CHAPTER IV

MODERNISTS' METHODOLOGY IN UNDERSTANDING THE HOLY

QUR'ĀN

4.1. PREAMBLE

In this chapter, we shall try our level best to detect and elucidate the most significant methods used by the modernists in dealing with the holy Qur'ān. However, before we embark upon discussing this topic in detail, it is worthwhile to shed light on certain matters, and then dot the i’s and cross the t’s in order to clarify the real purpose of this chapter as it should not be understood outside its underlying framework.

1. Since the desired objective of this chapter is to illustrate the methods employed by the modernists to understand the holy Qur'ān, our scientific inquiry, from the very outset, will focus on observing this phenomenon within its natural circumstances. That is, the present research will seek to describe these methods according to the Arabian modernists’ own conception regardless of whether or not it is in keeping with its Western roots. In other words, our scope of interest, here, is presenting the above methods according to the Arabian modernists’ framework, and not that of the Western thinkers though they are the original authors of such methodologies. As such, this study will, firstly, lay out the Arabian modernists’ approach, then critically analyze it so as to find out to what extent its underlying conceptual and methodological parts are consistent with its general framework. Thirdly, we shall, attempt to examine and evaluate these methods in the light of their Western roots.
2. The current probe will be confined to set forth those methods, which have been, indeed, used to understand the holy Qur’ān. This will help us to test the validity of the premises against their final outcomes. The examples, which are to be shown later, are considered as the outcomes that will be very instrumental in finding out about two important things. Firstly, the extent of the compatibility of these methods – premises – to interpret the holy Qur’ān in a way that does not contravene the core principles of Islam, and which is, jurisprudentially, known as what is decisively and definitely stated as meaning for a particular matter of religion. Secondly, the extent to which modernists have contrived to invest such methods, and present the methodological alternative, which can be, truly, a feasible substitute for the customary and orthodox methodology of exegesis.

4.2. GENERAL TRAITS OF THE MODERNIST METHODOLOGY.

In spite of the remarkable difference in the modernists’ philosophical background, and intellectual inclination, from which they draw their works, theories, and understanding of the (scriptural) texts, they however, come to terms with certain fundamentals, and methodological principles, to which they allegedly profess their commitment, and raw their discernment from the traditionalists. The most important principles are, namely, objectivity and comprehensiveness.

4.2.1. Objectivity:

The proponents of this intellectual trend contend that it is essentially to dissociate one’s own self from the phenomenon under study. It is to disentangle oneself from any preconceptions or ante-post thinking, whereby one must approach the
phenomenon in a quasi mechanical way\(^1\), which must be emptied of flowing emotions
that are likely to drag the researcher into bare illusion, particularly, in the matter of
religion: “the first condition of the objective scientific research is to study the
underlying text away from wild emotion that is likely to topple the researcher into
fancy and delusion, especially if the topic under study was, more or less, of a religious
nature”\(^2\). In dealing with the traditional and jurisprudential heritage (*Turāth*), one has
too meet the following requirements of objectivity: Getting acquainted with the nature
of the phenomenon under study, and outlining the most suitable methodology to study
his phenomenon.

1. Such a methodology must proceed upon three major steps:

   a. Structural treatment: it starts out by dropping and brushing aside all
      pre-concepts about *Turāth*, then trying to deal with all texts as a corpus that
      addresses a unique problem capable of interpreting all possible charges in this
      corpus. The structural treatment, also, requires the study of nomenclature
      (terminology) of the text through the interrelations net that monitors and
      disposes these terms, and hence deriving the genuine meaning from within and
      not from without the text.

   b. Secondly, historical analysis: that is to link the phenomenon under
      study to its cultural, political, and social atmosphere. The importance of the
      historical factor lies in: First, apprehending the text’s historicity. Second,

---

See the comment of Hashim Šālih about the book of his teacher, 'Arkūn, Muḥammad (1996), *al-Fikr
-Islāmi Qirā‘ah ‘Ilmiyyah*. Hashim Šālih (tran.), 2nd ed. Beirut: Center of Domestic Development,
155.

\(^1\) Muḥammad (1990), *al-Kitāb wa al-Qur‘ān: Qirā‘ah Mu‘āṣirah*. Damascus: Al-Aḥāl for
ās, al-Ṣultān, al-Ḥaḍīqah, al-Fikr al-Dīn Bayna 'Irādah al-Ma‘rīfah wa 'Irādah al-Haymanah 1st
ed. l-Dār al-Bayzā‘*. Araba Cultural Center, p.9.
and then become a sheer mute-instrument, stripped of every emotional feeling or personal preference; we will shortly find his answer in the next line of his aforementioned statement. After he gave most of his time to his ideological preoccupations, later on he devoted himself to it: "I had therefore turned into the scholarly pursuit of *Turāth* with the advent of eighties". Al-Jābīrī went too far in showing his ostensible allegations, which in fact reveal the real image of his pretended objectivity in dealing with *Turāth*. He, firstly, conceives *Turāth* as a normative product for it is deemed as a civilizational entity and value; then, secondly, he attempts to exploit and marshal it for the sake of another value which he tries to hype it over the Arab world from an ideological perspective:

"Modernism is a message and inclination towards modernization, that is a modernizing mentality; modernizing scientific and sentimental standards. When the predominating culture is a *Turāth*-based culture, the modernist discourse must be directed, first and foremost, towards *Turāth* (itself) in order to refine it and present a modern vision of it. Modernism's heading, with its steps, methodology, and vision, towards *Turāth* is in this case, directing the modernist discourse to a wider segment of the elite and educated people, and even to the entire masses; and thereby fulfilling its entrusted message."

Being excessively steeped in subjectivity, al-Jābīrī's objectivity emanates from the fact of feeling persecuted, and is also driven by hostility and animosity towards *Turāth*, which he visualizes as a usurping enemy. Thus, he is striving hard while using all possible modern interpretative tools to crack down on his enemy, and that is by means of a warlike strategy with two concurrent dimensions: the first dimension is to get rid of the usurping *Turāth* hegemony over our consciousness and thinking by means of dismantling its structures, and turning

---

*bid.*

*bid.*, pp.21-23.


*bid.*, pp.46-47.
its resolute constants into contingent variables. The second dimension is to contain and subjugate Turāth, then wield the modernistic authority over it, and hence act on its behalf as it was acting on our behalf\(^{12}\). The issue raised by al-Jābiri, who allegedly professes to be objective in dealing with Turāth, was ultimately recapitulated in a highly subjectivity-filled question that marks his craving for victory even at the expense of stark reality “How do we redeem ourselves from the Turāth’s authority inflicted on us? Or alternatively, how do we, (ourselves), exert our authority over it”\(^{13}\).

The issue of objectivity, as contended by Ṭāhā ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, is a time-worn matter; nevertheless, the process of distinction between values and facts (incidents) had not yet been developed and standardized until the appearance of the objective trend in science, which asserts the impossibility of transferring from fact to obligation, that is there is no room to admit a link between an incident and moral values, and the impossibility of defining values by referring to the fact only. Nonetheless, those two core requisites have been vitiated by the following three facts:

a. Values – saturated rationalism: this is because rationalism derives its norms and disposes its structure within an integrated framework of society, culture and history according to the finest degree of importance and suitability, both of which are considered a specific subset of values. Rationalism, itself, consists of theoretical values, like systematization, soundness, coherence, organization, and order, etc.

\(^{12}\)Ibid., pp.47-48.
\(^{13}\)Ibid., p.47.
b. Values — saturated facts (incidents): this is due to the language constraint meddling between the researcher and the facts, which are to described and analyzed according to this language, which is actually filled with cultural values. Moreover, the description of facts in itself is not a matter of interest. So, what is more important for us is to select from the facts’ descriptions and features what mostly benefits and suits our preferences and objectives.

c. Realism of values: values are not only a subjective practice that bears on emotions, sentimental reflections, and one’s mood and psychological state; but also they have an outbound existence just as other topics that are liable to propagation, understanding and common analysis. Values cannot be conceived in a vacuum away from reason and fact, as there is no clear parting limit that separates practical values from factual phenomena. There is even an interlacement among such settings (values, fact-reason) as maintained by modern researchers, who had already extended their study to find out about the possibility of investing such interlock. Therefore, the objectivity flashed by the Arabian modernists is an old and time-worn objectivity. Even the empirical researchers, themselves, expressed their reservations about it as they viewed that it is almost impossible for it to be applied in human science research due to the high likelihood of error and deviation from three main perspectives: the researcher, the phenomenon under study, and the ensuing relations between both of them.

---

5 Ibid., p.35.
4.2.2. Comprehensiveness:

Modernists perceive that conscious scientific inquiry is such a study that neither dissolves the particular into the general, nor confines itself in the particular at the expense of the general. It is an all-inclusive study that embraces all the constituent parts of the topic, and addresses them with several tools and methods. "As such there is a great necessity for reexamining Turāth and conventional thought from a new perspective; a comprehensive, dialectic, and historical vision that neither stifles the specific into the general nor confines itself in the specific at the expense of the general"\textsuperscript{17}. For the modernists, comprehensiveness is a cardinal condition to get full access to 'ījtihād (one's personal legal reasoning) in its modernist concepts, and this will not be fulfilled except by striving over:

"Two levels; the general level, which has a broader scope, emphasizes the critical analysis of the religious phenomenon prevailing in all societies, and the specific level that focuses on the religion of Islam, which needs to be rectified in the light of modern scientific theorization of religion, society, and history"\textsuperscript{18}.

The remarkable feat, so to speak, of comprehensiveness had caused some modernists, according to Shuḥrūr, to spend nearly two and half decades on doggedly diligent work, protracted pondering, and conscious reflection, all of which led him to detect the inadequacy of Islamic thought, and its wrong foundations thereof\textsuperscript{19}.

1. According to the modernists, the due comprehensiveness is sufficiently developed through its external section without its internal one, while the contrary does not hold true. In other words, whoever masters the modern methodologies is, thereupon, well-capable of understanding and delving into the details of religion itself. However, one who is well-versed in the sciences and methodologies of

\textsuperscript{17}Al-Jābirī (1991), op. cit., p.42.
\textsuperscript{19}Shuḥrūr (1990), op. cit., p.29.
religion, is not necessarily erudite in the field of modern methodologies, nor he is even capable of comprehending its objectives and outcomes that have an impact on the religious phenomenon "The fundamentalist (religious) vision dismisses the anthropological outlook; and the former does not even possess the necessary rational tools to understand the objectives of anthropological inquiry, whereas the contrary is possibly true. That is to say, the anthropological researcher is willing to please the believer in his faith, and share his intellectual methods, and sentimental reflections; besides striving by all means of ‘Ijtihād and history to know about everything regarding the religious phenomenon". For this reason, the modernists warn Muslim scholars not to discuss any modernist work about Islam as long as they cling to their outdated methodologies:

"Muslim scholars are not entitled to draw forth any judgement about this philosophy (modernism) before they discover, and experience its virtues, and comprehend its ultimate objectives. However, they will not be rightly guided to such an approach as long as they tenaciously cling to the narrated reports, and juridical rules set forth in the old books of biographies, Ḥadīth and jurisprudence."

2. It is, indubitably, a laudable move on the modernists’ part to urge certain scholarly feats like comprehensiveness in thinking, getting conversant with all methodologies, looking into the details within its overall framework and, in turn, viewing the aggregate through its constituting elements, besides maintaining the structural and analytical equilibrium all though this reasoning. Nonetheless, there is a wide gulf between what has been consistently urged by the modernists and their actual writings that often contravene their long-chanted slogans. In practical terms, what the modernists have actually accomplished is segmentalization instead

---

7Arkıın (1986), op. cit., p.28.

