort of artistic and denotational approach in the understanding of text and its meanings. This approach has been given more attention in recent decades, and it has, in the light of denotation as a contemporary science, evolved into a modern theory of text analysis. This theory is based on objective denotation, as opposed to subjective denotation.

General view on the issue of denotation

Denotation represents “the understanding of phenomena in that this comprehension channels the consciousness onto something different (Mozafar 1386: 40). Thus, the thing that channels man's consciousness onto something different is the signifier (*dāll*), and this other is the signified (*madlūl*), whereas the process itself is called denotation (*dalālat*). We will use a commonly known example: seeing smoke denotes the existence of fire or seeing fire denotes the existence

of smoke; i.e. hearing a voice from behind a wall denotes the existence of a human being.

On the other hand, the transmission of consciousness from one thing onto another usually comes into existence due to the new relationship that consciousness establishes between the two things. This relationship connects the signifier and the signified, and the cognition of their inseparableness is conceived outside of consciousness. This inseparableness can exist on a rational, natural or conventional level. Hence, denotation can be realized through three forms:

- a. Rational denotation, which represents essential inseparableness between the outside existence of the signifier and the signified as e.g. the inseparableness between condition and the conditioned, between influence and the influenced. This denotation is determined by reason not by word or by the convention of legislation, like when some rational preconditions are created that lead us to wished results.
- b. Natural denotation, which is the natural inseparableness between two things as demanded by man's nature. Due to this, on the basis of natural necessities, types of persons and personalities can be distinguished.
- c. Conventional denotation, which represents inseparableness between two things in accordance to a convention, so that the existence of one thing is argument enough for the existence of the other. It is the legislator who connects these two things, which creates an obligatory connection. For example, the shape of a letter indicates a word; traffic signs indicate traffic; numbers are mathematical signs etc.

The meaning of convention in logic means placing a word in the context of its meaning so that the given word denotes meaning. There are two kinds of conventional denotation:

1. Verbal denotation – when the sign is a word;
2. Nonverbal denotation – when the sign is something outside the framework of words. There exist certain and determined signs for understanding an intention between two sides e.g. allusion etc.

Therefore, whenever the signifier of a category that is determined by convention or legislation(s) has assumed a specific meaning, or had, due to common usage, assumed a specific meaning, we speak about conventional denotation. All features and common markers between society and customs of people out of which respective meaning can be derived are called conventional or nonverbal denotation, whereas the denotation of sounds and specific expressions with specific meanings are called conventional verbal denotation.

Verbal denotation is the one that is created in the consciousness due to the connection of words and meanings i.e. “the existence of a word in that it emerges out of the speaker’s knowledge; the knowledge of meaning and sense in accordance with his point of view” (Mozafar 1368: 42).

The denotation of words with meanings in all languages is not inherent feature of words but conventional and based on a convention of the legislator, who appointed specific meanings for specific words. Hence, in each verbal conventional denotation, convention is relevant; otherwise would each word indicate every meaning. In this case, each word carries specific meaning based on a determined convention of the legislator.

Ebad ben Sulayman Zamiri (*‘Ebād ben Soleymān Zamīrī*) and a group of Mu tazilah predecessor thought that denoting meanings to words is not based on a legislator’s convention, since they assumed that Adam’s descendants had not earlier had language and communication. Some Ash’arīans held even the view that existing expressions are ur-expressions, determined by the Almighty God and revealed to people. This view cannot be accepted. Furthermore, it has not been reported in history that prophets were sent by God to teach words. Thus, they thought that denoting words with their respective meanings does not stem from a legislator’s convention but is in accordance with man’s inner needs. This means that each people established words based on the people’s essence and the needs of their nature. By essential needs we have in mind that words were chosen in order to understand senses which are the subject of its attention. Furthermore, even animals produce sounds in different situations (*Saḡḡādī, Farhang-e ma’āref-e eslāmī*).

Even though this viewpoint had raised the attention of many distinguished contemporary scholars, a majority of them did not accept it, supporting the idea that denotation of word is established by convention.

