

Text Whispers and Reading Ideologies The worlds of Intention and the Horizons of Interpretation Among Scholars of Heritage

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Abstract

The war of readings is still fierce, each of which claims to link to meaning, as reading theories resort to strategies in the hope of finding a way to the semantics of meanings, subject to the power of ideology, as it strives to achieve a kind of objectivity, but whenever a contract is loosened, it falls into the traps of other contracts. This article stands out on traditional readings as one of the aims of the research, as we have come to serious approaches that modern methods have only recently reached.

Key Words: Reading Theories; Semantics; Ideology; Objectivity; Traditional Approaches

1. Introduction

The divine discourse has long constituted a subject of linguistic, semantic, and miraculous (*i'jāz*) studies due to its aesthetic value, which dazzled recipients and surpassed their mastery of the arts of rhetoric and eloquence. This is attributable to its semantic coherence and linguistic cohesion, as it is the Book of God, encompassed by His care and preservation. Such qualities motivated scholars to delve into and elucidate the meanings of the Qur'an, given that the distinctiveness of its stylistic structures compelled interested researchers to establish mechanisms for understanding its significance, uncovering its forms and constructions, and identifying the locus and secret of its deviation from linguistic norms at times, and its infusion of ambiguity into meanings decipherable through contemplation and reading at others. Consequently, exegetes were prompted to adopt diverse linguistic mechanisms to study the Qur'anic discourse; they employed exegesis (*tafsīr*), hermeneutics (*ta'wīl*), jurisprudence fundamentals (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), morphology, grammar, and rhetoric, in addition to scholastic theology (*ilm al-kalām*) and philosophy, aiming to comprehend, contemplate, and discern its subtle meanings. Thus, they did not stop at the apparent meanings but extended their inquiry to potential semantic implications. Their textual induction was remarkably distinguished, and their analytical tools were highly specialized—particularly when considering that a consensus exists among most critics that the linguistic contributions of our predecessors in the Arab heritage have not yet received the research attention they truly deserve, as many domains in our heritage remain pristine, requiring a conscious, scientific, and linguistic perspective. The objective of this study is to bridge our linguistic heritage with modern studies in the field of reading, thereby providing a simplified illustration of one manifestation of reading mechanisms, while contributing to the revelation of classical scholars' endeavors in reading and interpretation.

Modern linguists have noted that the Arab heritage embodied clear visions regarding many issues of reading, interpretation, and the determination of textual intentions—aspects that Western theories may only have grasped a century ago at the earliest. We seek to investigate these interpretive efforts, particularly those concerning the tools that convey meaning, in order to synthesize the legacy left by classical scholars in the realm of reading and hermeneutics and juxtapose it with Western studies and methodologies through a descriptive and analytical approach. Through this article, we aim to bridge a modest gap in the wall of academic research, driven by our conviction that scientific inquiry is an integrative enterprise in which past and present efforts converge to achieve results and judgments that advance the scientific trajectory. The field of textual studies has witnessed a remarkable evolution in terms of methodologies, theories, analytical mechanisms, and modes of textual processing. In light of these developments, I deemed it pertinent to approach this phenomenon by raising the following targeted questions:

What are the primary epistemological foundations and reference frameworks for reading in general, and within the classical heritage in particular? How have critics drawn upon these frameworks at both the theoretical and applied levels? Regarding their impact on our heritage, how do we discern their early seeds and manifestations? Furthermore, what are the points of convergence and boundaries between the classical scholars and modern theorists?

This article aims to contribute to elucidating the classical reading strategies traditionally employed in approaching texts through contemplation and hermeneutic interpretation. These inter-sectarian debates facilitated access to the underlying intentions of the discourse, which shaped an ingrained linguistic sensibility grounded in the primary source of legislation and cosmic truths. Consequently, eminent language scholars applied themselves to discovering the subtleties of the language, relying on cognitive faculties to interpret texts, wherein the reader reinterprets a given verse to align with its contextual framework. We have reached several conclusions, most notably that classical interpretive approaches traversed developmental stages that modern cognitive and methodological frameworks have only recently attained. Moreover, these classical approaches were grounded in rigorous knowledge bases, contrary to the widespread notion that they relied solely on repetition and uncritical transmission.

Through these hypotheses, we observe those interpretive endeavors that transcended their historical constraints, allowing us to envision horizons for Arab theoretical frameworks. This entails building upon the achievements of classical linguistic sensibility rather than dismantling them or relying exclusively on foundations external to our cultural domain—thereby avoiding the labyrinths of unbalanced acculturation and uncritical experimentation.

Furthermore, scholars of legal theory (*uṣūliyyūn*) categorized lexical terms according to various considerations, such as general (*‘āmm*) and specific (*khāṣṣ*), absolute (*muṭlaq*) and restricted (*muqayyad*), explicit meaning (*maṭṭūq*) and implicit implication (*mafhūm*), among others. They similarly divided expressions into literal (*ḥaqīqah*) and metaphorical (*majāz*). Building on these foundations, they sought to scale the heights of language by leveraging semantic structures, syntax, and morphological forms that are indispensable to the Arabic language rather than peripheral to it. These represent intrinsic linguistic phenomena that cannot be overlooked when analyzing and reading texts in general,

and scriptural texts in particular, in order to ascertain the divine intent—especially given that certain texts resist straightforward interpretation and prove difficult to negotiate.