Ibid., p.25.
of comprehensiveness, and distorted generalization instead of scrutinized scholarly enquiry.

a. For instance, all those researchers, regardless of their educational background, who have critically examined al-Jābiri’s thought, - who is one of the most prominent modernist theorists in the field of *Turāth* studies - drew the same conclusion, which was to the effect that al-Jābiri’s writing on *Turāth* are, indeed, characterized by segmentalization and eclecticism. In this respect, George Ṣarābīshī had this to say:

“The epistemic methodology, as enshrined by al-Jābiri, turns out to be an ideological tool for discernment and dismissal...indeed, the operation room to which the critical examiner of the Arab mind urges us to enter is, in reality, an autopsy room for anatomizing, amputating, dissociating, and sectioning the segmentation...and normally such splitting of one’s selfhood is, actually, inciting one section of the selfhood against its other sections”

The Moroccan philosopher, Ṣāhā ‘Abd al-Raḥmān addresses the same reality by saying:

“In hindsight, al-Jābiri, when embarking upon the field of implementation, proceeded to divide *Turāth* into discrepant and independent elements, and favour thereof one part at the expense of the others’. Thus his call for comprehensiveness ended up being meaningless, and eventually backfired. As such, al-Jābiri became a practitioner of segmentalization and differentialization rather than comprehensiveness and integration as ostensibly alleged by him: don’t you see the unity of *Turāth*’s elements breaking as under at his own hand”

What all the preceding amounts to is that al-Jābiri’s writings exhibit a gross segmentalization and eclecticism of *Turāthic* texts, besides a deliberate

---

Ṭarābīshī, George (1993), *Madhbaḥat al-Turāth fi al-Thaqālah al-'Arabiyyah al-Muʿāṣirah* 1st ed. Dār al-Sāqī, pp.77,81,83. See the full section of the same source from p.73 through p.128. In this research, the author demonstrates, with convincing evidence, the segmentalization, eclecticism and logical bigotry.

distortion of reports and quotations, blind fanaticism and intellectual bias in favour of conventional thought at the expense of Islamic thought.  

b. As for 'Arkūn's perception of comprehensiveness, it unveiled his inexcusably lurking ignorance whereby he unconventionally enlisted ten pillars of faith (ʿImān):

“The ten pillars of faith, in Islam, make up the same number as the existential fundamentals, which are not related to any time concurrence or any specific political domain; but instead they concern the human’s divine covenant, that is to say, the trust ensured ever since the start of creation between almighty Allah and the first man, who accepted to bear such (a heavier) responsibility, which the heavens and earth, the natural and spiritual forces, had declined to undertake”.

'Arkūn's methodological paradoxes do not only end at this critical level of stark intellectual poverty with regard to the very rudimentary basics of Islam, which are known even to young Muslims, not to mention the one who claims himself to be the master thinker of the age; but also his inconsistencies went overboard when he made of this naked ignorance a core foundation to demonstrate his secularism with his allegation that: “The pillars (i.e. principles) of faith, in Islam, are not related to any time concurrence or any specific political domain”. The main driving force of the above methodological antithesis is certainly the author’s intellectual bigotry and the ideological bickering that haunted his mind, thereby deluding him that he was

Arkūn speaks for himself: “Whoever contrives to direct public opinion towards the distinction between the interest of religion and interest of individuals and (social) classes; between the ignorant imitator and the diligent scholar that is equipped with the modern scientific machinery”. 'Arkūn (1986), op. cit., p.29. To 'Arkūn’s analogy, all Muslim scholars are ignorant imitators except him, who allegedly pictured as the sole assiduous scholar just because he is armed with modern methodologies.
the hero, who was able to “refute the political ideologies, which are nowadays vainglorious under the name of the Islamic Revolution”\textsuperscript{27}. 

In a nutshell, the modernists, on the issue of \textit{Turāth}, have proceeded with the principle of compartmentalization in order to employ one part of \textit{Turāth} against the other part just to argue with their ideological foes, namely, the Muslim activists\textsuperscript{28}. 

\section*{1.3. MODERN LINGUISTICS}

\subsection*{1.3.1. The importance of modern linguistics:}

Modern linguistics is one of the most important methodological approaches that is often reiterated at the very outset of modernist works, which discuss the interpretation of certain verses of the holy \textit{Qur’ān}\textsuperscript{29}. Besides other modern methods of research, the modernists view modern linguistics as the real alternative to the timeworn hermeneutic methods of \textit{Qur’ānic} interpretation, which, to their perception, seem to be losing momentum since they have failed to keep abreast with the spirit of the modern age: 

“Indeed, (legal) interpretation does not proceed from a vacuum, it is not procured by old tools, which have lost their potential for explanation and interpretation; but it is, instead, on intellectual endeavor whose undertaker must be well-acquainted with the scientific discoveries of his own living age; whereby he must use, accordingly, the suitable methodological tools”\textsuperscript{30}.


\textsuperscript{29} Tarābishī (1993), \textit{op. cit.}, p.12. 


In this respect, the Modernists proceed towards different trends. There are those who show their utmost irreverence for the (scriptural) text, which is to be valued only if subject to fanciful speculation and purely mental reflection. That is, the (scriptural) text, which, in totality, reflects the fact is definitely worthless as, in their opinion, it fades away with the disappearance of that particular fact, which it was used to describe\(^3\). By corollary, according to this group of Modernists, Islam has no extrinsic presence, in that it is disposed by our intellect and conceptions, and thereupon it has no ultimate (final) reality. As such, Islam seems to be just reasoning styles, (blurred) conceptions, (lurid) scenes, and (baffling) words, which need to be unraveled and disentangled in order to release the Arab man from his shackles\(^3\)\(^2\).

Another group of Modernists accuse the texts of revelation as being a shroud that cover reality, and they accordingly deal with it in a police spirit whereby they delve into investigations of the hidden connotations of this text, then dismantling its structure and laying it bare so that they can elicit what was discreetly kept in the legal textual setting\(^3\)\(^3\). As for other Modernists, they advocate the symbolist approach in dealing with al-Qurʾān. In other words, they look into al-Qurʾān on the basis that it is made up only of a set of clues and symbols that indicate a number of theoretical and philosophical concepts whose ultimate purpose is to control the fact and subjugate the people experiencing this fact\(^3\)\(^4\). However, the most outstanding group, in this regard, comprises those modernists who cherish the dual principle of non-synonymity and non-association, or the principle of non-synonymity but with association. From their point of view, this trend represents the latest product of Modern Linguistics\(^3\)\(^5\). Due to

\(^{34}\) Abū Zayd (1995), *op. cit.*, pp.217,219,222-223,
the abundant supply of applications for the latter expository trend compared to the other modernist trends, we shall then confine our analysis to the study of two models, which are the most pronounced works for the non-synonymity trend in Qur'ānic interpretation, namely, Muḥammad Shuhrūr and Ḥāj Ḥamad’s models.\[36\]

3.2. Shuhrūr:

Reasoning stems from a philosophical axiom, which is; in the author’s opinion, believed to be an Islamic ideology to the effect that the source of human cognition are actually the materialist world, which is exclusive of the interaction of human elfood. That is to say, the true cognition is fulfilled when mentally visualized images correspond to factually existent objects. Therefore, it is the physical existence other than the mental visualization of things, which makes up the essence of its urūth. In an effort to legitimize his above assertion, Shuhrūr invokes the following verse:

“It is He Who brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers when ye knew nothing; and He gave you hearing and sight and intelligence and affection: that ye may give thanks (to Allah).”

Sūrah al-Naḥl: 78.

everything in the universe has a material (physical) existence; thus science does not knowledge the existence of something that is not physically present, and thereby conceivable to one’s mind. The unseen word is, itself, a materialist world, and the universe, in turn, had not originated from nonexistence, but instead it had emerged

the former’s book, in which he admitted the principle of non-synonymity in the comprehension of holy Qur’ān, has attracted a colossal number of readers, the impetus that caused the book to be printed for a second edition in a period of not more three months from the date of the first issue (Sep. 00). In return, the book had, also, stirred up a flurry of criticism and trenchant comments more than other book in a time not exceeding three years. As for Ḥāj Ḥamad, his works that address topics related to al-Qur’ān, for instance, al-‘Alāmīyyah al-‘Alamatīyyah al-Thāniyyah and Manhajīyyah al-rān al–Ma’rifīyyah had, indeed, attracted a lot of readers and researchers, particularly, those rests in the study of Islamic thought. The first book was printed in two editions, whereas the second book was a subject theme for a number of conferences, like the one organized by the national Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT), Cairo office in the Cultural season 1991-1992. The reference was entitled “Manhajīyyah al-Qur’ān wa ’Aslamat al-‘uḥūm al-Tabī‘īyyah wa al-‘āmiyyah.
from a substance of a specific nature; and likewise our living world is going to be brought to an end, so that another world with another nature will take its place, and that is what we conventionally term as the life hereafter. Such a philosophical stance towards the relationship between thought and nature eventually led the author to adopt the non-synonymity approach in the course of understanding the meanings of the holy Qur'ān in order to keep pace with the tremendous scientific advances which ensued in the later decades of the twentieth century. Shuhrūr alleges that he derived this principle after having thoroughly scrutinized the Arabic language by referring to all existent Arabic dictionaries, among which he found that ‘Maqāyiṣ al-lughāt’ measures of language), the dictionary ascribed to ‘Ibn Fāris, as the most suitable resource for his scholarly discoveries. The author had to undergo a lot of painstaking work for nearly ten years before he finally comprehended the non-synonymity principle. The author thereafter realized that he was a prisoner of misleading illusions and reversed axioms. The history of the author’s alleged breakthrough dates back to the time when he first encountered an old friend in one university in Moscow, the capital of the former Soviet Union wherein he got to know about his friend’s Ph.D. dissertation, which examines the originality of the Arabic language as being an independent body from the family of Semitic languages. Ever since Shuhrūr had discovered the existence of the non-synonymity principle in the Arabic language, and argued that whoever believes in the opposite (synonymity) his call, will, not be more than a mere ruse. In view of the foregoing facts, the author set out to critically review the verses of the holy Qur'ān, and later concluded that it is indispensably important to distinguish between the core terminology like the difference between al-Kitāb, al-Qur'ān, al-Furqān, al-Dhikr, Ummu al-Kitāb, al-Lawḥ al-Maḥfūz, and al-'Imām al-
Mubīn. Shuhūrūr bases his arguments on the account that exact sciences like medicine and engineering, although they are a human product, are still associated with high veracity, precision and non-synonymity; therefore, the holy Qur'ān, being the word of Allah is more deserving to be viewed with such a level of high distinction i.e. non-synonymity).

It is not reprehensible for one to have whatsoever point of view as long as this proceeds from a tentative perspective but what is really inadmissible is for one to announce the support of a particular belief than in no time one the seeks to undermine, and that was the case of our fellow Shuhūrūr, who purports to have adhered to the non-synonymity principle, but soon, in some passages, he contradicts his alleged principle whether on the methodological or the practical level.