Now we focus on two more types of verbal denotation:

1. Natural verbal denotation: there exist words and sounds which emerge due to natural states that occur in man, and hence these sound indicate to the state; for example, “sigh” indicates pain, and cough indicates a cold.
2. Rational verbal denotation: according to the judgment of reason, each word indicates to the existence of a speaker (the one who utters), and each word requires a speaker. If the speaker is not within our scope, we can discern that the word heard has its speaker, like a word coming from behind a wall (Tūsī 1326: 61–63; Tahānawī 1862: 486).

Convention causes the word to indicate meaning. The word is called signifier (*dāll*) or sign, and meaning is signified (*madlūl*), whereas the process is called denotation (*dalālat*).

Words and their respective meanings are inseparable by convention, so that the conception of one indicates the other i.e. what follows from the conception of the signifier is the signified and vice versa.

A speech is signified in the speaker’s mind prior to making an utterance; what follows, due to the inseparableness and unitedness, emerges conception of the signifier and is expressed via language; hence recipients listen to an utterance delivered through such words. These words reflect the meanings, and thus are meanings of words delivered to the recipient’s mind without any delay.

Convention can be two-fold:

- a. Established convention, through an agreement on the legislator’s sides, which is a primary principle in the denotation of word meaning;
- b. Convention which is based on a wide common application in a language.

Tūsī talks about a further kind of denotation which he calls “written denotation”, which occurs in correspondence (Tūsī 1326: 62).

Verbal denotation in respect to established convention is divided into three categories:

1. Congruous denotation: the denotation of a word in all meanings that refer to it, as in the denotation of the word *house* and all meanings it encompasses;

2. Containing denotation: the denotation of a word on one segment of meaning and content it refers to, not in respect to the full meaning; this segment is contained in the full meaning, as the word *wall* is contained in respect to *house*:
3. Obligatory denotation: the denotation of words by meanings that go beyond the frame of basic meaning i.e. the latter is conditioned by the former and follows from it, as the word *house* in respect to furniture and home items.

Sheikh 'Ishraq calls congruous denotation "denotation with intent", containing denotation he calls "encompassing denotation", and obligatory denotation is "enforced denotation" in his terms (Shirāzī 1314: 35–37).

Some works, such as *Qawā'id-e 'allāme*, mention "allusive denotation". By this definition a sentence or an utterance is meant, which, besides the congruous meaning holds also specific meaning. Salient examples of this we find in Quranic verses. One verse states: "[...] and the bearing of him and the weaning of him was thirty months" (Quran, *Al-Ahqāf*: 15), and another states: "Mothers shall suckle their children for two whole years" (Quran, *Al-Baqarah*: 233). The explicit denotation contained in these two verses deals with pregnancy and breast feeding during a 30-month period, and a full 24-month period. Allusive denotation in the two verses suggests that the minimum pregnancy period is six months. Here we note a sort of rational necessity, since there is established a certain kind of inseparableness between primary and deductive meaning. Surely could this denotation also be called "meaning denotation" since the importance of mind and meaning in respect to the word is highlighted.

As far as using words in allegorical meaning for carrying consciousness from the sphere of the real into the sphere of the allegorical meaning, inflectional analogy which shifts the recipient's consciousness from real to allegorical meaning is necessary. Or, in case of polysemy, a defined analogy is necessary, where common meanings will be the determining factors for establishing specific meaning. These analogies are divided in:

1. Verbal analogies,
2. Analogies of state.

The principles of Fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) in Shiism will be covered in another study. The issues discussed in this scientific area, if explained in the right way and with a contemporary language style so it is comprehensible to a majority of thinkers, the author of this article thinks, would result in a revolution in the sphere.

On semantics

This semantic approach analyses sentences and connection between words instead of introducing input characteristics; political and cultural preconditions that dominate in the sphere of speech and text representation are considered and analyzed; taken into account are denotation of words, the speaker's worldview, individual viewpoints; verbal analogies and analogies of state at the time of utterance are studied, reaching the meaning of symbols contained in the messages. Semantics studies the meaning of contents in respect to their usage.