These constitute cognitive competencies and interpretive endeavors that contribute to the semantic multiplicity of the text, through which communicative bonds between the addresser and the addressee are forged via the codes of diversity and difference. We aim to uncover and analyze these mechanisms to fulfill the objective of this study. Indeed, the Qur'anic text has become the epicenter of linguistic studies and textual theories, as it is the Book of God, encompassed by His care and preservation. This status prompted exegetes to adopt diverse linguistic mechanisms for analyzing the Qur'anic discourse; thus, they employed exegesis (*tafsīr*) and hermeneutic interpretation (*ta'wīl*). Rather than confining themselves to surface meanings, they transcended them to explore potential semantic implications in order to derive rulings of obligation, prohibition, specificity, generality, and other legal categories. Consequently, their inductive analysis was remarkably distinguished and their analytical tools highly specialized. This has motivated us to trace the early roots of reading and interpretation among our intellectual predecessors, examining how they deployed and operationalized these methods to comprehend texts—particularly given that a consensus exists among most critics that the linguistic contributions of our ancestors in the Arab heritage have not yet received the scholarly attention they truly deserve, as many domains in our heritage remain pristine, requiring a conscious, scientific, and linguistic perspective.

The interpretive endeavors of scholars in exegesis, hermeneutics, and legal deduction (*istinbāṭ*) bear witness to their methodological proficiency. They constitute a fertile ground for textual approaches that warrant rigorous excavation and investigation. Driven by this imperative, we seek to investigate these reading practices—particularly with respect to the tools that convey meaning—and to undertake a synthesizing and analytical study of the legacy left by classical scholars in the domain of reading and hermeneutics.---

2. Reading Theory: Historical Archeologies

It is well established that no theory attains intellectual and methodological maturity except through conceptual inputs supplied by various other disciplines and theories. This applies directly to Reception Theory (*Théorie de la Réception*), which became laden with diverse conceptual currents dating back to Greek studies. The latter displayed an early concern for the recipient (*récepteur*)—the audience—through the theory of mimesis, catharsis (*Catharsis*), and the concept of transcendence. These served as philosophical foundations upon which reception theory was built. This interaction (*Interaction*), integration, and overlap subsequently led to conceptual ambiguity and difficulty in delineating the historical boundaries of the theory. Consequently, innovative terms and concepts were forged whose semantic scopes proved challenging to circumscribe, particularly amid the evolving landscape of literary production.

Hermeneutic studies and reading approaches have demonstrated that intentionality is a sought-after objective rather than a readily given entity; it possesses a fluid, mercurial meaning that cannot be attained without rigorous effort, thereby compelling the reader to formulate revealing strategies and pathways. Reading practices have accordingly diverged and varied from one

methodology to another, giving rise to what might be termed an "interpretive rivalry" that caused fractures in the intellectual structure of Islamic sects. Anyone who carefully examines the Qur'an and contemplates its verses through legal deduction (*istinbāt*) and hermeneutic interpretation (*ta'wīl*) realizes that accessing its meanings is a high-stakes endeavor requiring a diverse array of reading mechanisms. This stems from the fact that the Qur'an is structured upon the stylistic nuances (*afānīn*) of the Arabic language, rhetorical conventions, and grammatical principles—much of which remained enigmatic even to eminent linguistic authorities, despite their efforts to explain and codify them through scholarly reasoning (*ijtihād*) aimed at bridging interpretive gaps, particularly after the cessation of divine revelation and the primary avenues for discerning the divine intent following the passing of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). Consequently, meanings proliferated, intentions multiplied, and commentaries diversified as a result of a rich cultural context that fostered constructive dynamics between the creator and the recipient.

3. The Textual Approach: Between the Concern for Intentionality and the Horizons of Reading

Classical studies among various intellectual sects diverged regarding intentionality, particularly following the cessation of the prophetic tradition of textual exposition. Consequently, exegetical works emerged, and hermeneutic interpretation (*ta'wīl*) intervened to bridge the chasm between texts and their underlying intentions upon which meanings depend. Various sects harnessed the vehicle of hermeneutics, employing it as a means to advance their theological and ideological aims. This led to a diversification of foundational premises, particularly among classical scholars of rhetoric, grammar, and other linguistic and foundational disciplines (*uṣūl*) upon which hermeneutics relied to trace textual intentions and lexical semantics.

Thus, the emergence of hermeneutic interpretation became an inevitable necessity accompanying obscure or ambiguous texts, serving to probe linguistic semantics and capture what the author holds—commonly referred to as intentionality (*Intentionnalité*). Consequently, textual approaches confronted turbulent headwinds that obfuscated the clarity required to reach the creator's subjectivity and ideological orientations through the flexibility of the textual structure, all while preserving the intimate relationships between the text and the animator/interpreter (the reader) to ascertain the intended meaning. Indeed, "the pursuit of meaning remained contingent upon the speaker's intentionality; thus, those engaged with discourse preoccupied themselves with what the author intended to say, believing that identifying this volition defines the author's intention."^[1]

However, is the addresser's intent easily retrievable and clearly delineated, keeping in mind that intentionality was never a point of consensus among theories operating within textual fields to excavate, read, and reveal the author's intent? Indeed, the author has come to be sidelined and unwelcome across critical domains, especially amid the growing "calls for the autonomy and unity of the literary text. In cases where the literary work reaches a high degree of maturity and completeness, it dispenses with the presence of the author or the seeker of their intent."^[2]

4. Early Manifestations of Reception in Classical Texts

In seeking the linguistic sense of "reception" (*al-talaqqī*) within Arabic lexicography, one finds that the root *t-l-q* falls under the general conceptual umbrella of "receiving" or "welcoming" (*al-istiqbāl*). The term *al-talaqqī* appears in *Lisān al-ʿArab* with closely aligned senses; Ibn Manẓūr notes: "So-and-so met (*laqiya*) so-and-so, or encountered (*lāqāhu*) him, in an encounter (*luqyān / mulāqāh / talaqqan*)," [³] meaning he came across him and received him. Thus, the recipient (*al-mutalaqqī*) in this sense is the receiver (*al-mustaqbil*). He further states: "So-and-so receives (*yatalaqqā*) so-and-so, meaning he welcomes/receives him." [⁴]