1. On the methodological level, Shuhūrūr apparently espoused the theory of "non-synonymity", which signifies "the terms indicating one particular thing under one possible consideration". That is, the foremost requisite in the process of understanding is inevitably the lexical culture whereby every word has its very definite significance, which is not to be associated with any other meaning since every mentally visualized object has to correspond to a physically materialized existence. However, the author soon proceeded to contradict his prior belief upon which he had based all his arguments by according to the audience the primary role in the meaning industry - after he was simply a receiving set with no active role but to memorize the very exact terminology in order to be capable of understanding what have been literally conveyed to him – beside rendering the
words of the holy Qur’ān as variable terms whose meanings are derived from the society’s culture and epistemic ceiling while, before, they were deemed just constant, and characterized with a fine precision, accurate specification and invariability that are usually associated with the terminology of mathematics and physics⁴². In short, Shuhrūr had moved from one side to the opposite side. What’s most astonishing, here, is that on both sides, the author yet wreaks his wrath upon Muslim scholars who seem to him to be the main culprits for Muslims backwardness and intolerance⁴³.

2. On the practical level, Shuhrūr acknowledges the principle of “synonymity” on a few occasions, for example, in his saying: al-Qur’ān = prophethood (Nubuwah), ‘Ummu al-Kitāb = the message of the Prophet (al-Risālah)⁴⁴. In one passage, the author said: “the regulating standards (Dawābit) or rules (Qawā‘id) of interpretation”⁴⁵. Here, the author used the term “Dawābit” as a synonym of “Qawā‘id”. In another passage, Shuhrūr defined the concept of ‘Ummah: “As such, the ‘Ummah comes with the meaning of path (al-Sabīl), way (al-Tariq) and trace (‘Athar)⁴⁶. In the latter definition, the author recognized three synonyms for the word “‘Ummah”. Moreover, in his comment “the Qur’ānic narration, or say, the best narration, that’s why it is called Ḥadīth or Qur’ān⁴⁷, which to his knowledge, both have the same significance, this apart from holding “Qur’ānic narration” as a synonym for “the best narration”. Last but not least, the author viewed that the letter “Mā” comes as a synonym for the word “al-Ladhi”

⁴²Ibid.
⁴⁴Ibid., pp.102, 103.
⁴⁵Ibid., p.196.
⁴⁶Shuhrūr (1994), op. cit., p.66.
⁴⁷Shuhrūr (1990), op. cit., p.93.
(who/which/that) in his following statement: “Here, Mā appears as a synonym for *al-Ladḥū*”. With all such inconsistencies and intellectual wavering, the author yet sees no deterrent to holding the principle of “synonymity” as some sort of illusion, an upshot of intellectual tyranny, and an aspect of formalism: “to make the form prevail over the content in the linguistic sciences... the impetus that helped to reinforce the illusion of synonymity among the people of *Ḍād* Language (Arabic), and all this falls under the goals and repercussions of despotism”.

4.3.3. 'Abū al-Qāsim Ḥāj Ḥamad

'Abū al-Qāsim Ḥāj Ḥamad draws the distinction between the customary language of the Arabs and the language used in the holy *Qurˈ ār*⁵⁰. He attests that the language of *al-Qurˈān* is superior to the customary language of the Arabs in that the former’s vocabulary is raised up to the status of terminology: “the divine use of a word raises it up to the status of terminology”⁵¹, “Thereupon the reasoning of synonymy and association are to be non-existent”. The author postulates that:

“The *Qurˈān*, in its syntactic building is akin to the cosmic building whereby if a celestial body turns off its predetermined orbit, the entire cosmic order will end up in disturbance; for this reason almighty Allah had matched the syntactic building of *al-Qurˈān* and the sites of stars; as such, almighty Allah does not swear by the stars themselves, but rather by their respective positions:

“Furthermore I call to witness the setting of the Stars, And that is indeed a mighty adjuration if ye but knew, That this is indeed a Qur-an most honourable”.

Sūrah al-Wāqi’ah: 75-77.

There is no one capable of monitoring the *Qurˈānic* wording in view of the correspondent letter in the fashioning of the universe, except almighty Allah. That is every letter has its building linguistic function in the making of *al-Qurˈān*⁵³.

⁴⁸Ibid., p.94.
Since the holy Qur'an is made of a language set as an expressive means, and while its epistemic methodology is to monitor all topics related to its (Qur'an) scope, its underlying language must, in turn, be monitored and resolutely regulated. Thus, a single word must not be given more than one definite meaning, regardless of its position in the general textual context, otherwise there will be a clash in the Qur'an and a wide discrepancy between scholars' exegeses and interpretations. Besides, this does contravene what had been ascertained earlier by Arabs in their rhetoric linguistics, and also it comes in conflict with the ultimate reference of the ample legacy of their vocabulary.54

In reality, 'Abu al-Qāsim Ḥāj Ḥamad had missed chance as he contradicted himself both on the methodological or procedural levels;

1. On the methodological level, the author built up his theory on a postulate, which draws a parallel between the language of the holy Qur'an and the customary language of the Arabs, particularly, in respect to the two linguistic features: synonymity and association. Paradoxically, Ḥāj Ḥamad, shortly after, came to revoke the ban on the use of synonymity and association in Arab linguistics as well, and instead he assigned to it, almost, the same properties as the language of the holy Qur'an: "In contrast to many opinions, there is no single word in the Arabic language, despite its richness, which is fully able to substitute the intuition, meaning or syntax of another word; the fact that the vocabulary (of this language) is like the Arab man who had established it, in that it is characterized by a special peculiarity in every distinct word."55

55 Ibid., vol. 1, pp.157-158.
2. On the procedural level, the first example the author adduced to support his point of view has, eventually, a boomerang effect on his analysis. The author wrongfully alleged that whenever the word "Massa" appears in the Qurʾān, it is understood as cognition, apprehension, sensation, feeling, emotional and mental reaction, whereas the word "lamasa" comes with the meaning of physical and corporeal contact between two things\(^{56}\). However, the real meanings of the verses invoked in this respect certainly refute the author's alleged fallacy. For instance, the following verses:

"And they say: "The Fire shall not touch us but for a few numbered days""

Sūrah al-Baqarah: 80.

"This because they say: "The Fire shall not touch us but for a few numbered days""

Sūrah 'Ālī-ʻImrān: 24.

"Whose Oil is well-nigh luminous, though fire scarce touched it"

Sūrah al-Nūr: 35.

"And incline not to those who do wrong, or the Fire will seize you"

Sūrah Hūd: 113.

In all the preceding verses there is no such mental reaction to hell-fire! And also in the following two verses:

"There is no blame on you if ye divorce women before consummation."

Sūrah 'Ālī-ʻImrān: 47.

She said: "O my Lord! how shall I have a son when no man hath touched me?"

Sūrah al-Baqarah: 236.

There is no room to admit that the physical contact, here, means the mental reaction. The act of "Mas", in this context, has a clear meaning, namely, the

\(^{56}\text{Ibid.}, p55.\)
material (physical) contact. That is to say, the act of setting one’s body ablaze is definitely a physical act; also, normal delivery for a woman naturally happens only after a sexual intercourse has taken place between the two partners; that’s why The Virgin Mary wondered upon hearing the news of her pregnancy. But, to the author’s doctrine, the meaning of the above verse of sūrah al-Nūr is expressed as a mental based response between the (lightening) oil and fire!! Likewise, the meaning of the verse of sūrah al-Baqarah came to be distorted, in which the author’s doctrine acknowledges that there is no guilt for those of you (men) if you get divorced since your feeling, sentiments and intellect do not respond to your wives. As such, the man will not be legally liable to any sort of payment towards the divorcee, and all what he may give her is regarded as beneficence and not legal obligation!!

4.3.4. General perspective:

As a matter of fact, if we look beyond the very limited lens through which some modernists are used to viewing the issue of synonymity, and apply, instead, a more comprehensive and universal outlook, we will inevitably find that this issue was one of the major concerns that preoccupied human thought. On the Muslim side, the notable scholar, 'Ibn al-'A‘rābī was the pioneering thinker to deny the principle of synonymity in the Arabic language, and that was in the fourth century (A.H.). Accentuating this reality (non-synonymity), the author of “al-Muẓhir” (i.e. al-Suyūṭī) stated:

“Every two letters (or two words) set by Arabs to term with one (common) meaning whereby in every letter (or word) there is a peculiar meaning that is not associated with the other letter (or word) thereof we might have either learnt about it, and thus reported it, or we might have been unclear about it, and for that we did not profess ignorance for Arabs”57.

There is a very firm relationship between non-synonymity and association: "Non-synonymity is couched upon those terms indicating one significance under solely, one consideration"\(^\text{58}\). While "the property of association is to the effect that a single word indicates two meanings, which are, conventionally, the most agreed upon by the people of that language"\(^\text{59}\).

In relation to the two aforementioned principles (i.e. non-synonymity and association), there are three linguistic trends to be distinguished:

1. The first trend rejects both non-synonymity and association. The most leading proponent, who spearheads this trend is 'Ibn Darastawayh\(^\text{60}\). Obviously, 'Abū al-Qāsim Ḥāj Ḥamad seems to be one of the exponents of this group.

2. The second trend denies non-synonymity, but admits the principle of association. The most prominent advocates of this group are 'Ibn al-'A'rābī, in the past, and later came his followers, Tha'lab and 'Ibn Fāris\(^\text{61}\), and too many others to name. Apparently, Muḥammad Shuḥrūr is more likely to fall under this category.

3. The third trend recognizes both non-synonymity and association. This linguistic approach represents the doctrine of the majority of scholars. The most renowned partisans of this doctrine are, namely, al-Rummānī, al-Fārisī, 'Ibn Jinnī and Suyūṭī, and many other theologists and experts of scholasticism\(^\text{62}\). The latter trend causes no objections since it is rationally and textually legitimate. There are

\(^{58}\)Ibid., p.402.
\(^{59}\)Ibid., p.369.
\(^{62}\)Ibid., p.42.
scores of Arabic linguistic reports which reveal for instance, that there are three terms: *Hintah, Burr,* and *Qamih* all of which carry the same meaning.

a. The arguments of the first group are certainly untenable and countered by rational and legal evidence. Rationally, it is quite possible to envisage a number of words with one common meaning, or a single word with different meanings. As for textual evidence, there is too much to mention. Tawfiq Shāhīn pronounces on the matter: "the literal association is a conspicuous trademark in our language, and with its abundance it became a hallmark of it (language), and one requisite factor for its development".

Indeed, the advocates of the former trend look at the words through a historical lens. As a matter of fact, the differences (in the meaning) admitted by this group were actually sent into oblivion, and hence became merely a historical issue in the terms’ course of life, and that was owing to its semantical evolution and protracted time of usage. According to this trend, the users of language pay no heed to the ancient semantic significance of the words, and all they are concerned about is only the actual (instant) significance of the term. In this regard, Bally pleads that:

"The words are being used not according to their historical value, in the fact of language, in that one’s mind forgets the initial steps of its moral development; this if we really presume that the mind had, once in a while, come to know about it. The words have always an actual meaning, which is bound by the instant in which it is presently circulated."

---

Wittgenstein, the pioneer theorist of the positivist school, who, in his early writings acknowledged the literal non-synonymity, but in his late age forsook his prior belief, and conversely turned to recognize the property of non-synonymity in the language as he viewed that the textual context is actually the main determinant of the meaning of words. In Wittgenstein's opinion, the word becomes no a longer logical symbol with one fixed and entrenched meaning that is not subject to change despite its different usages, but rather it is a dynamic entity, which derives its purport and significance from the field and general context in which it is mentioned. For this reason, the author advises one to ask oneself: How did I learn the meaning of this word? From which example did I take it? And in which context is it mentioned?

