

## CRITICIZING THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL PLURALISM BASICS WITH AN EMPHASIS ON THE HOLY QURAN'S AYAT

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**Abstract.** Understanding of the religious texts and the emergence process of various interpretations are amongst the challenging topics in the present era. Epistemological pluralism is amongst the notions proposed in the area of Holy Quran understanding and interpretation. The theory is a form of epistemological relativism that realizes the cognizance or verity as relative based on time, place, society, culture, inheritance and belief in such a way that the thing that is considered as cognizance depends on the value or the importance of one or several of the abovementioned variables. The necessity of epistemological pluralism is the closing of the perception and conversation while the canonical ruler intends a special purpose of offering a text and pours his intention within the cast of words. The most important basics of the theory are: human cognizance relativity, originality of senses and human's materialism, non- specification of a text's meaning. The present writing aims at investigation of the foundations of epistemological pluralism and it has been carried out based on an analytical-descriptive method from an intra-religion standpoint and takes advantage of the holy Quran's AYAT to criticize and challenge the issue.

**Keywords:** epistemological pluralism, relativity of cognizance, originality of sense, semantic specification.

**Statement of the Problem.** Discrepancy on the understanding of the texts is a common issue and an undeniable reality. The individuals interested in literary texts have always witnessed the differences in the ideas by the literary men regarding the interpretation of some poems by Hafiz, Mawlana and the other poets and writers. The existence of diverse and different interpretations of the holy Quran and the jurisprudents and speakers' differences of ideas are expressive witnesses indicating the existence of the discrepancies and differences in the perceptions of the religious texts. Essentially, the necessary condition for the enhancement of the sciences that are based on interpretation and comprehension of text is the belief in the possibility of offering a variegated understanding of a text. The interpreter involved in the writing of a new rendering of a text believes that s/he can possibly present parts of the prior perceptions of the Holy Quran along with a correct understanding and conception. The belief is the prevalent presumption by those who engage in the writing of a new work in each of the study fields related to text interpretation.

Holy Quran interpretation has been posited since the very beginning of its revelation and there are made many efforts during these centuries in this regard. Each interpreter has applied a specific method to understand the holy Quran which has gradually caused the enactment of rules for it. The existence of many books on the interpretation of the Holy Quran and the explication of the AHADITH by immaculate Imams (peace be upon them) in the course of Islamic civilization history bear witness to the same issue that the Muslims have not neglected the understanding of their religious texts. In the contemporary era, epistemological pluralism theory is one of the challenging opinions in the area of interpretation that recognizes cognizance or verity as a relative issue based on time, place, society, culture, inheritance and belief in such a way that the thing that is deemed as cognizance depends on the value or the importance of one or several of the abovementioned variables.

The proponents of the epistemological pluralism believe that the understanding of a text is totally revolving about the interpreter's mentality. The text reader encounters the text with a certain prejudice and expectation and tries imposing his or her own mentality on the text and perceives the text the way s/he has expected and understood it. Based on such an analysis of the nature of text interpretation and understanding, all of the interpretations and any understanding of a text are individual-specific and avoidance of interpretation based on one's own ideas and making efforts for not having pre-knowledge and expectations and prejudices involved in the text conception are infeasible and rather improbable because the event of understanding and interpreting a text does not come about in any way other than this and the understanding of a text pivots about the orbit of the reader and the interpreter (see also, Mojtahed Shabestary, 2005: 20).

They offer another analysis of the nature of text understanding wherein text interpretation is described as the common product of the interpreter and reader's mentality and semantic horizon, on the one hand, and the text's semantic horizon, on the other. The blending of these two semantic horizons makes understanding happen. The reader starts conversing with the text and the text understanding is the result and outcome of such a conversation and interaction. Text understanding begins from the interpreter's mentality and semantic horizon. The reader goes to the text with specific prejudices and preconceptions that are moderated in the process of understanding by the text.

So, the text understanding is the product of a reciprocal action between the interpreter and the text which is termed as hermeneutic circle or hermeneutic chain (see also, Mojtabeh Shabestary, 2012: 46 and 378-379).

