

A New Science of Religious Comprehension

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Yahya mohamed

Science of the methodology of religious comprehension, is a logical introduction to the study of the systems and methods of religious understanding, and indeed of science and thought in general. This title constitutes the first volume of the five-part project (The Methodology in Understanding Islam). Its purpose is to subject Islamic studies under the dominance of systematic epistemological research and scrutinize all its forms of sectarian doctrines, as the thinking is achieved in the sectarian doctrine and not by its doctrine.

Instead of succumbing to the curriculum organized following sectarian thinking, the doctrine has been rendered into patterns of systematic, multi-pronged thinking.

Science of the methodology depends on two basic premises, one of which complements the other. The first states that comprehension is not a true reflection of the text and is, therefore, independent of one another. The second also states that comprehension is an outcome of both the text and the reader, meaning that the human subject has a role in producing understanding just as the text has this role, and because the subject has a role in influencing understanding; so does the latter becomes subject to infinite variations of comprehension.

Religious comprehension in this respect is similar to science in its relationship to nature. In both cases, it is assumed that there is an external concept that results in a conceptual disclosure, whether this disclosure is scientific or comprehension.

In natural science, the external subject is represented by what is called nature. In religious comprehension, this topic is the text.

Both science of the nature and the religious comprehension of the text are based on an external subject that is a thing-in-itself, and there is no way to identify this outer self without the mechanisms of the human subject, considering its precepts, whether that leads to a gap between our outer-self in approaching it closer or farther.

In the sense that just as religious comprehension is based on two basic postulates, which are that comprehension is autonomous from the text and that it is formed by the interaction between the text and the human subject, similarly, science is based on these two postulates: that science is autonomous to nature; thus science is an outcome influenced by both nature and the subjectivity of the scientist.

Nature is the external object characterized by being a thing-in-itself that cannot be recognized without interacting with the subjectivity of the scientist and its precepts.

Therefore, we have discussed three types of systematic studies that have one thing in common, namely, the science entrusted with the approach to understanding the text; the second approach is to perceive the external concept; and thirdly, the approach to the interpretation of nature. All of these types of studies are united by something that represents the external subject that the mind deals with by perceiving, understanding, and interpreting through its sensory and inductive mechanisms.

The science concerned with the method of understanding the religious text is what we call Science of the Methodology. It corresponds to the science that deals with theories of knowledge and methods of perception within philosophy, as it relates to the philosophy of science. Science of Methodology applies to these different resources and comparisons among them, as it is relevant to other sciences and objective knowledge.

The merit of Science of the Methodology is that it includes a combination of both hermeneutics and epistemology. It includes the art of interpretation as it recognizes that not every understanding has the ability to transcend the limits of interpretation and be influenced by a priori concept. This removes the subjective tendency, as confirmed by modern literature. Likewise, this carries the epistemological roots to preserve the precise objective meanings without leaving the hermeneutics to the chaos of open comprehension within its controls or limits, so it works to confide the hermeneutic practice as much as possible but recognizes the impossibility of eliminating it. Thus, Science of the Methodology can be considered a bridge between hermeneutics and epistemology.

According to Science of the Methodology, religious comprehension is preceded by its methodology. The first cannot appear without the latter.

This is true of the various types of inferences and inferential knowledge, as this knowledge can't appear without mechanisms and a foundation for prior perceptions.

The mechanisms and priori differ; to the extent that the methods of knowledge differ, and thus we have what we call cognitive systems because of the possibilities of producing and understanding according to these methods.

Each cognitive system has its own rules of understanding, which are of two types: minor and major.

Comprehension depends on minor rules, and from it, religious sciences and other sciences that target religious comprehension, although these rules, in turn, depend on major rules, and the latter represent **fundamental generators** of understanding and cognition, and they are the subject of study of science of the Methodology. Therefore, this science is characterized by comprehensiveness and totality, as the laws and rules that it seeks differ from those dealt with

by the cognitive systems in comprehension and analysis.

The research concerning Science of the Methodology is considered one of three types of research in religious comprehension, one of which is deductive research, such as that practiced by scholars, as it is a kind of direct knowledge of the text or external subject. The second is historical research, which is concerned with developments in religious comprehension throughout history.