This type of approach sees meaning through the speaker's intention whereas the recipient is expected to decode what the speaker said and had in mind (see: Farāmarz Qarāmalekī 1385: 236).

The study of semantic approach can be arrived at via two methods, and the speaker's intent can be reached on the basis of their sentences.

1 Methodological individualism

This method uses different verbal and positional analogies, and principles of language and syntax in order to decompose the text and arrive at the speaker's intent. An example of this method we can see in literary comments, and, in the comment, directing one's attention to the reason of Revelation.

2 Methodological holism

In this method, the commentator observes himself in respect to the entirety. Sentences are not analyzed separately, but their respective meaning is reached through the understanding of the whole. In this approach, attention needs to be directed to context, homogeneity of sentences and the recipient. An example of this is traditional Tafsīrs, based on context and the homogeneity between Surahs and Ayahs. Thus, the goal is to arrive at the speaker's worldview in order to comprehend his intentions. For example, if we reach Hāfiz Shīrāzī's or Saadi's world-

view, we will understand their poetry. Alike, considering commentaries of inspirational Divine Speech is accomplished through observation of worldview, through the prism of denotation, and, of course, proper alignment with the determined criteria of the Merciful. It is exactly due to this that for each text a semantic field can be sketched out. Toshihiko Izutsu's (1374) *God and Man in the Quran* can serve as a good example of research on the method of semantic approach.

According to this method, entering the semantic field can be accomplished in a quantitative manner and word analysis in the text with the statistical method (Farāmarz Qarāmalekī 1385: 237).

“The enumeration of words, their classification into nouns, adjectives, verbs etc., discriminating key and interjacent words, precise designation of word meanings and mathematical count, style and context analysis of what is written by means of inner and outer analogies in the text, determining an imaginary system, comparison of word positions in the imaginary system with their respective position in the systems connected.”

An important principle in this method is the recipient's objective remembering of the message listed to, and the endeavor to “catch” the speaker's intentions without interference of the listener's consciousness. This represents a sort of passive approach in contact with the text (see: Farāmarz Qarāmalekī 1385: 235–238).

The reciprocal method and merging two approaches based on a sample and research program

In this approach, instead of limiting the attention on the recipient's role in the text (hermeneutic method) or the speaker's intent (semantic method) in the comprehension of text, an active interaction between the speaker and listener or the writer and reader emerges. In other words, message and text meaning is a result of methodological interaction between the recipient and the text. This approach does not rescind the speaker's intent but merges it with the recipient's needs. The path towards exposing the writer's or speaker's intent leads via an active reader's i.e. recipient's relation to the text or speech (not just linguistic principles).

This is explained in that every text holds three basic spheres:

1. Speech (*notq*): statement in the text as to how it is. In question is the intention of explaining and conveying of the intended.

Questions and answers follow from the text itself. A “text as center” view is considered (pure semantics).

2. Input (*entāq*): inserting of statements into the text. Both the question and answer stem from the recipient, in this method. A “recipient as center” view is considered (pure hermeneutics).
3. Reading through (*estentāq*): statements are derived from the text. In this approach, the question comes from the recipient whereas the answer is derived from the text. However, the method in question is not about the recipient’s mere passivity but it is about a standpoint of **reciprocity**.

It is said that “a well formed question is half the answer”. A precisely and wisely asked question leads man to discovery. As Mawlana says: “The question follows from knowledge, but so does the answer.”

By the reciprocal method is understood, taking into account important peculiarities of both methods and leaving the weak point aside, the accepting of a new methodology in a new form by which we approach the text. Via the reciprocal method we reach the speaker’s standpoint because the commentator, taking into account the text’s overall mood, “lives with” the speaker; engages in the speaker’s or writer’s thought system, epistemology, ontology and anthropology, and hence approaches text analysis on the basis of understanding the writer’s worldview and the semantic field in his works. This is a semantic view on the text. On the other hand, the commentator’s consciousness is not exhaust, and he approaches text commentary on the basis of theme cognition and interpretation. On this level, we face a certain kind of hermeneutics. Hence, the reciprocal approach is neither pure semantics nor pure hermeneutics, but a logical and methodological reciprocity between these two methods. On one hand, active is the text, and on the other hand, the recipient. Both sides engage in an interactive process by which deduction and interpretation is formed.