Based on such an analysis, the capability of a text to be understood and perceived is endless and there is a possibility of an unlimited number of readings of a text because one pillar of the understanding action, i.e. the text, is fixed and unchangeable, but the other pillar, i.e. the reader and his semantic horizon, is diverse and variable. Due to the same reason, there is a possibility of the occurrence of diverse and numerous conversations between the interpreters and the text as a result of which amalgamation of multiple and numerous horizons comes about and the text becomes capable of providing for unlimited readings, resultantly.

The importance and necessity of the present study lies in the idea that the acceptance of epistemological pluralism bars the achievement of the real intention of the canonical ruler because the prerequisite condition for it is that the meaning be changed in respect to the knowledge and materials stored in the minds of the audience and reader and everyone reaches a desired meaning of the book and tradition with his presuppositions in case of which no sure understanding can be obtained and everyone finds a specific understanding of a text and every understanding will be a proof for the owner thereof. Thus, the present study is a novel step aiming at the elucidation of the foundations of epistemological pluralism and it has been conducted based on an analytical-descriptive method and criticizes these foundations via seeking assistance from the AYAT in the holy Quran.

### **1. Relativity of the Human Cognizance:**

The first claim premise of the epistemological pluralists is the relativity of the human cognizance. The claim that the human understanding does not have the potency of achieving the realities because it is influenced by the time, place, conditions and characteristics of the perception system for which reason none of the human imaginations and confirmations are absolute rather they form a collection that is a mixture of the effect of those factors and it is neither equivalent to the external materials nor can they be resembled to topics residing the mind (Sobhani, 1996: 84); thus, there is no such a thing as pure perceptual form (Ja'afari, 2000, 189).

The perspective finally leads to a sort of epistemological relativism. Dubiousness entered a new stage with the onset of renaissance era. David Hume denied the intellectual cognitions to only approve the sensory data. Kant made a distinction between the external manifestation of an object (Noumenon) and the mental manifestation (phenomenon) to practically promote relativism. Knowing relativity and lack of decisiveness as the foundations of epistemological pluralism, some contemporary Muslim modernists have written as follows: "the philosophical and scientific decisiveness are lost in the new intellectual space and looking for sureness the way it was exercised by the antecedents has become fruitless and the lack of decisiveness has dominated the human thought in every ground" (Mojtabeh Shabestari, 2005: 172).

#### **1.1. Criticism and Evaluation of the Human Cognizance Relativity:**

It can be discerned in a brief review of the holy Quran's AYAT that such attitudes have never been confirmed and the truth is attainable from the viewpoint of the Holy Quran. There are many AYAT regarding the denial of epistemological relativism. The Holy Quran has directly targeted skepticism and provides reasons to prove both the possibility of its recognition and its objective actualization. The following points have to be pointed out to explain the issue:

1) It can be concluded in an investigation of the application cases of the term "doubt" and its derivatives in Arabic that dilemma, dubiousness, indecisiveness and non-confidence are intended by doubt whether be it equal to the probability of its contradiction in terms of the degree of dubiousness or not as it is stated in the dictionaries "doubt contradicts sureness" (Farahidi, 1989, 5:270; Ibn Manzour, 1993, 10: 451) or as stated by some "doubt means dubiousness and uncertainty" (Toraihi, 1995, 5: 276-277; see also Mostafavi, 1981, 10: 451). It is stated in some resources that "doubt is a state of dubiousness between two contradictory issues in which the intellect cannot prefer one to another" (Jorjani, 1885, 56; Saliba, 1993, 1: 705).

2) "Raib" which is also in Arabic synonymous to doubt and uncertainty has been denounced in the holy Quran because the tone of the AYAT related thereto is reproaching and reprimanding. There are various affairs related to "Raib" in the AYAT. For example, "doubt in the holy Quran" (BAQARAH: 2), "doubt in the resurrection" (JATHIEH: 32) and "doubt in death" (ESRA'A: 99). All of these cases are related to religious and value matters that should be acquired in a sure manner.