It is unequivocal from the preceding that the modernists' allegations about the fact that they are using the latest and most updated methodologies have been grossly discredited since the (Western) authors of these methodologies have themselves announced their divorce from it.

b. The repudiation of synonymity without the property of association is indeed an unfounded claim, and has no potent evidence since the recognition of association is, after all, a preliminary step to admitting synonymity. Now, let's assume that the following symbols [A – B – C – D – E] represent the domain of words, whereas the following numbers [1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5] stand for the underlying meanings. Every symbol is attached to one of the above five

The word “al-Nawā”, if regarded singularly, will be seen as an associate term, the fact that it indicates more than one meaning; but if considered with another term, for instance “al-Dār”, it will then appear as its synonym, for both indicate exactly the same meaning (the place, in which people live).

d. Some researchers opine that scholastic works and doctrinal fanaticism play a significant role as to whether one recognized or denied synonymity, in the fourth century (A.H.)\(^7\). The renowned Maghribī thinker, Aḥmad Abu Zayd ascertained this reality in his book: *al-‘Usul al-Fikriyyah li al-Balāghah wa ‘Tjāz al-Qur'ān* (*The Intellectual Foundations of Rethorics and Miracles of Qur'ān*), whereby he contended that most of the early partisans of synonymity belonged to the Muʿtazilah group, who draw the distinction between the name and the thing being named, and such a personalized perception has a direct bearing on the Muʿtazilah scholastic doctrine, particularly, in relation to their perception of the 99 attributes of Allah, for example, the occurrence of Allah’s speech. As for the advocates of non-synonymity, they all fall under the ‘Ashʿariyyah doctrine, which views the name and its underlying (the thing named) as one integrated thing; that’s why ‘Ashʿariyyah scholars believed in

---

\(^7\)Abū Zayd (1989), op. cit., p.43.
the pre-existence of Allah’s speech\textsuperscript{71}. In spite of the depth and logical coherence of the foregoing discussion, its premises, however, are refuted by the plain fact. Thus, for example, al-Suyūtī and his predecessors 'Ibn al-'A'rābī, 'Izz al-Dīn 'Ibn Jamā'ah\textsuperscript{72} all showed their agreement with synonymity though they were not members of the \textit{Mu'tazilah} denomination. Furthermore, the number of 'Ash'ariyyah scholars who did acknowledge the principle of synonymity by far outweighed the number of \textit{Mu'tazilah} scholars in this regard. Regardless of whether the synonymity doctrine is ascribed to the \textit{Mu'tazilah} or 'Ash'ariyyah group, the preceding assertion has shown anew the extent of Shuhrūr's methodological inconsistencies, and revealed another aspect of his intellectual confusion as he arbitrary viewed the approach of synonymity to be the natural outcome of intellectual and political tyranny, which had been politically founded by Banū 'Umayyah (Umayyad), linguistically and jurisprudentially outlined by al-Shāfi‘ī, theologically reviewed by al-Ghazālī, spiritually and behaviorally refined by 'Ibn Al-'A'rabī\textsuperscript{73}. In doing so, the author prejudicially associated the entire 'Ummah, from its early age, with shallowness, shortsighted thinking and autocracy. The author spared only 'Ibn Rushd, 'Ibn Sinā, and all who stick to their path from the followers of Greek philosophy\textsuperscript{74}. The author then attempted to provide factual evidence for his allegation so as to emphasize the role of tyranny in the prevalence of the synonymity school at the expense of the non-synonymity school. In this respect, he argued that due to the phenomenon of political tyranny, 'Ibn Khaldūn and Sibawaih were accredited an uncontestable fame

\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., p.46.
\textsuperscript{72} Al-Suyūtī, \textit{al-Muzhir}, \textit{op. cit.}, vol.1, 405.
\textsuperscript{73} Shuhrūr (1994), \textit{op. cit.}, pp.29, 34, 224 - 236.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., pp.227-230.
upon recognizing synonymity, and hence both were admitted as a more important references than Tha‘lab and ’Abū ‘Afī al-Fārisī who cherished the principle of non-synonymity. Now, if we postulate, for the sake of argument, that the advocacy of synonymity in our Muslim world is not more than a mere ruse, which was bred and brought up under the conditions of political tyranny, but what are we going to say about the dominance of synonymity in today’s Western world from which the author allegedly procures its latest methodologies; is that a product of autocracy, or rather the author’s fallacy and shortcomings? Commenting on the matter, the Syrian writer Māhir al-Munajjid says:

"the author, in relation to all previous topics and many other occasions, like the one who professes to have invented vapor (steam) in the twentieth century... Moreover, the author was even unable to keep pace with the (intellectual) themes and ideas that have been circulating for hundreds of years ... and in reality, the ideas proposed in the book reveal (the author’s) shortsighted thinking, and stark lack of the epistemic tools."

4.4. Historical Materialism

4.4.1. The importance of historical materialism:

Many modernists are disposed to conceive historical materialism as the sole methodology that is eligible to examine *Turāḥ* within its historical motion, apprehend its relative values, and determine the objective relation between people and the possible elements of progressivism and democracy founded in *Turāḥ*.

"The historical material methodology is the only one capable of unveiling such relations, examining *Turāḥ* in its historical motion, assimilating its relative values, and underlining what’s still preserved for the necessity of its existence and presence in our (modern) age, as a witness for the originality of the objective

ibid., p.30.

relation between the elements of progressivism and democracy from our cultural legacy and the elements of progressivism and democracy from our nationalist culture at present. It is even mandatory to apply such methodology on the Islamic Arabic *Turāth*, which is still, up to now, deprived of this factual approach. To the modernists, historical materialism is the perfect *Turāth*, which seeks to inquire into the material social activity of man in respect to both of his constituting sections, the direct and indirect material section, which are based upon the intellectual aspect in which *Turāth* appears as one of its lucid reflections. For them, it is regarded as the fundamental methodological standard through which they observe the general traits of *Turāth* with dialectic outlook that has two dimensions: the first dimension holds that our knowledge about *Turāth* comes as a product of the socialist ideology with both of its contemporary principles, dialectic materialism, and historical materialism. As for the second dimension, it is to the effect that *Turāth* is to be comprehended within its historical context, and according to the characteristics of the time and space based social structure, which had generated it (*Turāth*). The latter dimension is intended to fulfill two main purposes: the first is to conceive and contain *Turāth* in a new and modern style. As for the other purpose, it is to employ the modern conception of *Turāth* for the liberation of Arabian thought from the hegemony of fatalist metaphysical utopian ancestral thought. Moreover, some modernists went to the extent that they unequivocally dismissed the existence of a parallel theory to the one historical materialism, which is exclusively the only one capable of providing a

*ibid.*, vol. 1, pp.26-29.
magnificent objective interpretation of the present living situation and others alike⁸¹. As a result of their tenacious adherence to this theory, which is, to them, the sole scientific methodology, one of the modernist writers had, for instance, authored one book entitled: “Difa‘an ‘ani al-Māddiyah wa al-Tārikh” (Sticking up for Materialism and History) wherein its editor waxed lyrical about the merits of this method of research: “It is a truthful book (sticking up for materialism and history) which appears, therefore, in its very optimum time, as one of the beacons of guidance and obviousness in the age of intellectual disturbance and vicissitudes⁸²”.

Now, after we have become acquainted with the importance of the former methodology to the modernists, we now proceed to the next question: what is historical materialism all about?

4.2. The concept of historical materialism:

Historical materialism is a philosophical theory that inquires into the general laws of the historical upshot. It is essentially based on the core interrelations among social phenomena in every social edifice through its stages of evolution, and that in order to comprehend the general laws and driving forces for the historical development. To that effect, Al-Jābīrī states: “the historical outlook is the one that comes on the heels of the outcome of an event, and strives to link the fact with that particular event so as to explore the effective and directing factors thereof⁸³. Ḥusayn Marwah defines historical materialism as a methodology for the interpretation of the materialistic human activity. To him, it takes many forms following the historical stage it came rough, besides the social system and epistemic ceiling that accompanies every

---


⁸²‘-Azm, Ṣādiq Jalāl (1990), Difa‘an ‘ani al-Maddiyah wa al-Tārikh, 1st ed. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr al-Id, p.11. The editor, Muḥammad Darkūb is an Arab Communist whose name is mentioned in the face of the book.

historical stage. Nevertheless, all these forms come to terms with the fact that they
look at the living world as a material, objective and eternal entity whose existence is
independent of any exogenous forces, and that it has the precedence over (human)
hought and awareness. In this respect, H. Marwah distinguishes four forms, which
are as follows;

1. Unsophisticated materialism: It is the earliest form of materialism experienced
by history. It perceived the life’s phenomena with a spontaneous dialectic outlook.
It was, by then, mingled with the rest of science. This type of materialism used to
mirror the ideology of the progressivist forces in the ancient slavery society.

2. Metaphysical materialism: It was widely used by European thinkers in the
seventeenth, eighteenth and at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Such a
trend reflected a static stand that looked at the world with the preview of the
overriding fact of the prevalence of natural and mechanic science at that time.
This form of materialism represented the nacent bourgeois ideology and other
progressivist forces.

3. Democratic revolutionalist materialism: this form of materialism came to
appear in the nineteenth century in some European countries. It essentially relied
on the dialectic approach in its underlying conception of nature. Overall, it
symbolized the ideology of the agricultural revolutionary forces.

4. Dialectical Materialism: It is the last form of historical materialism, which is
conventionally known today as Marxist materialism. The latter carries the
ideology of a particular social class, which is disposed to undertake the task of
revolutionary change of the world84. Dialectic Materialism is conceived as the

---

ideological platform for the Marxist-Leninist current, for which The famous
Russian figure, Stalin asserts:

"Dialectical materialism is the world outlook of the Marxist-Leninist Party. It is called dialectical materialism because its
approach to the phenomena of nature, its method of studying and
apprehending them, is *dialectical*, while its interpretation of the
phenomena of nature, its conception of these phenomena, its theory,
is *materialistic*. Historical materialism is the extension of the
principles of dialectic materialism to the study of social life, an
application of the principles of dialectical materialism to the
phenomena of the life of society, to the study of society and of its
history."\(^{85}\)

4.3. The elements of historical materialism:

Stalin's definition set forth above reveals that this methodology is broken into three
elements: Materialism, historicity and dialectics. Therefore, what are the underlying
significances and purports of these elements? And how do the modernists manage to
transfer such concepts to the Islamic Arabic field, and then adapt them as
methodological tools for the comprehension of the holy *Qur'ān*?

1. Materialism is a term indicating a particular intellectual doctrine, which
believes in the materialistic nature and objective reality of the world that stands
autonomous and independent from our personal conception and intellect, in that it
is the cause of itself, and that the material substance is the ultimate reality and the
prime cause of universal phenomena. Thus, everything that fails to submit to the
materialistic laws or that does not fall under a specific time – space context and
tangible experience will be a mere delusion\(^{86}\). That's why some modernists, lest
they infringe the principles of materialism, attempt to approach all the verses that

---

James Thrower (1983). *Marxist-Leninist 'Scientific Atheism' and the study of religion and Atheism in

are related to the unseen world by applying a purely materialistic interpretation. For instance, the following Qur'anic verse:

"Who believe in the Unseen"

Sūrah al-Baqarah: 3

is perceived by modernists with a totally materialistic interpretation: "the concept of the unseen (world) and testimony that are mentioned in the holy book is a squarely materialistic concept". As such, paradise, hell-fire, angels, and doomsday are all subject to tangible perception and materialistic experimental sense, if not today it will be then in the subsequent days due to the tremendous scientific discoveries. Thereby, it is rather a relative unseen (world) that is drawn to a progressive contraction. Following this analogy, the Lord (Allah) and His words, which are the essence of all beings, are regarded as real materialistic elements that fall beyond the human consciousness. However, the difference between the existence of the Lord and the existence of His words lies in the fact that Allah's existence is singular, and thus it is not compatible with the law of dialectics, and not prone to corruption, destruction and evolution like the material objects. Hence, should we stick to the end of the author's methodological line, we will ultimately find ourselves saying that humanity should wait for the day when (the almighty) Allah, angels, jinn and all the rest of the unseen world will be susceptible to experiment and sensory perception, and thereupon, the whole world will be rendered communist, since there will be no demarcations or watersheds between the unseen and the pre-testimony of believers as everything will be subject to perceptible conception and scientific experiment. There are, however, the opponents of materialism, who contend that the belief in the relative unseen

---

shuhur (1990), op. cit., p.266.

ibid., pp.267-268.

ibid. PP: 263-265.
will lead us to compound ignorance: "If there were some nook or cranny of the world which human beings could not know about, then we could not know that we could not know. Otherwise we would know something about it, contrary to hypothesis".  