As for the methodological research, it is concerned with studying the methods of religious comprehension and clarifying the relationship that exists between them and their priori foundations and comprehension. In other words, it practices thinking in the curriculum, not by the curriculum.

One of the advantages of methodological research is that it includes historical research, to the extent that it is correct to say that the methodological research without the historical research is meaningless.

It is noted that the second (historical) research is based on the first deductive research, so if this research is knowledge, then the second research (historical) is a science related to this knowledge. The difference between them is that the first research is a science-based on an external topic, which is the text, while the second research is based on the cognitive command of the first research, and it has nothing to do with the religious text directly.

The matter is also true with the third research (Methodology), as it is based on the subject of comprehension and has no direct relationship with the text. Thus, the first research is the only one that deals with the text directly through the phenomenon of deduction. The other two research deals with comprehension, not the religious text. Historical research is concerned with studying comprehension superficially (surface), while methodological research is concerned with meticulously assessing inward to reach the core (basis) structures of understanding in depth.

Therefore, methodological research is related to the core structure of comprehension, for the latter owes its foundation and construct to the *priori* that permits us to understand and think even if we do not make sense of them, and they constitute the core of the topic that science of the methodology deals with research and scrutiny.

Accordingly, the sectarian dialogue is often affected by the type of dialogue that is counter-productive, according to the interlocutors presenting their point of view as it is based upon a superficial structure, considering the prior position that was not paid attention to regarding the core structure or the infrastructure of their comprehension.

The essence of the sectarian conflict - here - proceeds according to the core structure without the interlocutor's awareness, which leads to the first conflict related to the superficial structure of their understanding. Thus, both interlocutors are characterized by a lack of understanding of what the other has presented in the premise.

Moreover, it is counter-productive for the dialogue to depend on two different structures; one of the interlocutors proceeds according to the core structure, while the other proceeds according to the superficial structure. This is because, in this case, whoever belongs to the research in the core structure understands what the other has presented, while the other does not understand what the first has presented in premise, so the dialogue is unbalanced, and the outcome is therefore hindered.

Considering that the superficial structure has different layers, it may be completely superficial or intermediate, although it is superficial concerning the core structure.

We can express this by the presence of three different structures, superficial, intermediate, and core. The intermediate is characterized as having a double character compared to the other two structures.

For example, a religious decree on a specific issue or the interpretation of a particular verse makes knowledge belong purely to the superficial

structure of understanding. While attaching this knowledge to other researches, such as linguistics, semantics, the science of prophetic narrations, all of this will make comprehension belong to the intermediate structure that is the substratum to the superficial structure. Still, it remains superficial or intermediate compared to the core structure that searches for the priori of understanding and its methodology.

The precise science is the one that ranges from the core structure to the superficial through the intermediate structure. We are inclined to consider the intermediate structure to enter within the superficial understanding structure.

The core structure is conditioned by the possibility of knowledge even if the researcher is unaware of it or thinks about it. Knowing this condition is not possible without "in-depth analysis" to reach the maximum sources of generating thought. We do not mean limiting the process to a specific time, as dealt with by Michel Foucault. Rather, it is sufficient for us to think about the cognitive system, even if it is not defined by an era, because time sometimes overlaps and because the cognitive time does not necessarily coincide with the historical time of the ages.

Lastly, Science of the Methodology has three levels of research as follows:

The first: is analysis, in which the scholars produce an understanding monitored and analyzed as reflected by the priori, the **fundamental generators**, and the different ways of comprehension. If the deductive research adopts consciously or unconsciously a specific method of understanding and is thus not concerned with studying the methods of understanding, then Science of the Methodology works on studying these methods by analyzing what the scholars produced in the premise.

Second: Setting the criteria for preference between curricula or theories, as the task of Science of the Methodology necessitates

searching for the criteria to supersede by preference between the curricula of understanding or its conflicting theories.

Third: The pursuit of establishing disciplined curricula for the production of highly efficient theories and systems for understanding.

Finally, this science has imposed on us to present many new concepts, as characterized by dynamism, effectiveness, and richness of knowledge and philosophies, without being of the simple static type that does not benefit, enrich or produce anything.

Translated by **Zaid Kanady**

The reference

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