Amongst the AYAT wherein the term "Raib" or "doubt" has been used are the ones pertinent to "contest". The point that can be used from these AYAT is that if the people of the holy Quran revelation time did not have a correct understanding and belief in the AYAT, then it would become useless and meaningless for the contesting and challenging to be stated in the Holy Quran's AYAT. For instance, AYA 23 of SURAH BAQARAH brings testimony to the realism of the Holy Quran's revelation by the God and shows, first of all, that its signification is real, meaning that the holy Quran has been indeed revealed by the God and it is not that it has been made by the mentalities of the prophet (may Allah bestow him and his sacred progeny with the best of His regards) and, second

of all, the expression style is also realistic. A person adopts a position of expressing a realistic statement when speaking based on reason and insisting on the idea that bring an AYA like it if you doubt its realistic nature.

3) A substantial part of the holy Quran's teachings and guidance address limited doubt and attempting to get clear of it. As an example, doubt in the unity of the God (HUD: 62), doubt in resurrection (JATHIYEH, 32), doubt in revelation and prophecy (SAD, 8), doubt in religion (YUNUS, 104) and doubt in prophets' invitation (EBRAHIM, 9) have been put forward in this regard. All these cases that have dealt with doubt speak of religious issues doubt in which is not acceptable at all and acquisition of concrete knowledge of them all is necessary and required.

4) The Holy Quran has endeavored to take advantage of various methods to direct the doubters towards the real and reality-complying cognizance and prevent them from digression. These methods are:

4-1) referring to the correct and reality-conforming basics in which they do not have doubt such as AYA 84 and 85 of the SURAH MO'MENUN in which the doubters have been referred to the principle of monotheism in the existential creativity and divinity of the world that had also been affirmed by them so that they might get rid of the aforementioned doubts.

4-2) following the proof: in many of the cases, the holy Quran uses substantiation and reasoning as a means of reaching an ultimate proof and/or it has demanded proof from the enemy in some other need cases (BAQARAH: 111). In some other AYAT, it posits as a proof of the contestant's conviction his lack of substantiation of the evidences and proofs (MO'MENUN, 117). The proofs have also been put forth in denouncing the obedience of the doubt in the holy Quran (NAJM, 28). Of course, the suspicions can be categorized into two types in terms of proof and credibility: credible suspicion and incredible suspicion the latter of which is also intended by the Holy Quran.

4-3) reference to experts: such as AYA 94 of SURAH YUNUS that orders, "So, if you are in doubt, [O Muhammad], about that which we have revealed to you, then ask those who have been reading the scripture before you. The truth has certainly come to you from your Lord, so never be among the doubters" It can be understood from the appearance of the AYA that the God's apostle (may Allah bestow him and his sacred progeny with the best of His regards) has become doubtful but the honorable AYA does not necessarily mean it (Tabataba'ei, 1996, 10: 122).

AYA 15 of SURAH ESRA'A is amongst the AYAT that imply the epistemological relativism. In this AYA, the God expresses a stable divine principle and law that is not specific to a certain individual from a given race, gender, group, religion, sect, economic class, time and so forth rather it belongs to all the mankind and the AYA reads as follows: the God will not chastise (corporeally or otherworldly) any sinful human being unless there is sent a prophet to him or her and an ultimatum has been reached with him or her. The principle is recounted in the science of discourse and principles as the "heinousness of the chastisement for the untold". The thing that makes us consider the AYA's intention holding for and generalized to the entire human being is firstly the suspension of or entitlement to chastisement in the honorable AYA to the sending of a messenger and secondly the use of the term "messenger" in its indefinite form that conveys "whole" if used in a negation style.

It can be explained that the AYA means that if the divine message reaches the human beings and they turn their faces away from it and continue their insurgency and blasphemy and tyranny, they are entitled to receive divine chastisement. The requisite of the law is that firstly there should be a reality named divine message delivered to a large number of the human beings (Sufism denial) and secondly the message is understandable, recognizable and perceivable by the human audience (skepticism denial) because if it was not possible to perceive the message, the obedience and disobedience and the resultant chastisement would be rendered insensible. That is because the message that can be perceived by the humans has not been delivered to them as presumed, hence chastising one for what s/he has not been informed of cannot be issued by the wise God. Thirdly, the message incorporates all the mankind with no precondition and limitation for the audience (denial of cognizance relativity).