Accordingly, *al-talaqqī* and *al-istiqbāl* denote a unified concept for Ibn Manẓūr. This lexical variation may be attributed to usage among the Arabs. In English, one uses "Reception" (*talaqqī*), "Receptive" (*mutalaqqin* or *mustaqbil*), and "To receive" (*talaqqā*, *istaqbala*, *akhadha*). [⁵] The semantic shifts affecting the root *l-q-y* stem from the socioeconomic and linguistic evolution of its users, alongside the diversification and development of discursive purposes and practices. Consequently, the term was deployed and transposed into new contextual settings, endowing it with a rich body of semantic derivations. Al-Azhari states: "He received him (*talaqqāhu*), meaning he welcomed him (*astaqbalahu*); and reception (*al-talaqqī*) is welcoming (*al-istiqbāl*)." [⁶] A general consensus predominated regarding the usage of the term *al-talaqqī* among the Arabs; God Almighty says: "And indeed, [O Muhammad], you receive the Qur'an from one who is Wise and Knowing." [Qur'an 27:6]. [⁷] Thus, the term *al-talaqqī* is deeply rooted in Arab heritage. Within the Book of God, the term appears with the connotation of comprehension and acumen, as these qualities are realized precisely through reception and assimilation. This synonymy between *al-istiqbāl* and *al-talaqqī* inheres in the nature of Arabic usage—particularly among scholars addressing how texts are received and how rulings are extracted from them through comprehension and hermeneutic interpretation (*ta'wīl*). "Theory is typically a provocative critique of commonsense perception; moreover, it strives to demonstrate that what we accept as self-evident commonsense is, in truth, a historical construction (*Historical Construction*)." [⁸] Insofar as theory diverges from the conventional, it conversely seeks renewal and innovation in light of contemporary realities, pursuing precision and scientific rigor in its formulations—unlike traditional approaches and pre-packaged concepts.

This constitutes the defining feature of reception theory. Reception, "in its aesthetic sense, denotes a two-sided process, encompassing both the effect produced by the artwork and the manner of its reception by the reader. A reader may respond to a work in various ways: consuming or critiquing it, admiring or rejecting it, appreciating its form while interpreting its content, adopting a canonical interpretation, or attempting to offer a novel one. Finally, the reader may respond to the work by producing a new work altogether." [⁹]

Thus, reception constitutes that dynamism within meaning (*Sens*) generated through the reading act (*Acte de lecture*), seeking to articulate what the text leaves unsaid—whether out of admiration or rejection. This remains contingent upon the hermeneut's skill and capacity to engage in a dialogue with the text, attempting to strike a bargain with this dynamic entity while revealing its underlying factors. The recipient within this theory is an active and interactive

agent in the reading process; reception theory is not merely an aesthetic approach (*Approche*) to texts at an analytical level, but rather a comprehensive conceptual framework built on structured, self-directed methodology grounded in scientific rigor and drawing upon diverse disciplines. This is particularly observable in the German intellectual context in which the theory originated and developed—a context deeply linked to "the historical evolution experienced by German thought at the literary and critical levels. This does not imply that reception was exclusive to Germany to the exclusion of other human literatures; rather, it was the philosophical and theoretical purpose that reception theory assumed in Germany, along with the resulting theoretical hypotheses and empirical practices, that established Germany as the primary reference point in this theoretical endeavor."[^10] That is to say, reception theory derived its foundational principles primarily from German thought, subsequently interacting with human literatures and philosophical theories to announce the birth of a new critical methodology claiming conceptual autonomy, advocating for the revision of classical rules, and reconsidering approaches to modern literary works. "Interchangeable terms were assigned to the concept of reception within modern literary study methodologies; however, presenting these terms (as nouns and adjectives) in a precise and acceptable historical sequence proves challenging due to their proliferation, overlap, and the difficulty of disentangling them... Thus, 'reception' and 'reading' may be the two terms most deserving of attention, as they effectively convey the intended purpose."[^11]

Nevertheless, the term "reading" remains the predominant and widely used designation in modern critical studies.[^12] This ambiguity in defining the term—particularly within critical studies—stems from successive translations introduced to familiarize readers with this theory. What further complicated matters was that most translations were not rendered directly from German into Arabic, but rather via an intermediary language, such as English or French, thereby introducing conceptual ambiguity originating with translators into the intermediary language and subsequently carried over into Arabic.[^13]

This variance in terminology stems from diverging perspectives and epistemological reference frameworks. However, it can pose an obstacle for critics in general, and scholars of Arabic literature in particular, when deploying these imported ideas without taking into account the specificities of the Arabic tradition. Indeed, a rigorous, conscious, meticulous, and parallel reading—when supported by a distinguished critical framework and conducted by a perceptive, talented reader possessing critical sensitivity alongside linguistic, cultural, and psychological knowledge—can open new horizons for the creative experience, thereby realizing an authentic and creative critical practice.[^14]

The achievements of the Arab heritage in analyzing classical corpora represent a rich body of work, despite their divergence from Western textual studies. They reflect the specificity of belief, the distinctiveness of analytical mechanisms, and the variance in intellectual frameworks. This is clearly manifested across various fields, such as textual cohesion, context, intertextuality, and pragmatic and argumentative approaches, among other analytical tools and possibilities—even if terminology and foundational premises differ. This has been demonstrated by scholars of legal theory (*uṣūliyyūn*), hermeneutics (*mu'awwilūn*), and legal deduction (*istinbāt*), particularly regarding the comprehension of divine discourse and

prophetic traditions (*ḥadīth*). This is further complemented by linguistic and rhetorical achievements, without overlooking the poetic legacy that served as a reference point in creative and textual studies, enriching the Arabic intellectual corpus.