2. Historicity, it is to look at history as a field of human conflict and interaction with the world of existence. The historical outlook is emphasized by al-Jābīrī: "the historical outlook is the one that comes on the heels of the outcome of an event, and strives to link the fact with that particular event so as to explore the effective and directing factors thereof". Historicity, especially, in its materialistic form looks at the human being as a center of action in the course of historical development through social (classes) conflict. There is a mutual relation of influence between the social existence and social consciousness among individuals. In other words, the social existence and its type will determine the level of consciousness among individuals. Similarly, such consciousness will, in turn, contribute to the change of social existence. By corollary, according to the advocates of this methodology, everything is a product of fact from which is originated, and to which is, accordingly ascribed, including heavenly religious: "no matter how significant the validity and legitimacy of this religious reality is, or how great and expensive its sphere of circulation is, it is still, however, susceptible to the impact of historicity". As a result, the scriptural (legal) text is to be linked with its respective historical setting including its cultural, political and social dimensions in order to thoroughly understand its historical whereabouts, and then identify what it (text) has possibly stated, or what it could not draw.

Al-Jābīrī (1991), op. cit., p.43.
bid., p.108.
about, or what it could have mentioned, but kept silent about\textsuperscript{94}. Hanging on this methodology, the modernists thought they could liberate themselves from the ancestral query about \textit{Turāth} as the latter is, in reality, a non-historical approach that admits non-scientific tools in the critical examination of the legal text, like the tool of \textit{Qiyās} (Analogy), apart from the fact that it conceives religion as the sole prime mover of history while disregarding the rest of the factors\textsuperscript{95}. Al-Jābīrī distinguishes between the general and specific types of historical methodology. The former looks at the evolution movement of history as a product of class struggle, whereas the latter makes up the post-analysis conclusions and findings, which vary according to the type of \textit{Turāth} under study. Therefore, in view of this methodology, Al-Jābīrī views the whole \textit{Turāth} and Islamic history as a product of class struggle. For instance, apostasy wars are, in essence, a class struggle, and also \textit{Zakāt} appears like economic input (tax). In recapitulation, the author ascertains that theories of historical materialism are scientific methodological tools and a framework that can be adequately applied to the Islamic \textit{Turāth} while observing its realistic and historical peculiarity\textsuperscript{96}. Al-Jābīrī astutely attempts to coax the reader around to his view by justifying the use of this methodology over the Islamic epistemic field, and softening the intellectual sensitivity towards it by drawing a distinction between the scientific and philosophical aspect of the historical materialism. The latter aspect is viewed by the author as an atheistical approach, which is based on its purely materialistic outlook towards the universe.

\textsuperscript{94} Al-Jābīrī (1991), \textit{op. cit.}, p.32.
\textsuperscript{96} Al-Jābīrī (1991), \textit{op. cit.}, pp.108,114.
Surely, this outlook comes in a conspicuous clash with the Islamic theology that is based on the belief of the existence of Allah\(^97\).

Nevertheless, the modernist author was eventually entrapped in what Stalin has termed intellectual dogmatism: "If a Marxist political party does not base its analysis on dialectics and materialism, the inevitable result will be the rise of one-sidedness and subjectivism and the ossification of all thought"\(^98\). In reality, Al-Jābirī does not make any breakthrough or produce any new findings, but instead reiterates what Marxist revisionists have already featured in their intellectual showcase, the fact that they do distinguish between historical materialism and materialistic philosophy. That is to say they have to admit the possibility of implementing the methodology of historical materialism in the study of human societies without resorting to any philosophical materialistic basis. The conservative Marxists hold that those Revisionists are, indeed, opportunists and pro-Bourgeoisie, and they are even contradicting the simplest maxims of historical materialism\(^99\). What Al-Jābirī had alleged that there is a possibility to divest historical materialism of those theories that impair the Islamic core principles, Ḥāj Ḥamad went further by attempting to Islamically systematize and theorize for a better understanding of history through the study of the unseen-fact relation. That is, the unseen phenomena, which are reflected by the human fact through the laws of mutual interattraction and life cycles from the very early time of the prophet Adam (peace be upon him) up to our present time. The latter methodology tends not to rule out other parallel methodologies that deal with the interpretation of history, but rather it is more disposed to contain these methodologies by

\(^{97}\)bid., pp.111-112.

\(^{98}\)Ismes (1983), op. cit., p.124.

incorporating a new dimension, namely the conventional-religious mutual interattraction. In an attempt to highlight the difference between his own methodology and Marxist methodology, the author had this to say:

“In plain language, we say that the Qur’anic methodology admits (the principle of) teleology, but unlike teleologist philosophers, we do not acknowledge (the idea of) pre-planning (or pre-designation) of natural events as a crucial tool to monitor the course of the general motion to which it is deterministically bound.”

To further clarify the matter, the author states:

“The dialectical materialism’s estimations were adequately reasonable at their prime time; they appeared as a sort of visualizing of the future with the present’s considerations, and within a progressive methodology for the science of causation. However, what dialectical materialism had failed to comprehend is that every (natural) phenomenon has a universal root and extended limit to the unseen world, which shapes out the final outcomes. It is not because of its liaison with the dialectical premises, but rather it is estimated with wisdom as to what the final outcomes must be. Often, these outcomes are designated to point out the pre-designated objective that stands behind both the serviceability - Taskhir- (of things and resources) which ‘Allāh wants to happen, and anti-serviceability of things that ‘Allāh does not want to happen.’

“But the Unbelievers, their deeds are like a mirage in sandy deserts, which the man parched with thirst mistakes for water; until when he comes up to it, he finds it to be nothing: but he finds Allah (ever) with him, and Allah will pay him his account: and Allah is swift in taking account”.


The author argues that the concept of motion in human history, through the lens of al-Qur’ān, is not based on the class struggle as enshrined in the materialist outlook, but instead it is founded upon several circular forms starting from the individual form, then the domestic form, and ending with the universal form. That is to say, there is a dialectics between man and the universe, whereby it is

reflected through three distinct historical phases: "a mixed ingredients from the universal tissue turn into an organic being, and then to a human being", the material secession of man from the universe corresponds to a conscious integration of man in the sphere of the universe through the: "household phase, domestic phase and universal phase", and this "resembles the creation triplicity of man in the womb". Regardless of whether we admit that the historical evolution was carried out over a circular form or a class struggle as cherished by several thinkers other than Ḥāj Ḥamad, the ultimate outcome sought after by all modernists appears to be the same as they apply this evolution to every aspect including the legislative and mental aspect following the development of the tools of production. By corollary, they opine that our mentality in the twentieth century is quite dissimilar to the past mentality of the pastoral society in which the Prophet's companions and their successors used to live. Thus, they deduce that legislative laws must be altered and reviewed so as to keep pace with the current development of human mentality and the tools of production "therefore, legislation, despite its diversity, is only relative, as it depends merely on the peculiarity of the historical fact".

Some modernists attempt to solve this dilemma by asserting: "what is acknowledged in the (Islamic) legislation is the principle of punishment (or penalty); however the practical forms of this principle are at one's own discretion, and that's according to one's specific surrounding conditions, customs and (social) values".

It is unequivocal from the foregoing that there seems to be no difference between the conventional and Islamic laws, as the former also recognize the principle of punishment. Some modernists had even boasted that conventional laws are, after all, legal (Islamic) laws, though this fact is not realized by its own users. According to the historical analysis perspective: "Atheism is the original meaning of faith...and secularism is, therefore, the core of revelation, in that, revelation is secularist in its essence, and the features of theocracy associated with it (revelation) are only casual and a product of history".

3- Dialectics: It is a perpetual ongoing motion that disposes the interrelations of things and events. It is based on antithesis and contrast. Throughout its evolution, this motion is being directed from the bottom to the top, and from the plain (unsophisticated) to the intricate in a spiral form whereby novelty prevails over ancienliness. According to Shuhūrūr, dialectics comes in different types.

a. Internal Dialectical Motion: It is a dialectics that leads to the ultimate ruin of the thing subject to two conflicting elements, which eventually bring this thing to perish and constantly change its form. It is, also, called "Negotiation, and negating the negation". This type of dialectics is deemed as the prime secret of the constant evolution and change of the universe. This process of change is to be carried on until the demise of this material world (universe) with the advent of doomsday. Thereafter, there will be another succeeding world, which is to be heralded by the Day of Resurrection. The holy Qur'ān has perfectly elucidated this law:

Ibid., pp.291-294.
And call not, besides Allah, on another god. There is no god but He. Everything (that exists) will perish except His own Face. To Him belongs the Command, and to Him will ye (all) be brought back.


This verse signifies that all material objects, with no exception, will ultimately come to ruin through the continuous contrast process, which causes the demise of their early forms, and alternatively gives way to another form, and so forth.

The holy Qur'ān terms this type of dialectics as “Tasbīḥ” (glorification of Allah):

“There is not a thing but celebrates His praise (Tasbīḥ); and yet ye understand not how they declare His glory (Tasbīḥ)”

Sūrah al-'Isrā': 44.

“Whatever is in the heavens and on earth, doth declare the praises and glory of Allah”.


The author believes that the act of “Tasbīḥ” is derived from the Arabic word “Sabāḥa”, which means the incessant movement like floating in water:

“Each one in an orb floating”.

Sūrah al-'Anbiyā': 33.

There are two types of Tasbīḥ, Tasbīḥ of all creatures of the universe as a whole, and Tasbīḥ of the same person, who declares his recognition of the law of evolution. Both types of Tasbīḥ are mentioned in the following verses:

“So also was Jonah among those sent (by us). When he ran away (like a slave from captivity) to the ship (fully laden, He (agreed to) cast lots, and he was of the rebutted: Then the big fish did swallow him, and he had done acts worthy of blame. Had it not been that he (repented and) glorified Allah, he would certainly have remained inside the fish till the day of resurrection”.

Sūrah al-Saffāt: 139-144.

According to the author, it is clear that the law of “negation and negating the negation” applies to the situation of the Prophet “Jonah”, the fish and everything in the world of existence. Thus, had this law not been in existence,
there would certainly be no death, and hence the prophet "Jonah" would have stay enclosed inside the fish till the day of resurrection. The second type of Tasbih, namely, Tasbih of the sane person, is manifested by what Jonah said (praise) in the following verse:

“And remember Dhū al-nūn, when he departed in wrath: he imagined that We had no power over him! But he cried through the depths of darkness. “There is no god but Thou: glory to Thee: I was indeed wrong!””

Sūrah al-'Anbiyā‘: 87.