In the reciprocal method, we deal with criticism. Criticism is a conscious and rational act, which is the result of a confrontation of one theory with another, in the sphere of contents. Criticism aims at detecting contradictions existent in the text. It is possible that these contradictions exist in the core of a meaning. Moreover, it is possible that contradictions in a text or speech are visible, hidden or ostensible. That is to say, the revealing of contradictions hidden in the text is by no

means an easy task. Understanding and revealing of hidden contradictions requires a precise methodological and artistic text analysis which will eventually lead to perceiving and revealing of contradictions.

Hidden contradictions can be: metaphysical, semantic, and epistemological.

The thing being revealed, when it comes to hidden contradictions, refers to the following cases: possibility, necessity, originality, authenticity, spuriousness, judgment foundation or the lack thereof, which exist in deduction.

According to reciprocal method, “the text is neither pure interpreter nor the interpreted”, but is both. The interaction between text and interpreter means that both have roles of “both commentator and the recipient of comment”. In an interaction process, what the speaker expresses through his statement and what the listener (recipient) comprehends from the text’s core is merged so that it results in deep text understanding, and hence, one interpretation opens up possibilities for other and completely different interpretations (Farāmarz Qarāmalekī 1385: 240).

The logic of revealing and understanding of religion and gnosis

The logic of revealing religious judgments and Gnostic language represents an important issue in the understanding and deducing on religion and the language of gnosis i.e. one ought to know standards and criteria in distinguishing valid from invalid judgments. Is, in this respect, the logic of reason suffice, and is reason the utter and final benchmark which will lead us to right sentences and religious judgments, or do we necessarily ought to follow the path of commitment, or we ought to consolidate the two methods and decide on a path to merge one with the other?

From an epistemological standpoint, religion holds both an epistemological and an ontological reality.

From an epistemological point of view, religion is the sum of beliefs, ethics and ceremonies; i.e. the sum of contents and judgments in the sphere of beliefs, ethics and regulations. Religious contents and judgments are determined in the form of words and meaningful sentences i.e. the “Holy Book”.

From an ontological standpoint, religion holds an objective reality, which in itself includes some of the levels of being, and, besides its

verbal existence, which carries meaning, holds both an objective and an outward existence.

That which is revealed in this world onto the heart of the Seal of prophethood, and which is contained in the Quran as Revelation in written form is like “layered clothing”, whose authentic reality is stored in God’s *Absolute Book* (*Omm al-ketāb*), which was then revealed so that people can understand, ponder about, and behave according to it. This authentic reality can only be reached by those servants of God who are far from any form of corruption. After a gradual revelation from *The Guarded Tablet* (*Lawh al-mahfūz*), which has seen no alteration, its encompassment of the derogating and the derogated, the general and the specific, the absolute and the restrictive shows that it has a certain degree of variability, to enable easier comprehension for the recipient’s. Allameh Tabatabaei (*Tabātabāyī*) thinks that it is exactly this gradualness in Revelation represents a kind of variability (Tabātabāyī 1425, II: 17; III: 54; XII: 69). It is exactly these Quranic verses we recite and ponder about that are the basis for Quranic and religious studies. That is to say, we ought to find ways of their understanding and gaining benefit out of it.

An extremely important place in all cognitive segments of religion hold Revelation and the practice (*sunnah*) of pure imams in deduction and the logic of revealing religious contents and judgments.

For example, in the revelation of theological judgments which deal with states of earliest origin and recurrence, and by which, besides explanation and affirmation of religious beliefs, obscurities and dilemmas are removed, we refer to two resources: reason and the Revelation, although the degree of their usage is distinct with different Muslim groups. Theological judgment requires a holistic approach to meaning, so before a certain theological judgment calls to a faith, religious sciences ought to be viewed through the prism of integral and clear standpoint and hence reach their “semantic field”. Besides, the existence of analogy is one of the major principles of deduction in theology. In theological studies, a holistic method should be supported by analogy.