Classical scholars worked extensively on texts, establishing procedural foundations and strategies through which they codified methods of reading in alignment with the divine intent of Almighty God. The science of exegesis (*‘ilm al-tafsīr*) opened the Qur'anic text to analytical reasoning and critical inquiry (*al-ra'y wa-l-naẓar*), leading scholars to apply the reading process to it. Consequently, their understandings diversified and the scope of their scholarly reasoning (*ijtihād*) expanded in accordance with their cultural influences, which were prominently marked by prevailing philosophical and theological (*kalāmī*) currents—especially as non-Arab elements integrated, forming a cohesive society receptive to alternative cultures and differing opinions.

5. The Syntactic Mechanism in Textual Approaches

Engaging with any linguistic phenomenon necessitates grounding oneself in the core levels of language, particularly the syntactic and semantic levels. This stems from the fact that language operates through an interconnected system of linguistic tiers; analyzing or interpreting texts inevitably requires addressing the structural levels of linguistic study—morphology, grammar, syntax, and semantics—alongside their syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic dimensions on the one hand, and their morphological and phonological dimensions on the other. Studies have demonstrated that syntax possesses critical properties that enable speakers to employ them as analytical mechanisms, serving as the foundation for both classical and modern grammatical inquiries through reading principles and rules. Highlighting these properties within linguistic structures presents an optimal model when examined independently. Words follow one another and align according to lexical structure within a verbal orchestration governed by grammatical and semantic principles and rules. "Indeed, the focal point of study at the syntactic level is the sentence or the linguistic structure."^[15] Since structure constitutes the core of morphological study, the analytical focus shifts toward the sentence. The fundamental governing law in all of this is syntactic structure, which establishes the standard for the sentence, thereby ensuring harmony among phonemes within an organized framework to which inflectional vowels (grammatical markers) conform.

Furthermore, evocative and indicative reading cues (*qarā'in*) exist that "guide toward clarifying the ambiguous (*al-mujmal*), establishing certainty by eliminating unintended interpretations, specifying the general (*takhṣīs al-‘āmm*), restricting the absolute (*taqyīd al-muṭlaq*), and diversifying semantic implications. These constitute the most significant indicators of the speaker's intent."^[16] This directs us to the role of context in determining the semantics of a given structure, which subsequently governs the degree of comprehension—particularly regarding the Book of Almighty God. The Qur'anic word is defined and interpreted through a consideration of its meaning within the syntactic structure, for "Qur'anic semantics is far too deep in purpose and broad in scope to be inferred merely from an isolated word and its dictionary definition or by consulting lexical glossaries; rather, it is derived from structural

semantics and the demands of Qur'anic meaning within composition (*nazm*) and context."[^17] In this manner, the reader is empowered to determine textual intentionality.

For instance, consider a reading of Surah Ash-Shura, wherein Almighty God states: "God is Subtle with His servants; He gives provision to whom He wills, and He is the Powerful, the Exalted in Might."[^18] The attribute *Al-Laṭīf* (The Subtle/Kind) applies to whoever seeks refuge in Him among His servants when despairing of creation, placing their trust in Him and turning back to Him; at that moment, He accepts them and turns toward them. As for Ibn 'Āshūr, he states: "The clause *(and He is the Powerful, the Exalted in Might)* is conjugated onto the attribute *(Subtle)* or onto the clause *(He gives provision to whom He wills)*, serving as an exaltation of Almighty God through these two attributes. It functions as a precautionary qualification (*iḥtirās*) against the misconception that His subtlety stems from incapacity or compliance; for He is Powerful and Mighty, incapable of neither weakness nor subservience. It likewise counters the misconception that His provisioning of whom He wills arises from stinginess or scarcity; for He is the Powerful—and power precludes all causes of stinginess—and He is the Mighty (*al-ʿAzīz*)—and might precludes all causes of poverty. Thus, His provision to whom He wills with whatever He wills is bound to a wisdom He knows regarding the conditions of His creation, both general and specific."[^19]

The verse occurs within a context of divine benevolence and subtlety toward servants who abound in good deeds. The predicate appears in the intensive form (*faʿīl*), signifying hyperbole (*mubālaghah*). Engaging with texts and adapting them is by no means a contemporary invention; rather, it is deeply rooted in our history and culture, and these classical texts offer the strongest evidence of this reality, demonstrating how the Companions (may God be pleased with them all) were routinely consulted on texts whose meanings appeared obscure to people's understanding.