The word of glory (Subhānak), here, is a bare declaration from the sane person to acknowledge this law, unlike what is widely accepted that Allah is too exalted to be marred by any sort of inadequacy or weakness; this is because such concepts are relative and subject to change following vicissitudes of space and time. Thereby, the praises and glorification of Allah by all beings is essentially refer to the fact that almighty Allah is the source of this internal dialectical motion existing therein, and which lead to its ruin (and demise)\textsuperscript{110}.

b. External dialectical motion: In the author’s opinion, this is the type of dialectics associated with dual harmony and agreeableness in a pair of things. It is a general law that embraces the entire material existence as indicated by Allah’s saying:

“And of every thing, We have created pairs: that ye may reflect”

Sūrah al-Dhāriāt: 49

External dialectics is the second major law to which all things of the material universe adhere in the form of a binary mapping (opposite) external relation between two or more things. That is to say, it is not unlikely for a single thing to have an opposite dialectical relation with another thing at a given level, and

\textsuperscript{110} Shahrūr (1990), \textit{op. cit.}, pp.223-230
also to have another opposite dialectical relation with a third thing at a different level, and such is the case with other relations. Such a relationship, which characterizes the law of external dialectics, is defined as a binary oppositeness based relation, which is based on a mutual effect interrelation between two things, and it is by no means based on a contrast relation, admitting to the fact that two contrasting things never come to terms with each other; but instead they come in succession, and yet this does not happen in the very material things, in that it is associated only with phenomena.  

Both the internal and external laws of dialectics are also present in social life and history, whereby external dialectics was predominant until the advent of Islam that stood in favor of internal dialectics. This reality, according to this modernist elite, was adequately emphasized by the holy Qur’ān starting with the story of the Prophet Nūḥ (peace be upon him), which reveals internal dialectical conflicts between Nūḥ and his people.

“They said: O Noah! Thou hast disputed with us, and (much) hast thou prolonged the dispute with us: now bring upon us what thou threatenest us with, if thou speak the truth!?".

Sūrah Hūd: 32.

However, these internal conflicts ended in an external dialectics, which was founded upon the natural disaster of the biggest ever flood (Tūfān). Next came the story of the prophet Hūd, (peace be upon him) which in turn begins with internal dialectics between Hūd and his folk:

“Dispute ye with me over names which ye have devised – ye and your fathers, - without authority from God?”

Sūrah al-‘A’rāf: 71.

Soon, the internal conflict turned into external dialectics, which happened due to another natural disaster, namely, a very wild windstorm. Likewise, the story of the prophet Šāliḥ emerged as an internal dispute with his own people about monotheism (*Tawḥīd*) and injustice; besides, the people of the Prophet Shuʿayb had to spark off an internal argument when enjoined to honestly measure and evaluate the goods sold. In addition, the Haughty Pharaoh and his relentless confrontation with the Prophet Moses and his assistant Hārūn; all that was based on internal conflict (dialectics), which later became external dialectics upon the drowning of the Pharaoh and his companions. As such, human history from the distant past used to follow this order of dialectical trend. In other words, there was no regime that reached its demise because of internal dialectics (internal revolutions), but instead they were to perish and vanish in the wake of external dialectics (foreign incursion) as experienced, for instance, by Kanʿān, and the Greek and Roman states. With the appearance of Islam, the general traits of the Arab society had been changed by means of an internal revolution and not by a natural disaster or foreign incursion. That is to say that the internal dialectics was more dominant compared to the external dialectics. Thereby, the law of internal antitheses served as a natural catalyst for the outbreak of apostasy wars, the battle of *al-Jamal* and battle of *Siffin*.

4.4.4. Assessment:

In reality, all these lengthy assertions made by the author seem to be not more than ideological inferences, which carry the elements of self-contradiction and abolition, mainly, from the following perspectives:

---

1. The author alleges that *Tasbiḥ* is the *Qurʾānic* expression that describes the law of “negation and negating the negation”. He justifies his argument on the grounds that *Tasbiḥ*, in Arabic, means movement and the act of swimming. He derives such a definition from the linguistic Dictionary of 'Ibn Fāris. However, if we were to concede that 'Ibn Fāris had adduced such a meaning, we are however reserved about how the author winds up with such very particular purport of internal antithesis, internal dialectics movement or negation and negating the negation through the act of swimming. In fact, 'Ibn Fāris while pronouncing on the concept of *Tasbiḥ* states: “the other root (of *Sabīha*) is *al-Sabhu wa al-Sibāḥah*: to bathe in water. It is said that (*al-Sābiḥ mina al-Khayli*) the faster horse is the best stretching its feet when galloping”\(^{113}\). By following the author’s analogy, we will eventually conceive that the swimmer is internally self-contradicted, and thus his movements in the water negate each other; with that logic we will inevitably anticipate that the swimmer’s movements, in their progression, may turn into a funny dance. We may even anticipate that the swimmer will perish, since the law of dialectics is to the effect that after internal conflict, the thing will be ruined. Adhering to the author’s reasoning, we will also understand Allah’s saying:

“There is not a thing but celebrates His praise; and yet ye understand not how they declare His glory”

*Sūrah al-'Isrā‘*: 44

As there is nothing to be internally contradictory and conflicting in order to praise the Lord; but you don’t understand their contradiction. Similarly, the following verse:

“Whatever is in the heavens and on earth, doth declare the Praises and Glory of Allah”


Will be accordingly interpreted as every thing in the heavens and in the earth is in internal conflict and contradicts each other just to praise Allah! In spite of the arbitrary interpretation of the holy verses, to which the author ascribes distorted meanings in an attempt to demonstrate his Marxist ideology while using a religious pretext to justify what eventually obliterates religion\(^{114}\), he is yet to come up with a totally different concept that eventually undermines his early assertion. Thus, after viewing \textit{Tasbīḥ} as the essence of dialectical law, the author, in no time, interprets \textit{Tasbīḥ} as the rational man’s recognition of this law; and of course there is a blatant distinction between the implications of recognition and contradiction. In the light of the author’s new contradictory statement, the concept of \textit{Tasbīḥ} in the two former verses will be then understood as being that every substance acknowledges the internal antithesis for the sake of Allah, but you don’t virtually understand their acknowledgement. In addition, all that is in the heavens, and all that is in the earth acknowledges this antithesis for the sake of almighty Allah, Glory to God! He is absolutely free from the very fallacious meanings, which the author ascribed to Him! Apart from this intellectual muddling and ideological bigotry, and away from the sense of scientific accountability, the author has the nerve to say:

“As for the saying that ‘\textit{Subhānallāh}’ means to free God from all inadequacies and flaws is actually a time-worn saying. To his knowledge, the underlying secret behind his denial is that the flaws and inadequacies imply an epistemic, social and human meaning, which therefore implies a sort of relativity that causes these meanings to change from one time to another, and from one place to another. Thereby, the real \textit{Tasbīḥ} for all existent beings to God basically referred to the fact that Allah is the source of the dialectics

\(^{114}\text{Lenin says: “Religion is opium for the people”. James (1983), \textit{op. cit.}, p.114.}\)
movement in all the things, ever since Allah created this material world.\textsuperscript{115}

Glory to God! He is too exalted to be marred with these spurious allegations!

Eventually, the author comes to a stage where he discredits his own theory; the issue, which we shall clarify in the following discussion.

2. The author’s denial of the conventional meaning of \textit{Tasbih}, namely, disassociating almighty Allah from all that is blasphemous, is in reality a palpable rejection of what is certainly stated in the linguistics dictionary of 'Ibn Fāris, upon whom the author allegedly builds his methodology. By corollary, the author unwittingly questions the plausibility of his early analysis. In plain language 'Ibn Fāris defines \textit{Tasbih} as:

\begin{quote}
\textquote{\textit{Tasbih} is to free (\textit{Tanzih}) almighty Allah from all ill-attributes. (Literally) \textit{Tanzih} means taking away and isolation (Tab‘id). Arabs used to invoke the term \textquote{\textit{Subḥāna...}} for a particular things to show how far and how alienated it is. Of Allah’s many attributes, we find \textit{subbūh}, which is derived from the term \textit{Tasbih}; that is, as just mentioned, to free almighty Allah from all irreverent attributes.} \textsuperscript{116}
\end{quote}

What all the preceding amounts to is that the author shows a flagrant subjectivity, indiscriminate selectivity and vitiated scientific trustworthiness, in that without any scientific warranty, he selects only certain meanings, and overlooks the rest of the meanings, though the latter are more authentic and relevant to the genuine interpretation of the aforementioned verses. Even if we were to compare between the amount and order of phrases that carry the meaning enshrined by the author, and those which have been left out and considered as intellectual trash, we will ultimately find that the latter, by far, exceed the former in terms of the number of lines (ten to four lines); besides it was the first to be mentioned right from the very

\textsuperscript{115} Shuhrūr (1990), \textit{op. cit.}, p.224.

onset of this discussion. What’s more astonishing is that after all this vociferousness and intellectual bristling, the author paradoxically, and only a few lines down from his first statement, views that *Tasbīḥ* implies the meaning of *Tanzīḥ*, whereby he interprets Allah’s saying:

"Glory to Allah, who created in pairs all things that the earth produces, as well as their own (human) kind and (other) things of which they have no knowledge"

Sūrah Yāsīn : 36.

By making the following comment: “here, the term ‘Subḥāna’ (ie, more or less, glory in English) is used to signify *tanzīḥ*. That is almighty Allah is too exalted to be subject to the law of generic coupling”\(^{117}\). The author’s methodological inconsistency is best described as a logical product of his satanic mind for he himself states that illusion and superstition are a product of the satanic mind\(^{118}\).

Having surveyed this brief account of the contents of historical materialism, we come to conclude that the latter is no more than a mere ideology or doctrine that has its own peculiar conception about the universe and history. Moreover, it is desperate for the fact, rather than the fact being desperate for it (materialism). In reality, historical materialism is a doctrinal edifice founded on some presumed axioms, whereby if one of these axioms is missed out, the whole edifice will be ruined. As such, the statement that admits the possibility of applying historical materialism to the process of understanding *Qurʾān* and Islamic *Turāḥ* is proven paradoxical. For instance, Al-Jābirī starts out by viewing historical materialism as: “a vacant framework that can be filled with the things we want”\(^{119}\). Nevertheless, before long, Al-Jābirī totally contradicts himself while discussing the future of

\(^{117}\)Shuhrūr (1990), *op. cit.*, p.233.

\(^{118}\)Ibid., pp.337-355.

Marxism in the Arab world, whereby he considers historical materialism as the only doctrine eligible to change the Arab’s current conditions to a better position:

“Therefore, the doctrine that is apt to activate the classes’ inertia in this society more than any other ideology: the doctrine that is able to turn into historical act through society is unequivocally the one, which gives to a particular situation a loaded concrete interpretation. As I mentioned earlier, there is no room for other doctrines to compete with Marxism in this regard”¹²⁰.

As such, the author comes to revoke his earlier allegation, which stated that Marxist methodologies are just empty intellectual frameworks, and thereby can be employed in our Islamic field. In addition, claiming that historical materialism comes in compliance with the Qur’anic texts is certainly a void allegation, as if one were to combine atheism and belief in Allah; besides it is just muddling along, which is only justified by the analogy of political and intellectual maneuvers stimulated by Lenin in his merciless war against religions, particularly, Islam. In hindsight, Lenin realizes that the direct assault on Islam is not worthwhile, given the fact that religion is tenaciously embedded in the masses’ sentiments, and thereupon he was convinced to look into the epistemic sources of religion, and then reinterpret it according to the materialist ideology in a way that serves the doctrinal objectives of Marxism¹²¹. Arab modernists take their cue from Marxist ideology as they are looking forward to the prospective domination of the methodology of historical materialism over the Arab world as foreseen by the loyal Arab Marxist, Al-Jābīrī “we are discussing, here, Marxism as an ideology, and we are discussing its future in the Arab world through a discourse of the (all) possible and not through a discourse of the necessary. As such, we claim that Marxism will prevail over the intellectual arena, and it will be the prime mover of

Al-Jābīrī (1992), Wijhat Nazar, op. cit., p.159.
the social conflict in the Arab world in the future; thus... and thus... and thus, its future, being now discussed, is a contingent future”\textsuperscript{122}.