### **1.2. Originality of Sense and Human Materialism:**

The relativists drawn on the human materialism to claim that everything perceived through senses should be real. Thus, they say that a single thing might be sensed sweet by one and bitter in another's taste. Even a single thing does not always feel the same. It is not clear which of the manifestations is consistent with the reality and which is not. So, they both are similar in this sense. In this regard, there is either no truth, or if there is, it is ungettable (Sobhani, 1990).

Such pluralism in ideology has found its way to the religious cognizance. Therefore, the owners of thoughts look at the religion through the lens of pluralism the same way they use it to look at the nature. It means that they say everybody understands religion as far as his perception allows him and that the understanding by everyone is true (see also, Soroush, 2013, 37, 102-103).

Assuming that everything that cannot be seen and/or whatever that is not provable and/or revocable via the senses is mental and meaningless, the supporters of the epistemological pluralism have opined the nullity of the religious concepts and meanings and, then, they have come to the conclusion through such presumptions as

“whatever residing the mind is tangible and transient and changeable like the human himself” that the recognition of the religion and creed is something more of a variable and changeable issue thence, through analyzing the individual and social factors, involved in the formation of human mentality, within the format of evident models and their own acceptable hypotheses, they have introduced the religiosity image as something being resulted compulsorily out of certain psychological, social and/or economic conditions” (Ibid, 279-281).

In other words, in their ideas, human being is a material creature and his thoughts, as well, are material realities outputted through special material instruments in a mutual give and take with the outside world. Based thereon, the human understanding and perception becomes a temporal and relative issue disregarding the absoluteness or relativity of the truth.

#### **1.2.1. Sensory Cognizance and its Characteristics:**

There is no doubt in the idea that senses are means of recognition but Plato does not consider the tangible issues of a cognitive value and he only realizes reasonable things as recognizable and he states that “tangibles are appearances not the realities hence they are transient and mortal not original and persistent and science is always of the second type not the first”. He knows the intellect faculty as the very means of recognition and asserts that “recognition can only be attained via the intellectual proofs because the senses only pertain to the details and the details are always changing and varying and die out hence the subject of recognition should be a whole thing” (see also, Folkie, 1987, 193; Forughi, 1988, 1: 27 and Tabataba’ei, 1993, article5: 4).

Of course, the Islamic scholars, following the AYA 78 of the SURAH NAHL give the human senses an instrumental value although the instrumental role of the senses is only related to the imaginations and concepts that are adjustable to the tangibles like the concepts of human, tree and so on; not in all of the imaginations, because the human mind features a series of other imaginations, as well, that cannot be justified by means of any of the senses and they incumbently enter the mind through other routes and in other forms. Of course, although the imaginations have not entered directly via senses into the mind, they do not exist in there on spontaneously rather the mind gains access to them after becoming qualified for a series of sensory perceptions taking special forms. At first, the mind does not have any imagination of anything and it is like a blank slate that only possesses the talent of accepting a role and its initiation of perceptual activity is by the senses (see also Tabataba’ei, 1993, 5-6).

However, sensory recognition is characterized by features and limitations some of which have been pointed out below:

1) Sensory recognition only sees the appearances. Human senses cannot figure out the relationships and depth of the phenomena and the essence of things and it cannot infiltrate the internal nature of them and they only feel the apparent properties and manifestations and qualities such as color, sound, taste, softness and roughness. It is made clear from seeing the human beings’ gaining of insight over the internal nature of objects such as discerning the cause and effect relationships and the necessity of the existence of the effect upon the existence of the cause and other things of the like that there is another instrument plus senses.

2) Another constraint of the sensory recognition is that it is limited to the present time and it can only sense the present time objects and things related to the past or future are beyond the sensory recognition scope; the human senses can communicate with the current creatures. Thus, there is a need for another instrument for the understanding of the past and future creatures and incidents.

3) Another limitation of the sensory instrument is that it is restricted to a special region and place and it can only sense the things present in the same locality s/he is present and anything beyond that place are beyond the senses’ perception scope. As a specimen, if a person is only in Tehran, s/he can only sense things happening therein. It is made evident from confessing to the existence of Paris though not having sensed or seen it that we have travelled a way other than sensory perception.