Al-Jāḥiẓ states: "The entire matter revolves around clarity (*al-bayān*) and seeking clarification (*al-tabayyun*), as well as imparting understanding (*al-ifhām*) and grasping understanding (*al-tafahhum*). The clearer the tongue, the more praiseworthy it is—just as the more discerning the heart, the more praiseworthy it is. The one imparting understanding to you and the one seeking understanding from you are equal partners in merit."[^20] From this, it becomes evident that Al-Jāḥiẓ placed paramount emphasis on the issue of comprehension and communication (*al-fahm wa-l-ifhām*)—that is, making the listener understand and convincing them. Consequently, he incorporated the addressee or recipient as an active element in the rhetorical process—not merely as an element, but as its primary objective. This dimension was largely absent from the focus of jurists (*fuqahā*), whose primary concern was discerning the speaker's intent in the Qur'an and Sunnah. Persuasion (*Persuasion*) and imparting understanding constitute virtues toward which minds stretch and to which ears yield, because understanding (*al-fahm*) represents the disclosure and perception of every "subtle and intricate matter. It is thus more specific than knowledge (*al-ʿilm*), for knowledge is the act of perception itself, whether subtle or evident."[^21]

This implies that knowledge may be acquired through learning, unlike intrinsic understanding. Al-Tahānawī, in his *Kashshāf*, highlights a crucial point, stating: "In sum, scholars of Arabic grammar require intention (*al-qaṣd*) for semantic signification (*al-dalālah*). Thus, what is

comprehended without speaker intent is not considered part of the word's signification according to them; for signification, in their view, is intended strictly for imparting meaning in an absolute sense."^[22] Consequently, they reject ambiguous speech whose intent remains unknown. As is well established, the function of understanding and imparting understanding remains fundamental, serving as the pivot around which all other communicative functions revolve. For this reason, legal obligation (*al-taklīf al-sharʿī*) is contingent upon the realization of understanding. "The Sacred Law (*al-Sharīʿah*) is so close to human understanding and accessible to the intellect that it is shared by all people—whether sharp-witted or dull. Were it beyond the grasp of the elite, the Law would not be universal and unpretentious (*ummiyyah*)."^[23]

Thus, intent refers to that which is comprehended through intellect, distinguishing its possessor from others. "If discourse directed toward comprehension is poetically structured, cleansed of the turbidness of faltering speech, rectified from the distortion of error and solecism, free from arbitrary composition, and weighed on the scale of correctness in diction, meaning, and syntax—then its pathways expand and its points of entry become subtle. Consequently, intellect accepts it, finds repose in it, and grows intimate with it. Conversely, if discourse presents itself with the opposing attributes—being false, absurd, or unintelligible—its pathways become blocked; intellect rejects it, feels alienated upon sensing it, recoils from it, and suffers distress akin to the suffering of physical senses."^[24] Comprehension (*al-fahm*) constitutes an elevated faculty with which the reader-interpreter is endowed, one not possessed by the general populace—a phenomenon exemplified by Solomon (peace be upon him). Thus, whomever God grants success finds solace in this faculty, utilizing it as an instrument to uncover what remains hidden from ordinary human minds.

The initial dialogic encounter established by the reader with the text aims to comprehend it, draw near to it, and dissolve within it, thereby attempting to gather the scattered fragments of meaning, so to speak, or to approach meaning itself. In truth, no original, authentic meaning exists; original meaning is often an illusion, a delusion, and an unachievable end. Original meaning has long since faded into its own past... dissipating immediately upon its emergence, leaving behind nothing but its interpretation. It resembles the drone bee that dies immediately upon fertilization—dying the moment it meets its reality. The "origin" reigns for a single day, after which it is deposed, becoming the catalyst for the ultimate and eternal ruler: interpretation (*al-taʿwīl*).^[25]

- **Causality (*Al-Sababiyyah*):** The relationship may be causal—that is, what is attributed to the agent and predicated upon the cause. Thus, attributing non-speech to Almighty God serves as the cause for God's displeasure with those people. Classical scholars expanded extensively on the relationships of mental trope (*al-majāz al-ʿaqlī*) and the modes of metaphorical usage; however, we refrain from delving deeply into this discipline due to its vast breadth.
- **Temporality (*Al-Zamāniyyah*):** An action or its equivalent may be predicated upon the time of its occurrence. Almighty God states: *"By the morning brightness, and [by] the night when it covers with darkness/settles (*sajā*)"*.^[26] The night itself does not

settle or grow still; rather, human activity quiets down during the night. Thus, Almighty God ascribed the attribute of stillness (*al-sukūn*) to the night itself, given that night is the temporal frame in which stillness occurs.[²⁷] Mental trope here constitutes a manifest indicator whose underlying relationship is temporal, as night represents the time during which souls rest and human movement subsides.

- **Spatiality (*Al-Makāniyyah*)**: The relationship may also be spatial, which at times takes precedence over temporality; in this trope, the action—or its conceptual equivalent—is predicated upon the place associated with it. Almighty God states: *"And the earth brings forth its burdens."*[²⁸] The verb **brings forth** (*akhraja*) is predicated upon its spatial location; however, bringing forth burdens is not an intrinsic attribute of the earth, as bringing forth is the act of the Omnipotent, Choosing Agent—Almighty God. The true predicate-subject (*al-musnad ilayh*) is God, whereas the action (or what stands in its place) is metaphorically ascribed to the location in which it transpired. Thus, the earth is not the literal agent (*al-fā'il al-ḥaqīqī*), but rather the spatial receptacle (*al-zarf al-makānī*) wherein the action took place; hence, it constitutes a mental trope (*majāz 'aqlī*) whose underlying relationship is spatial.[²⁹] The earth did not perform the act of bringing forth; rather, because the bringing forth originated from within it, the action was figuratively attributed to it.
- **Originality / Masdar-Based Predication (*Al-Masdariyyah*)**: The relationship may be verbal-noun-based (*maṣdariyyah*), wherein the verb is predicated upon its own verbal noun (*maṣdar*). Almighty God states: *"And if an evil suggestion comes to you from Satan, then seek refuge in God. Indeed, He is Hearing and Knowing."*[³⁰] Here, the predicate (*al-musnad*) is the verb **comes as a suggestion** (*yanzagħanna*), while the predicate-subject (*al-musnad ilayh*) is the verbal noun **suggestion** (*nazgh*). Literally, the syntax would read: Satan suggests evil to human beings. However, Almighty God's phrasing—"And if a suggestion comes to you..."—transcends literal usage (*al-is'ti'māl al-ḥaqīqī*), as the action is attributed to its verbal noun rather than to its primary agent (Satan) by virtue of a cognitive cue (*qarīnah 'aqliyyah*).[³¹] The original and true agent remains Satan.
- **Objectivity / Passive-Recipient Predication (*Al-Maf'ūliyyah*)**: The relationship may also involve phrasing structured active-voice-wise yet predicated upon the direct object (*al-maf'ūl bih*). Almighty God states: *"...Have We not established for them a secure sanctuary..."*[³²] A sanctuary (*ḥaram*) does not intrinsically possess the state of being "secure" (*āmin*, active participle), given that sentience is an attribute of living beings; rather, it is "secured" (*ma'mūn*, passive participle). Thus, making the sanctuary an active agent when it is in fact the direct object receiving security constitutes a mental trope.
- **Agentivity / Active-Subject Predication (*Al-Fā'iliyyah*)**: The relationship may also be structured in a passive form (*maf'ūl*) yet predicated upon the active subject (*fā'il*). Almighty God states: *"And when you recite the Qur'an, We place between you and those who do not believe in the Hereafter a hidden barrier (*ḥijābān mastūrā*)." [33]* That is, a concealing barrier (*sātir*), for that which is literally