4.5. MYTHICAL METHODOLOGY (\textit{AL-MANHAJ AL'USTURI})

4.5.1. Importance of the mythical methodology:

For the modernists, Mythical methodology is no less important than the two former methodologies. In their opinion, this methodology allows for more flexibility and freedom in dealing with \textit{al-Qur'ān} through a modernist perspective, which is completely incongruous with classical interpretations. “I had already clarified how the modernist study (or modernist treatment) of metaphor, allegory and myth allows for other interpretations of \textit{al-Qur'ān} that are quite different from the left-over classical neureumentical \textit{Turāth}”\textsuperscript{123}. According to 'Arkūn, it is unequivocal from the preceding that there is a wide gulf between mythical (modernist) and classical (orthodox) methodology to the extent that one can readily distinguish a fundamental rupture that initially foils any attempt at dialogue between the exponents of these two methodologies\textsuperscript{124}. The main culprit behind such discord lies in the fact that Muslim activists still view \textit{Turāth} with a compound outlook wherein the genuine stories are muddled up with fake narrations, and the factual historical events with fanciful and mythical conceptions\textsuperscript{125}. These people are closed-minded as they treat history with a philistine and static approach, stimulated by the alleged hereafter time. Moreover, they insist on not recognizing the mind’s relativity or relativity of the idealistic \textit{Turāth}, particularly the words of Allah. By contrast, and without having the least convenience, they jump over the fact and mix up different periods of time, as for

\textsuperscript{1}Al-Jābirī (1992), \textit{Wijhat Nazar}, op. cit., p.156.
\textsuperscript{2} 'Arkūn (1996), \textit{al-Fikr}, op. cit., p.35.
instance, they refer to Sūrah “Tawbah” to enjoin the obligation of Jihād in order to establish an Islamic regime in exactly the same way as early pristine Islam. Thereby, they don’t admit the historicity of the Qur’ānic text nor do they consider the historicity of the contemporary age. Such Muslim activists, for instance the Muslim Brothers’ movement and the rulers in the Islamic Republic of Iran; are indubitable evidence for the continuity of the emotions-mobilizer Qur’ānic model. However, such a vociferous trend is, in fact, an illusionary approach that contravenes the simplest conditions of historical output. Therefore, the application of the Mythical methodology will, inevitably, help us to understand the true functioning of this Turāth-based thinking without bringing ourselves to clash with it. This methodology appears as one of the most drastic weapons that ought to be a very reliable tool in the present intellectual conflict with the religious current as it will cripple the viability of its traditional arguments, as well as laying bare its futile ideas and showing its inconsistency and abnormality.

4.5.2. The nature of mythical methodology:

According to modern thought, the word “‘Uṣṭūrah” (i.e. Myth) is an elastic word in that it carries more than a single meaning, and occupies a number of interconnective functions to the extent of causing discrepancy and divergence. ‘Uṣṭūrah is sometimes used to signify the stories of the very ancient inhabitants. It also means the different forms of faith, and so many other things to mention in this respect. Thus, the optimum method to discover the nature of this methodology is to lay out all the

126 Ibid., p.93.
127 Ibid., p.106.
128 Ibid., p.126.
historical stages of “ʻUṣūrah along with its general features and its impact on the development of human thought. According to the modernist conception, the myth first appeared in a form of initial and primary bound between Materialism and Idealism within a socially primitive environment, wherein the socio-economic values like exchange, supply and demand were unheard of. Thereby, utility and consumption values were conceived as the bottom line for the preservation of one’s self-existence. At this juncture, man was not yet able to apprehend the entirety (whole) and the subset in one integrated entity; but instead he sought, to some extent, to distinguish between them in view of his confined necessary existence, and within his embryonic mental reflection at the level of theorization. Ever since, the general traits of factual Materialism and non-factual Idealism (metaphysical) began to be effectuated, though this was not, under the primitive environmental awareness, to attain the extent of blatant discrepancy. Through such a dialectical approach (Materialism vs. Idealism) and in view of the law of progressive change and growing, besides the increase in man’s ability to monitor his peculiar environment as he tactfully developed more sophisticated material and intellectual tools, the factual Materialism factor started to prevail while the non-factual Idealism factor was reduced to contraction and diminution. Thus, in a such a context of man’s dynamic efficacy, the primitive theoretical thought, which lies in the “Myth”, was able to accentuate its overriding reality, develop its functions, and direct man towards a purposeful interaction with his environment and its objective (factual) hallmarks.

With the succession of time, the human’s social and economic life ended in a state of amazing intricacy and sophistication, the fact that rendered man often impotent both personally and objectively in getting control over his concrete challenging environment. By corollary, the religious phenomenon had to sprout up out of the guts
of non-factual Idealism. The nascent phenomenon appeared as an instant theoretical interpretation that initially subjected all the fates and control of nature to illusionary supernatural forces whose impact is still prevailing among the masses up to our present era. In short, the modernist elite perceives religion, more or less, as a fictional surrogate and even the antithesis to science; to them, it is far more inclusive than the concept of 'myth' ('Uṣūrah), in that religion is deemed as a class-oppression tool designed to stress the aspect of individuality through the dual-concept of faith (ʿImān) and infidelity (Kufr) along with their confined implications of either benefit (ʿInʿām) or deprivation (Ḥirmān).131

However, what we may deduce from the history of the myth, under the modernists' lens, is that the myth represents the ancestors' feeling, sentiments, conceptions, and their intellectual endeavors to understand the reality of the universe; it also stands for the gist of their peculiar experiences and reasoning in dealing with surrounding events.

Although the term myth invokes mere imagination, mythical speculations and shimeras, it is however a torrential source that acquaints us – if geared with an appropriate interpretative methodology – with the primitive thinking styles, impressions of the social spirit and its potential to outlive the limits of space and time.132 In addition, the history of myth appears to be potent evidence for the origination of the factual Materialism thought as it has the historical precedence over the non-factual idealistic religious thought.133

When discussing the holy book of Allah, modernists argue that although the Glorious Qurʾān and its staunch followers show their vehement disapproval to the concept of

myth for it is well perceived as the predecessors’ falsehoods and superstitions, apart from the fact that *al-Qur'ān* is being taught as the watershed between what is ‘rational’ and ‘irrational’, ‘Truth’ and ‘falsehood’; it is, nevertheless, crystal clear that *al-Qur'ān*, itself, has a mythical composition whereby fringe historical incidents are mingled with very popular Arabic tales and old Myths alongside some narrative references set forth in the Old (Torah) and New Testaments:

"The Myths of Ghalghamish, the Grand Iskandar, and the seven (people) who went in a (long unbreakable) sleep in the cave, all of which have reverberating echoes in the Qur'ān. We may add to this record, of course, some narrative effects originated from the Old and New Testaments, (stories of) disbelievers, and old Arabic tales."

According to certain modernists, one of the old Mythical examples that has been reiterated by *al-Qur'ān* is ‘water’, which was perceived by the distant past civilizations and the Torah as a symbol of the first creation: “in the Genesis of the Old Testament, the earth was ruined and deserted, and the Lord’s Spirit was fluttering over the (Waters) surface of the flood. Such a meaning is, unequivocally, equivalent to the Qur'ānic verse:

“And His Throne was over the Waters”.

Sūrah Hūd: 7.

Likewise, the Qur'ānic Stories like the creation of the Prophet Adam and the Angels’ prostration (*sujūd*) to praise him, *Ya'jūj* and *Ma'jūj* People, *Hārūt* and *Mārūt*, Jinn and Satan are nothing but just old myths and fabulous stories similar to Greek deities, butterfly fish, Ogres, the Phoenix, etc. The Modernists view that *al-Qur'ān* comprises and masterfully uses all the mythical and ideological functions: “On

---

34 Al-Qimni (1993), *op. cit.*, pp.20, 22.
occasions, they (these functions) are being used in a superb and uncontestable way, and on other occasions with redundant repetitions or simplifications and rigid constrictions required by the nature of the historical context as in the case of the foregoing *Sūrah*<sup>138</sup>. As such, the modernists affirm that *al-Qur‘ān* was able to symbolize and then model the recurrent historical incidents following: "the complex actor whom we mentioned earlier as the hero of change (i.e. Allah in the eyes of believers and Mūhāmmad in the eyes of the critical (analyst) historian)<sup>139</sup>. All the preceding gave rise to the concept of ‘Monotheism’ (*Tawhīd*) that recognizes only one God and one religion, which was firmly rooted due to the daily strife of the early small Muslim community. The survival of this minority was highly threatened by demise and extinction; but due to the holy book of *al-Qur‘ān*, such a minority contrived to turn their incessant struggles into an epic journey filled with sanctity, supernatural happenings and historical excellence; the impulse that made them a marvelous potential to agitate people’s feeling, stimulate their emotions, and mobilize their efforts even up to nowadays<sup>140</sup>. Consequently, an ancestral-bound (Orthodox) thought came into vogue, which was shielded by a set of resolute mythical assumptions:

1. Mankind’s differences are an inevitable fact, and that the only saved (thriving) ones are those who are capable of comprehending the message (of *al-Qur‘ān*) and sincerely adhering to it.

2. There is only one absolute *Turāth*, one divine message, and one genuine religion.

<sup>138</sup> Arkūn (1996), *Al-Fikr, op. cit.*, p.103. The Sūrah intended by the author is *al-Tawbah*”
<sup>139</sup> ibid., 105.
<sup>140</sup> Ibid.
3. The Prophet’s Companions are human like us. They represent an exemplary heresy-free model for the subsequent generations, who have a unanimous consent to seeking salvation in the Hereafter.

4. Such a type of mythical thinking believes solely in the validity of the scriptural (revealed) texts, whereby every text has a singular distinct meaning, and every textual unity (legal expression) is manifested by a practical conduct performed by the Prophet during his life. These textual unities are entrenched within a symmetric coherent semantic field; they are invariable and suit any generation, and any space or time, yet they don’t anticipate any sort of discord following the change in the objective and historical factors.\(^{141}\)

Thus, everyone is bound by the following treaty: Obedience to Allah in return for eternal salvation in the Hereafter in the unprecedented, beautiful gardens along with rivers and fancy houses of Paradise. Such Qur’ānic conceptions, which form one’s universal imagination, are barely reliable to our contemporary awareness; however, they were considered, in the time of the Prophet, as concrete facts whereby the people’s mental reflection at that historical juncture was steeped in imagination as they were not able to draw the distinction between myth and history or between idealistic conceptual factors and factual materialistic factors. Nonetheless, many traditionalists, in our present time, still hook onto such medieval, pathetic thinking\(^{142}\).

The concomitant relationship between mythical thought and religious consciousness is revealed through the inability of the latter to “distinguish between history and Myth; or between what is fanciful and what is rational;\(^{143}\)

\(^{141}\)Ibid., pp.25-26.