4) Sensory recognition is partial and it belongs to every individual person and not to the general and all individuals. For example, a special color is imagined not the general concept thereof the same way that the animals perceive things and there is no such a thing as general concept for them. Children are the same. Their recognitions are partial and individual and they do not have a perception in its general meaning of the house, color or human beings (see also Tusi, 1996, 2: 324). This is so until they reach an intellectual and logical recognition.

5) Sensory recognition does not always guarantee sureness<sup>1</sup>; because whatever that is perceived by the senses only occurs in a substantiation manner meaning that we understand through the senses that there is, for instance,

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<sup>1</sup> Certainty has been numerously defined and the epistemological discussions speak of the possibility of reaching sureness of a logical kind which is termed “sureness in its specific sense” (Mozaffar, 1979, 2: 201) and it includes “firm belief corresponding to reality and proof (see also, Farabi, 1987, 1: 267, 350; Sahlan Al-Savi, 1993, 371; Tusi, 1988, 360) that is not revoked by doubtful skepticism” (Tahanavi, 1996, 2: 1812). The condition “believe” dismisses “doubt”, the condition “firm” dismisses “suspicion” and the condition “corresponding” dismisses “imitative belief”

light but this much of understanding that is obtained via seeing the light does not ever cause the certainty of the existence of the light. Certainty of the existence of the light is attained when we realize the impossibility of the contradictory ideas' summation as an intellectual principle and form an exceptional analogy based thereon and reach a decisive and certain result thereof in such a way that it can be stated that we can observe the light via the senses so it exists and every object is either existent or nonexistent meaning that it is impossible for the existence and nonexistence of a thing to collocate so the nonexistence of the observed light is improbable rendering its existence necessary. We are sure that the light exists (Javadi Amoli, 2012, 256-257).

Amongst the topics posited in epistemological discussions on the sensory perception is the issue of proneness or non-proneness of the senses to errors (Russel, 1973, 33). For the senses' error proneness, a spoon inside a glass of water can be exemplified. The spoon is seen in a refracted manner while the eyes do not see it refracted in a natural state and with the absence of impediment. The holy Quran has also pointed to the erroneousness of the sensory perception: "at the time that you faced one another [in the battlefield], He showed them few in your eyes and showed you [as well] few in their eyes so that the God carry out the thing that must have been done" (ANFAL: 44).

The aforesaid issue is a vivid evidence of the idea that there is a possibility of error and deviation in the sensory perception means but it can be understood from the other AYAT (NOOR: 24) that the humans' senses will bring testimony to the God in respect to the occupations the humans have done in them and the scenes and sounds they have heard before the God; now, we know that such a testimonial should be devoid of any deviation and error and be qualified with the required substantiation and credibility in the divine court; thus, it is discerned that it is possible to perceive with no error and deviation through the senses but it is only granted by the divine authorization.

### **1.2.2. Criticizing and Analyzing the Originality of the Sense and Human Materialism:**

The idea that every human being possesses a special perceptual and cell systems and his brain receptors differ from those of another human being and, resultantly, his cognizance differs from that of another human is an incorrect statement because the human perception is not only limited to his brain and his brain cells rather these are intellectual work tools and the truth of the mankind is his abstract soul (regarding the abstractness of the soul, please refer to Sadr Al-Mota'allehin, 1981, 9: 99; Sadr Al-Mota'allehin, 1984, 7: 299). The understanding and perception, as abstract things (about abstractness of the perception and cognizance, refer to Sadr Al-Mota'allehin, 1981, 3: 297 and 300; 7: 37; Mesbah Yazdi, 1994, 2: 244) and the work of the brain and heart is not material rather when the instrument is readied as a result of their interactions and is faced with the basic scientific issues, the ground is set for the abstract soul to perceive the issues for what they really are.

Holy Quran realizes the existential truth of the mankind, to wit the soul, as something trans-material and belonging to the world of orders (ESRA'A, 85). In another AYA, the distinction between the creation of the soul and the creation of the human body is explicitly stated (Mo'MENUN, 14). On the other hand, in the other AYAT, the proposition of the materialists' notions regarding the external evidences and the human sciences and the instruments and tools related to these sciences (Mo'MENUN, 37-38).