If we look at the precise and profound topic of *ijtihād* in Islam, we can see that a method of deduction on legal regulations need be settled so that it results in discoveries on the logic of revealing legal judgments; hence, if such a logic would be represented and promoted in the right way, and circulated among other scientific disciplines, it would produce fruitful results.

In this respect, it should be useful to focus on methodological pluralism. By methodological pluralism we understand “taking diverse methods and means in respect to one topic” (Farāmarz Qarāmālekī 1383: 251), which are not to be considered uniform with a variety of methods in one field of science. Pluralism in accepting methods can be observed through two aspects:

1. The researcher makes use of different sciences in the resolution of an issue. For example, in the analysis of religious belief and its continuity, a variety of approaches are used such as the Gnostic approach, the theological, the psychological, philosophical phenomenology and esoteric religious research – their strategy is decided on without any research plan. This represents merely a kind of raw compilation in the sense of reporting.
2. Benefiting from methodological models. The benefit from different disciplines is like using a variety of colors in carpet weaving, where each mottle is chosen according to a certain model.

Accepting this method ought to be active and dynamic, by no means as is the case with Marxism – mechanical and compiling.

Religious scientific centers, universities and religious authorities ought to offer programs in order to discover systems which will be based on religious methodology i.e. to form sections:

which will encompass all pillars of religion and religious cognition i.e. aqaid (philosophy and theology), ethics (individual, collective and legal), regulations (individual, collective and legal), education (in its general meaning i.e. the formation of the individual and society), and religious scientific research;

which will elaborate all aspects of “reality comprehension” (text writer-commentator, contents-the cognitive, written-the interpreted, logic and method of insight), including issues concerning the Will of creation and Divine codification (Revelation, the theology of pure imams, their practice, reason and inherent will);

The need for combining research approaches in examination

As we have shown above, the combination of the hermeneutic and semantic method in text can be called a third approach i.e. “the

reciprocal method”. In this method the recipient activates his scientific capacities and faces the text. This communication is based linguistic methodological principles. Both the text and the recipient are both “interpreter” and “the interpreted”. Both have the role of “commentator” and “the recipient of comment”.

The speaker’s intention, which is based on methodological principles in text interpretation, is in an interactional relation with the listener’s capacities and information, which results in comprehensive understanding. In this case, each comment opens up possibilities for a new comment, and no complete text understanding can be offered.

The reciprocal method is used in both methods: hermeneutic and semantic, and it seems that a critical text approach, methodological comparison, and interactive communication with the text removes passiveness in relation to the text.

In aim of realizing this correct logic one ought to endeavor to bring models of theme deduction in accordance with indigenous approach, and that the position of each theme in the speaker’s thought system is treated in accordance with the semantic approach.

The cognition of intrinsic meanings is necessarily base on principles we find in logic, law, and Tafsīrs. The methodological logic of text comprehension requires principles and bases of comments, and “a proper text elaboration”, otherwise it will result in aimless and false understanding! In principle, our communication with the text, on this level, is explicative and interpellating, and both forms of communication stand in positions of mutual inference. Avoiding dogmatism and rescinding methodological monopolism, this type of research avoids monopolistic emphasis on research approach in particular.

On the other hand, the commentator of one text, in communication with the text, takes his own needs into account. Henceforth, we face two types of text:

1. Meta-historical texts, like the Holy Quran, which is, according to imam Sadiq “current and contemporary in every time, because its revelation is not tied to a particular time”;
2. Special and text contextualized by time.

In both text types, the reciprocal approach will be used. Focusing attention to meta-historical texts, based on the standpoint of the reciprocal recipient, offers correct and valid comments. In texts contextualized

by time, the commentator is required to pay attention to time markers of text emergence, and both its visible and invisible characteristics.

In conclusion, it must be said that we need to search for diverse correct approaches, correctly selected, and take care of reasons as to why one approach is better than the others.

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