hidden (*mastūr*) in origin is the Qur'an itself.^[^34] Furthermore, the ultimate capacity to construct such a barrier belongs in reality to Almighty God. What we may conclude from this presentation of mental trope (*al-majāz al-‘aqlī*) is that it constitutes an indispensable stylistic device of the Arabic language that cannot be overlooked. It endows diction with an expansive semantic breath through which the hermeneut transcends literal bounds toward imaginative horizons in pursuit of meaning. Master scholars of language and rhetoric (*‘ilm al-bayān*) excelled in elucidating the relational modes of mental trope, deriving them from the diverse stylistic facets of discourse while demonstrating their role as instruments that enhance expressiveness and rhetorical beauty.

Classical scholars tirelessly pursued the traces of meaning, seeking it amidst the folds of words and syntactic constructions. To this end, they relied on multifaceted analytical mechanisms across numerous disciplines, each according to his intellectual disposition and orientation in grammar, rhetoric, jurisprudence fundamentals (*uṣūl*), exegesis (*tafsīr*), and hermeneutics (*ta'wīl*). They grounded every discipline upon theories of their own formulation, establishing foundational principles and codifying rules; nevertheless, these propositions lacked systematic organization—or, more accurately, were not subjected to the formal theoretical frameworks recognized in our modern era.

Meaning-seekers navigating the vast sea of terminology frequently encountered conceptual confusion, failing to reach a consensus capable of extinguishing the flames of discord, which ultimately led to intense sectarian conflicts. The root cause of all this lay in the intentionality of words and their underlying semantics. Deviant hermeneutics (*al-ta'wīl al-fāsid*) practiced by straying sects—which departed from the Qur'an and the Sunnah—contributed significantly to broadening the scope of factional strife and stoking the fires of fitnah within the Islamic Ummah.

6. Lexical Semantics and Hermeneutic Pathways

These represent critical avenues of inquiry to which scholars devoted immense attention, establishing clear governing principles that evolved into linguistic canons defining the methodology of reading and interpretation—thereby harnessing the text's full potential to signify meaning. Regarding semantic signification, scholars categorized it into three primary modes: correspondence (*dalālat al-muṭābaqah*), implication (*dalālat al-taḍammun*), and necessity (*dalālat al-iltizām*). Concerning textual clarity and precision, they classified semantic levels into the perspicuous (*al-muḥkam*), the explained (*al-mufassar*), the explicit (*al-naṣṣ*), and the apparent (*al-zāhir*).

In Al-Suyūṭī's formulation, lexical semantics signifies underlying meanings—a stance shared by numerous legal theorists (*uṣūliyyūn*), such as ‘Abbād ibn Sulaymān Al-Ṣaymarī, who linked the lexical signifier to its signified through a natural affinity (*munāsabah ṭabī‘iyyah*). Others held that words signify meanings by virtue of divine institution (*waḍ‘ ilāhī*), as posited by Al-Ḥasan Al-Ash‘arī, while another school argued that vocabulary derives meaning from human convention (*al-muwāḍa‘ah*), a view championed by the Mu‘tazilite scholar Abū Hāshim ‘Abd al-Salām ibn Muḥammad Al-Jubbā‘ī.

Without delving deeply into the extensive theological disputes and dialectical debates (*mushāddāt kalāmiyyah*) among Islamic sects, it is crucial to highlight the foundational role of lexical items in constructing and delineating semantic intentions and textual meanings. Scholars diverged significantly regarding how lexical structures signify legal rulings: "In the Hanafī school, semantic modes are divided into textual expression (*'ibārat al-naṣṣ*), textual allusion (*ishārat al-naṣṣ*), textual implication (*dalālat al-naṣṣ*), and textual requirement (*iqtidā' al-naṣṣ*). Among the scholastic theologians (*mutakallimūn*), however, they are divided into the explicitly expressed meaning (*manṭūq*) and the implicit implication (*mafḥūm*)—both of which further branch into numerous subdivisions."^[35]

Classical scholars forged robust links between lexical signifiers and their intended referents. Expressions varied across categories of the specific (*khāṣṣ*), the general (*'āmm*), the absolute (*muṭlaq*), and the restricted (*muqayyad*), all relying on the mechanism of hermeneutic interpretation (*ta'wīl*) and the elucidation of equivocal verses (*kashf al-mutashābih*). Legal theorists (*uṣūliyyūn*) placed paramount emphasis on lexical terms and their contingent semantic implications, regarding the lexical form as the ultimate pivot and locus of their interpretive work. Consequently, scholarly inquiries proliferated in pursuit of extrapolating legal rulings (*istinbāṭ al-ḥukm al-shar'ī*), tracing textual intent across context, vocabulary, absolute and general declarations, specific and general formulations, alongside other domains of textual analysis.