In various cases, Holy Quran retells the debates by the claimants of the originality of the matter to the prophets and determines the method and style of their thoughts and recognition to be a sense-based method and recognition. In SURAH FORQAN, some of these individuals have been quoted as follows: "they, who do not hope in meeting with us, said why the angels have not been descended to us or why are we not seeing our God; they had in their insides haughtiness and arrogance and insurgency and mutiny; the day they bear witness to the angels, there would be no good news and annunciation for the criminals rather they will be deprived and prohibited of it and wish to avoid confrontation and evade the meeting" (FORQAN, 21-22).

In regard of the recognition, as well, the Holy Quran, along with speaking of the ones who deny the origin and the resurrection, introduces the individuals who, despite claiming religiosity, share their recognition and methods and styles of thinking with them. Such AYAT signify the idea that although sensualism results in the denial of the supernatural realities and nonmaterial affairs and leads to the denial of the certainty of them and/or skepticism in them, many of the religiosity claimers call themselves divine and nonmaterial disregarding the conflict between these two issues and in spite of their being bound to the sensory recognition (Javadi Amoli, 2012: 243).

It is made clear in an investigation of the AYAT in the holy Quran that such issues as intellection (HAJJ, 46), jurisprudence (A'ARAF: 179; AN'AM: 25) and contemplation (MUHAMMAD: 24) have been attributed to the heart and ego and the perceivable issues are intended by heart in the Quranic expressions; as it is stated by Allameh Tabataba'ei in this regard that "by heart, the very human soul and ego are intended" (Tabataba'ei, 1996, 2: 223). Therefore, understanding is a task accomplishable by the soul and the soul does neither possess a special smell and not a special color nor the other characteristics of the material creature so that anything perceived by the soul could

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from the definition (Ibid). There is no possibility of any violation in such a type of certainty. It is not possible to achieve such a type of certainty via sensory recognition.

be said to have acquired a special color and smell or certain material effects. Therefore, when the soul reaches the brink of thought, it does not see itself specialized and restricted rather it finds itself devoid of any place.

The result of the statements made herein is that the entire philosophical reasons put forward for the abstraction and nonmaterial nature of the science can also prove the stability and persistence of science. Thus, the science is not a material truth and the thing that is not material is clean of movement and graduation and features fixedness and permanence. So, the science that is the abstract aspect of the matter is fixed and unchangeable and nonrelative (Javadi Amoli, 2007, 279). Thus, the truth of the mankind does not undergo decay.

### **1.3. The Lack of A Text's Meaning Specification:**

The lack of a text's meaning specification is amongst the important epistemological pluralism foundations rooted in the philosophical hermeneutics discussions. The proponents of epistemological pluralism believe in the muteness of the canonical rules and language of the holy Quran and express that our understanding of a text revolves about questions we ask of the text in such a way that we cannot learn anything from the text if we do not pose any question thereto. The more our question is target at the depth in respect to religion, the more fleshy will be our understanding thereof. In this regard, we can add to our understanding of the religion with newer questions (Soroush, 2013, 270). Soroush states that "religion is sitting quietly for us to ask it questions and we know it to the same extent of the questions we ask of it" (Ibid, 506). From his perspective, "religion or, in other words, revelation is mute" (Soroush, 1997, 3). Elsewhere, he states that "religion is fixed and still and it starts speaking only when it is presented with the questions by the mankind and demanded for answers and it can be discerned when it is brought into the mind" (Soroush, 2013, 442).

The prerequisite for such a premise is that the text words should not contain meaning and this is the interpreter who covers the words with meaning and, of course, he, himself, is prone to theorization in understanding of the meaning: "meanings are subject to theorization and that is because guises are put on the expressions' bodies" (Ibid, 286).

#### **1.3.1. Criticizing and Evaluating the Text Meaning's Lack of Specification:**

Before dealing with the criticism of this premise and proving the speak-ability of the holy Quran's language, there are materials presented regarding the implication of words to meanings. In this regard, questions have been raised as to how do the words imply meaning in the common colloquial speeches? Is it that all the words of a text imply certain meanings always explicitly or is it that they never imply meanings or is there a third type that some words explicitly imply meanings and some others do not? Using a little scrutiny, it can be understood that the implication of words on meanings is not always absolute; to wit it is not so that they explicitly imply certain meanings so that the text could be described as "plain" or that they do not explicitly imply certain meanings so that the text could be recounted as mute and dumb rather there is a third type that is interpretation of a text. In the common conversations, the implication of word to meaning is of three types:

1) Some words explicitly imply certain meanings like the statement "it is off on Fridays" and it is also termed plain text in which case such a statement does not need interpretation and doubting such statements is some sort of misunderstanding. Our religious texts, including the book and the tradition are not devoid of such statements.