\(^{142}\)Ibid., p.99. You may refer also to the comment of his student, Hāshim Šālih in the same source and age.
between the mysterious fabulous and the factual authentic, as progressively ascertained by modern science. In contrast, religious thought draws a strong correlation between the two different levels of awareness and meaning. The concrete and direct intervention of the Lord in history (for example, restraining rain, sending down natural disasters and calamities to the errant folk, inflicting typical penalties, etc.) is not unlikely to materialize as though it is a natural and regular event; it is also transcendental to the strength of the human being, and thereupon it is coercive. In brief, all that we can say about the Mythical methodology is that the latter recognizes the Myth as simply as it is, and thereafter attempts to examine and comprehend its scope in order to know how the religious thought is functioning, and then dismiss its justificatory ideological theories, which stand against science and sound historical critical analysis. According to 'Arkün, the pioneer modernist, religious thought is a backward thought that was unable to distinguish between myth and history. In addition, it had immobilized all the patterns of conventional history within the very limited time of revelation, and hence it deprived itself of the proper critical analysis of mythical and rational cognition. Furthermore, religious thought was not yet able to coexist with the historicity of the European nineteenth century that had eventually contrived to discard the transcendental religious and spiritual factor, which had been regarded then as the hallmark of primitive societies.

In respect to all the preceding, the crux of the matter, here, is not whether or not the aforementioned theories are valid and logically coherent, since they are essentially mere ideological conceptions based on the conventional materialism.

'Arkün (1996), Al-Fikr, op. cit., p.68.
with its very unique outlook towards the universe\textsuperscript{146}. Thereby, the most important question, in this regard, is to find out about the method and the type of the epistemic tools used by the modernists to accord to the holy Qur'\textsuperscript{ān} a mythical interpretation. Indeed, this is what we shall attempt to emphasize shortly.

4.5.3. Tools of Mythical Methodology:

I have certain reservations\textsuperscript{147} about outlining the epistemic tools of this methodology, which are to be found scattered amidst the vast amount of literature on modernism. These tools can be summed up as follows:

1. “To have a historical critical analysis in order to spotlight all types of confusion, deletion, addition, and historical fallacies caused by Qur'\textsuperscript{ānic} narrations in respect to the data of the factual concrete history\textsuperscript{148}.” This solemn historical analysis requires, in turn, the application of the following methodological decisions on the Qur'\textsuperscript{ān}:

a. Rebuilding the living historical Turāth, that is, reinterpreting the Qur'\textsuperscript{ān} from the root, and then critically analyzing the foundation period of the early Muslim community so as to burst and decompose the elements of the mythical spirit to which the Qur'\textsuperscript{ānic} language is heading.

b. To have a responsible practice for positive acquisition, which focuses on the free scholarly inquiry that transcends restricted guidelines and peculiarities. In other words, it is to treat the concept of the “words of Allah” within the perspective of the new modern science tendencies.

\textsuperscript{4}Flack, Colin (1994), Myth, Tru\textsuperscript{th} and Literature, Towards a True Post-Modernism, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed. Cambridge University Press, pp. 1, 24-25.

\textsuperscript{5}It is unequivocal from 'Arkūn’s discussion, which draws extensively on the concept of myth that the author does not actually provide a plausible methodology as he instead gives just general suggestions about Tītan (socio-political chaos). Yet these generalizations were sourced from several Western intellectual schools to the extent that it brought about blatant discrepancy and confusion.

c. Relying on the sciences of linguistics and semantics in order to adequately understand the language that connects religion with historicity. 149.

2. "To have a structural analysis showing that al-Qur'an is fashioned in the same way as mythical thought, which touches upon ancient myths dispersed in terms of literal form and new content. That is a complementary work geared with a particular usage method and linguistic style in the Arabic language. To ensure the successful implementation of this approach, 'Arkūn suggests the following steps:

a. The lexical analysis of the words of al-Qur'an, that is to collect all the words related to a particular meaning, then sort them out under one rubric like the terms signifying 'Idrāk (apprehension): hearing, eyeing, looking, understanding and comprehending, or the terms related to the word 'Ilhtijāj (pleading): evidence, supposition, etc. Thereafter, these words are to be read according to their specific historical significance so as to unveil their true and original meaning they had when they were first used.

b. The literal study; that is, to incorporate the outcomes of the previous step in the macro-functioning system of al-Qur'an. In other words, al-Qur'an should be regarded as a formation of certain elements indicating two dimensions: first, it is an integrated entity with a set of internal laws. Second, it is an all-dynamic associated with a particular message and progressive innovation in a way that seems to others to be an everlasting formation. This, indeed, requires a critical interpretation of the literature of allegory used in al-Qur'an, and how such a science of rhetoric was astutely employed to convert

\*Arkūn (1996), Al-Fikr, op. cit., pp.120, 121.
real events into the permanent signs that raise above space and time; or simply convert what is real (factual) to non-factual. This evaluating approach is very crucial for it objectively addresses the issue of allegorical function in al-Qur‘ān, and prevents the latter from being vitiated by the very literal and formal interpretations that claim the existence of the juridical and moral legislation in al-Qur‘ān.  

4.4.4. Assessment:

What we can readily deduce from the preceding lengthy deliberation of the modernists over the issue of al-Qur‘ān and myth is nothing more than a boring and distorted reiteration of what is being circulated amongst the segments of Western Anthropological thought, which postulates that all religions have a materialistic nature, and they are a human product. That’s why the Anthropologist often seeks to emphasize the social function of religions. The unfounded belief in the materialistic and humanitarian nature of religion is repeated in the platitudes of the banal writings of the modernists.

1. The Humanitarian Source of Religion; to this regard, ‘Arkūn had this to say:

“The religious aspect of repentance (Tawbah) is nothing but a set of mental images and conceptions that constitute one’s universal imagination: I mean the flowing rivers and the cozy houses found in the gardens of Paradise cannot be placed in the experimental and perceptible space-time frame in which we live. But the promised Allah’s pleasure will not materialize except through the consent of the Prophet and the consent (consensus) of the community (as a whole). As such, we come, here, to encounter the mundane aspect of Tawbah: that is to surrender and show allegiance to a concrete authority and to abide by moral and juridical norms, which are reasonably accepted by the members of the community (Jamā‘a) simply because they are those who did produce and disseminate these norms.”

'Arkūn contends that the content of *Surah of Tawbah*, which to him is the final version of the religion of Islam, is considered as a sort of perilous manipulation of the historical and theological *Turāth* by the historical actor, who justifies this by simply mentioning ‘Allah says’\(^{154}\). As for al-Qimnī, who views myth as a reflection of fact, makes the former (myth) as a root of religion “myth is the origin of religion as ascertained by researchers of authority.”\(^{155}\)

2. The focus on the social function of religion; Šāliḫ Hāshim, while producing his introduction to the book of his teacher 'Arkūn, mentions:

“If we look at the matter from the collective conception, it is not then important to enquire whether some common orthodox sayings about the formation of the *Qurānic* text are historically and scientifically true or not. What is most important then is to pose the following question: How have these sayings managed to conquer the people’s minds and intellects for long centuries?”\(^{156}\)

As provably said: the thing that comes from its origin will not seem strange (or unusual). Therefore, all the foregoing atheistical assertions and the bleakly negative stand towards the Holy *Qurān* will not seem too strange coming from very loyal communists like 'Arkūn and al-Qimnī\(^{157}\). However, the glossy and tactfully phrased sayings, affecting eloquence, claiming to have the flair of science and all-round knowledge, and having the sense of origination and innovation will not, under any circumstances, accord a plea for condoning such glaring methodological inconsistencies, which are to be found nowhere but in the intellectual scraps bazaar from which the modernists often source their empty

\(^{154}\) *Ibid.*, pp.100-101


generalizations. These methodological contradictions appear on three levels: the theoretical, practical and ethical (moral) levels.

a. At the theoretical level, the modernists happen to violate one of their bright slogans, namely, the principle of objectivity, which rules out any pre-judgments\textsuperscript{158} or post-ante decision in the study of a given phenomenon. For instance, if we look into 'Arkūn’s former discussion, we will eventually find that it was all based on instant judgments that have nothing to do with scientific research. Thus, the author's serious urge for adhering to the historical critical analysis is, after all, just pointing out the relevant examples that warrant his prior (pre-determined) belief, which states that \textit{al-Qurān} comprises some sort of confusion, deletion, addition and historical fallacies.

b. At the practical level, the modernists, and after all this clamor and pandemonium as though the entire problems of thought and philosophy were solved at their hands, came to a stage when they explicitly profess that they don’t possess the relevant tools to understand the religious language: "We should acknowledge that we still lack the proper science of linguistics and semantics to accurately analyze such a language\textsuperscript{159}." In spite of their limited methodology, the modernists still go headlong into interpreting the scriptural (legal) texts and prejudicially labeling them with irreverent terms such as monopoly, coercion, darkness\textsuperscript{160}, selectivity, inconsistency, transcendence and generality\textsuperscript{161}, and other malignant descriptions, which are to be detailed in the next two chapters.

---

\textsuperscript{8} Refer to the Objectivity section in this chapter.
\textsuperscript{9} 'Arkūn (1996), \textit{al-Fikr, op. cit.}, pp.190-191.
\textsuperscript{10} \textit{Ibid.}, p.104.
\textsuperscript{11} \textit{Ibid.}, pp.147, 148
c. At the ethical level, 'Arkûn alleges that he is a staunch advocate of the anthropological intellectual current, which states that Anthropology is a science based on Realism and Rationalism. He is even enthralled by the charms of this science to such an extent that he considers it as the magical key to unravelling the religious puzzling signs, capturing them in their absolute transcendental orbit, bringing them down to the laboratory of realism and romance, and then laying bare their historical Turāth\textsuperscript{162}. Therefore, anthropologists, upon studying religions, are rationally and morally bound to detect any probable weakness or inadequacy. This is because there is no room for favoritism or flattery in the scientific methodology. By corollary, if the anthropologist fails to announce the faults and fallacies associated with religions, he would have then betrayed his moral responsibility\textsuperscript{163}. That is, he has betrayed these principles twice:

- Firstly, upon breaching the principles, which he had once pledged to uphold: “We shall adamantly reject all ways of the ‘screening one’s self’ strategy (the old style of Tuqyah – concealing one’s belief – espoused by the Khawārij and ʿIsmāʿiliyyah religious sects), styles of easy harmonization, and deceptive intellectual mixture\textsuperscript{164}.” But in no time, the author turned to adopt another approach, namely, the functional methodology, which focuses on the functions of religion more than on its inherent reality. Thereby, he sees that it is not his priority to unveil the mistakes, abortions and distortions that may be found in the Qurʾān, but he instead braces himself to disclose the type and nature of the function played by the Qurʾānic discourse\textsuperscript{165}.

\footnotesize
Bowie (2000), op. cit., pp.6-7
Ibid., pp.8, 130.
Secondly, in the avowal of certain findings that do not satisfactorily meet the scientific research requirements. That is the author impugns the authenticity of *al-Qur'ān* as he asserts that it does contain mistakes and distortions although he acknowledges the lack of an adequate amount of data and historical documents to make such decisive judgments which according to him, was due to the fact that these documents and scripts were worn out and mangled by the Prophet's companions. As such, the author would have certainly betrayed the most momentous scientific principles when he adjudicates particular events without possessing the tools and damning evidence.

This is, in general, a brief account on the most important methodologies used by the modernists to comprehend the holy *Qur'ān* in line with the spirit of the modern age. We shall afterwards offer some practical examples over the next two chapters, whereby the first chapter draws on the theological issues while the second chapter underscores the legislative issues.

---