7. Contextual Semantics

Hermeneutic scholars paid paramount attention to scriptural texts—comprising the Qur'an and the Sunnah—approaching them through reading, comprehension, devotional practice, jurisprudence (*fiqh*), exegesis (*tafsīr*), and the elucidation of obscure terms. They established methodological controls for dealing with lexical items to extract legal rulings (*istinbāṭ al-ḥukm al-shar'ī*). How could they not, when divine warnings from Almighty God explicitly cautioned against the pitfalls of improper interpretation, error, and misguidance? Context was held in high esteem as a semantic argument for excavating and uncovering meanings; consequently, the principle of considering contextual semantics in textual comprehension became a cornerstone supporting human understandings. Imām Ibn Daqīq al-ʿId stated: "Indeed, context serves as a pathway toward clarifying ambiguous expressions (*al-mujmalāt*), specifying potential meanings (*ta'yīn al-muḥtamalāt*), aligning speech with its intended purpose, and achieving its proper understanding." Similarly, Ibn al-Qayyim remarked: "Context guides toward clarifying the ambiguous, determining the potential, establishing certainty regarding the exclusion of the unintended, specifying the general (*takḥṣīs al-'āmm*), restricting the absolute (*taqyīd al-muṭlaq*), and diversifying semantic implications. It constitutes one of the greatest contextual indicators (*qarā'in*) revealing the speaker's intent; whoever neglects it errs in his inquiry and misleads in his argumentation."^[36]

Furthermore, the study of meaning demands a conscious analysis of the contexts and situations in which words occur—including non-linguistic elements. This necessitates adopting the pragmatic context (*al-maqām*) or the surrounding elements of the communicative situation, such as the nature of the utterance, its various semantic implications, its actual effect on the

recipient, the personalities of both speaker and listener, and the socio-linguistic phenomena surrounding the text. Context generates cohesion among lexical items, creating a synergy that constructs meaning and structures discourse. Almighty God states: *"Say, 'If mankind and the jinn gathered in order to produce the like of this Qur'an, they could not produce the like of it, even if they were to each other assistants.'"*^[37] God challenged the Arabs in their area of greatest mastery and expertise—they were master craftsmen of speech. Yet, the challenge was not restricted to an isolated word; rather, it transcended that to encompass the entire syntactic context. 'Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī noted in this regard: "Evidence for this is that you may see a word that pleases you and wins your favor in one context, yet you see that very same word feeling heavy and disagreeable in another."^[38]

Context was systematically employed to trace and clarify meaning. Reaffirming this, Ibn al-Qayyim (may God have mercy upon him) pointed out: "Context guides toward clarifying the ambiguous, determining the potential, establishing certainty regarding the exclusion of the unintended, specifying the general, restricting the absolute, and diversifying semantic implications. It constitutes one of the greatest contextual indicators revealing the speaker's intent."^[39] All these constitute reading mechanisms and hermeneutic efforts deployed by classical scholars; they functioned as guiding instruments amidst the ambiguities of meaning to reach textual intentionality—especially given that the hermeneutic enterprise is fraught with risks and obstacles, considering that language is inherently open to multiple interpretations (**ḥammālatu awjuh**), and its semantic stations are dynamic rather than static, shifting in tandem with changing contexts and lexical variations.

8. Conscious Reading: Present Realities and Future Horizons

It is entirely impossible to disregard or overlook the transformation experienced by contemporary textual approaches and reading theories regarding discourse in general and the Book of God in particular—especially among scholars operating in the field of hermeneutics and reading of the divine scripture. Although opinions regarding these thinkers diverge and various religious factions reject them, one cannot deny the remarkable analytical activity associated with a group of intellectuals and figures such as Mohammed Arkoun, Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, Malek Bennabi, Hassan Hanafi, Ali Harb, and others. These scholars employed modern analytical tools and strategies that were unfamiliar in our classical heritage, instilling vitality, departing from uncritical imitation, striving to avoid past failures, and forging interpretive avenues responsive to current realities. Abu Zayd states: "What unites us as Muslims is contained within the text, and this must be acknowledged; however, accessing and attaining it can only occur through interpretive reading (**al-qirā'ah al-ta'wīliyyah**), given that hermeneutics represents the optimal process for expressing mental operations of profound depth when confronting texts and phenomena."^[40]

A reader who harbors apprehension toward the text—or a reader who constitutes a negligible drop in the ocean of the text—cannot discern the intentionality concealed within textual opacity. The true reliance in negotiating and harnessing texts rests upon that animator/interpreter (**shāhin**) who rides words and directs them according to their will, shattering horizons of expectation and generating unexpected semantic implications. This leads

us to assert that synthesizing human experiences—specifically those pertaining to textual approaches—provides an expansive reading space that, through its cultural orientations and intellectual branches, endows the text with semantic proliferation based on what literary history has produced across ages. Indeed, "linking history and literature... rests on the premise that literary models constitute an expression inspired by the essence of human experiences."^[41] This assists the reader in the process of construction and production, enabling them to fill the gaps and lacunae left to stimulate creative consciousness in uncovering hidden textual intentions—whether by excavating linguistic specificities or through other mechanisms such as stylistic deviation (*inḥirāf/inzīyāḥ*) and linguistic redirection to reveal the unsaid (*al-maskūt ‘anh*) and summon the absent from the text.