2) Some words do not explicitly imply meanings (Sobhani, 1991, 84) rather they appear in words in such a way that they are not characterized by "plainness" but they are reliable and less likely to mean the otherwise and the world's intellectuals rely on them in their common colloquial speeches and act based on the substantiations of their appearance (see also Khoraqsani, 1988, 323) and there is no need for seeking for a solution.

Of course, the otherwise possibility also strikes the mind in the holy Quran's appearance of the words and the speaker might mean something else like AYA 7 of SURAH HASHR that expresses the necessity of obeying the entire things recommended and prohibited by the prophet (may Allah bestow him and his sacred progeny the best of His regards) whereas the AYA's revelation rank shows the necessity of a verdict regarding its revelation that is the very "Taqsim Fi'e" and implies absolute submission which is a consequential implication (Shaker, 2003, 184). The point worthy of note here is that due to the possibility of the other meaning from the surface of some of the AYAT in the holy Quran, these AYAT lend themselves to interpretations that provide for other meanings for the AYA and of course all these meanings are of the same importance.

3) The implication of some words to the meanings is ambiguous in such a way that the reader cannot understand what the speaker mean in which case solutions have to be sought to understand the text. It is in this part that the similarities are proposed meaning that some words' implications to the meanings become likely; they do not either have explicit implication, to be considered plain, or imply meanings from the surface structure that could be reliable in which case the text should be interpreted so that the speaker's intention could be revealed. One should know that the solution does not lie in epistemological pluralism rather a method should be employed that is determined by the immaculate Imams (peace be upon them) and that is referring to the solids in case of the similarities otherwise one should refer to the narrations by chaste AHL AL-BAYT (peace be upon them) that is per se demanding another discussion and outside the present writing's scope.

Epistemological pluralism claimers have extended the text muteness to the entire text while there are statements in the text that are “plain” and needless of interpretation; in particular, there are many plain AYAT with explicit implications in the Holy Quran as well as some other AYAT featuring surface meaning that are reliable and there is only a small fraction of AYAT that remain as the ones with similar meanings and they can also be understood via referring to the solid evidences.

In criticizing this premise, one should note that by the text utterance, the very implication to which it guides is intended and, corresponding to the law of understanding and the culture of conversation, it makes the listener hear its specific sound and the perceive comprehend its specific meaning and speech or utterance has never intended to mean the vocalized expression of the words in a text and there is no difference in this regard between the uttered and written words and the written existence guides the reader the same way that the vocalized existence does and the necessary condition for enjoying the guidance of the written or spoken existence is the very preunderstanding and the guidance of the spoken or written existence is sometimes maintaining of the same presuppositions and sometimes changing them based on such methods as perfection or removal and denial or by other methods (Javadi Amoli, 2000, 1: 227-228).

Sorush compares religion with a scientist who has seal of silence on his lips; these are our questions that make him talk (Sorush, 2013, 264); this is while His Highness Ali (PBUH) orders that “the book of the God is before you and it speaks with you and it is not tongue-tied” (Sayyed Razi, 2004, 250).

Therefore, Holy Quran has expressed whatever the thing human beings need on their path to guidance: “and we descended this book to you that expresses everything” (NAHL: 89); the duty of the interpreter is understanding the expressions and guidance and it is not born of and decorating the answers, as envisaged by Mr. Sorush (Sorush, 2013, 272). In other words, the religious texts contain answers to the religious questions whether be it those raised at the revelation time or be it the questions proposed in the future ... the religious scholar does not make mistakes in some cases, he comprehends the purports conveyed by the religious texts not that the meanings are the speeches made in his mind (Va’ez, 1997, 29).