However, circumspection and deliberation are imperative; the interpreting self must not be given free rein to tamper with or violate the sanctity of texts without restraint, particularly regarding the Holy Qur'an. This concern prompted Ibn Taymiyyah to observe in his book **Muqaddimah fī Uṣūl al-Tafsīr** regarding scholars, interpreters, and their mode of engagement with the text and its rulings: "Ibn Taymiyyah called attention to this [scholarly engagement with texts] in his classification of text-analysts: among them are those who hold a preconceived belief in a meaning and force the wording to conform to it, without regard for what the Qur'anic vocabulary rightfully denotes and clarifies; among them also are those who attend solely to the literal wording, without considering what is appropriate for the speaker in the context of discourse. Among certain sects, this reached the point of extreme esoteric allegorization (*bāṭiniyyah*) or radical anthropomorphism (*tashbīh*), the root cause of all which traces back to the interpreter's own stance before the text."^[42]

What requires focus is a conscious openness to incoming sources of knowledge, particularly regarding reading and interpretive mechanisms, while striving to avoid the perpetual conflict between the ancient and the modern. What aids the Arab critic and the discerning reader is accepting the Other through human dialogue and coexistence: "We must proceed from our present concerns when engaging with our cultural reality in both its historical and contemporary dimensions. From this vantage point, our dialogue with Western thought acquires its authenticity and dynamism, and from here we cease chasing after every novelty simply because it comes to us from the advanced West."^[43]

Indeed, it is disgraceful to succumb to that fascination that leads to stagnation, or an openness whose outcome is uncritical acceptance, assimilation, and consumption without a perceptive intellectual movement or a debate grounded in expressing informed views—resulting instead in passive reliance, acceptance, and humiliatingly insatiable consumption. As rational agents, we do not reject participating in shaping global human thought, which is a legitimate human right embodying the understanding of our reality. What must be emphasized, however, is not giving Western hermeneutic mechanisms free rein to wreak havoc on Qur'anic texts without justification, solely to strip the religious text of its sanctity and isolate the facets of language and grammatical rules that constitute—in reality—foundational canons and standards appealed to in both ancient and modern times, without extremism or bigotry.

Reading a text is built upon ideologies and ideas carried by the author and carrying them in turn. Furthermore, linguistic material possesses stylistic methods, mechanisms, and possibilities that grant the reader that presence and reading competency empowering them to engage with and tame texts. "There are thus two sides: an objective side referring to language—which represents the common ground making the process of understanding possible—and a subjective side referring to the author's thought, manifested in their specific usage of language. These two sides point to the author's experience, which the reader seeks to reconstruct in order to understand the author or comprehend their experience. The reader may begin from whichever side they choose, as long as each leads to understanding the other."^[44]

9. Conclusion

Accordingly, this study has arrived at a series of key insights and findings, summarized as follows:

- **Re-evaluating Heritage Readings:** Modern scholarship must prioritize classical hermeneutic readings, seeking to capitalize on their insights and re-evaluate them in light of contemporary imperatives.
- **Formalization and Theoretical Systematization:** Classical readings represent a profound intellectual achievement that requires rigorous theoretical formulation and codification by modern scholars to open new horizons in the fields of textual reading and reception theory (*al-qirā'ah wa-l-talaqqī*).
- **Pioneering Nature of Classical Approaches:** Classical approaches achieved analytical milestones that modern critical methodologies have only recently reached. Furthermore, they were grounded in structured knowledge systems and rigorous foundational canons—contrary to the prevalent misconception that they relied merely on passive transmission and repetition.
- **Linguistic Phenomena as Essential Analytical Tools:** Linguistic phenomena serve as indispensable instruments for textual engagement and regulation, functioning as optimal mechanisms for establishing textual cohesion (*al-tamāsuk al-naṣṣī*) and coherence (*al-insijām*).
- **The Reader's Cultural Horizon:** The reader's intellectual background constitutes a vital resource for determining textual intent and the author's underlying purpose.
- **Polysemic Nature of Arabic:** The Arabic language is inherently multi-faceted (*ḥammālatu awjuh*), possessing an expansive interpretative realm bounded only by words and syntactic structures, and governed by the contexts in which they appear—all of which serve as factors driving the multiplicity and diversity of readings.
- **Lexical Dynamics:** Words serve as the foundational building blocks through which meanings evolve and diverge whenever their positioning, advancement, or deferment (*al-taqdīm wa-l-ta'khīr*) shifts within discourse.
- **Integrative Determinants of Meaning:** Semantic signification is inextricably bound to syntactic constructions, lexical choices, morphological formulas, structural patterns, and contextual settings—all of which represent critical reading mechanisms that cannot be overlooked when establishing textual intentionality.

- **The Impact of Ideological Backgrounds:** The role of ideological frameworks in orienting both author and reader during the processes of construction and deconstruction (*al-binā' wa-l-tafkīk*) is self-evident—denied only by those lacking critical insight and scholarly preparation.

- **Methodological Rigor of Classical Hermeneutics:** Classical readings relied on linguistic rules and legal foundations (*uṣūl shar'iyyah*) to ascertain discourse intentionality, establishing rigorous hermeneutic methodologies in their engagement with texts—particularly scriptural ones—to derive legal rulings based on identifying the higher objectives of the Lawgiver (*maqāṣid al-shar'*).

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