Thus, the religious texts and the language of the holy Quran are not mute and dumb so that they can be spoken by the others’ tongues rather it is the divine language that purifies and cleanses the humans’ ears of soul of the dirt by its clean flowing. Revelation is the language of creation that deals in full chastity with the understanding of the truths of the universe and elucidation of all the things involved in the human felicity. The human history has never being deplete of this lucid stream although a prophet, as the role-model of the human offspring and the prominent figure of his own nation, has received a book every now and then from the God in proportion to the power and rank he has had and other messengers have been sent after a book-owning apostle to protect and interpret what has been succinctly mentioned in the book (see also MO’MENUN, 44).

The question that might be posed here is that if the meaning of a religious text is not specifiable and the interpreter and the reader of the text are faced with an endless number of the meanings and perceptions of the religious texts, how can it be guaranteed that the interpreter presents a correct meaning of the text?

Based on the premise of the lack of meaning specification, the interpreter never has the competency of reaching the honest meaning of the text and he cannot make a distinction between the correct and incorrect meaning of the text. Referring to the conscience, everyone easily finds out that s/he will never consider an unspecified meaning in his mind and every understanding task intends the expression of a definite purport that can be contained by the mind. Even those who consider an unspecified meaning for a text and propose it as a variable matter do not give it to the hands of the course of the time and change of the traditions upon writing a text rather they intend familiarizing the audience with certain thoughts of their own. Therefore, one can understand through stored knowledge that meanings have certain limit in the mind and because others, as well, like us, have mind, thought and intentions of expressing concepts and, finally, making audience understand their speech, they also have specified meanings in their minds that they want them to be regenerated and embedded in the audience mind (see also, Hadavi Tehrani, 1998, 271). Moreover, accepting the unspecified nature of the meaning is against the methods practiced by the intellectuals who trust in the expressiveness and signification of the texts and conversation in their engagements in and disputes on the talks, understanding and making understand, enacting and announcing law otherwise debating over a topic would be useless (see also, Reshad, 2000, 40-41).

### **1.3.2. The Proofs of the Holy Quran’s Speak-ability:**

The claim that the holy Quran’s language is mute and devoid of meaning and needful of interpretation done by the mankind and that the mankind reaches numerous interpretations based on his presuppositions is blemished hence unacceptable by the holy Quran because the Holy Quran introduces itself using such terms as light (MA’IDAH: 15), expressive (AL-E-IMRAN: 138), deliverer of message (EBRAHIM: 52), preacher (YUNUS: 57), proof (NISA’A: 174), revealer (NAHL: 89).

On the other hand, the holy Quran also introduces itself as the “guider” (BAQARAH: 185) and its trait of being a guide is not in compliance with its being considered mute. In other words, the divine speech expresses the divine

intentions to the obliged individuals with utmost eloquence and fluency and the obliged individuals, having knowledge of the Holy Quran's words and their meanings are capable of understanding the concepts introduced therein. Essentially, the holy Quran's miraculous nature lies in the idea that it is absolute in every respect and not stainable in any aspect, both in terms of the words' implications and also the exemplifications presented therein in cases they are deemed necessary as well as in terms of the eloquence and fluency. Thus, the holy Quran is absolute and its absoluteness means it is chaste. Interpretation of the Holy Quran based on the non-absolute human presumptions and rationalities is multipliable but it will be rendered wasted using a single means and instrument, to wit the things acquired from inside of the holy Quran and based on the definite presuppositions of the intellect; if it is considered that there are numerous meanings, they would be of the type of the perfection of non-contradictory understanding. In summary, the holy Quran is never silent and mute and devoid of implication and understanding; and, the various interpretations of the holy Quran will be rendered wasted or directed towards perfection, not contradiction, if they are done based on the internal teachings of the Holy Quran.

Now, a set of AYAT in the Holy Quran are utilized to investigate the claim of its muteness:

1) The mighty God orders in AYA 174 of SURAH NISA'A that "O, people, you have been sent a proof by your God and an illuminating light has been turned on before you". "Proof" rhyming with "Fo'lan" means expression of reason and although it is used in its infinitive form, it is used in its subjective form and such a use of a word indicates that the reason and substantiation put forth are recounted as proof in which case its meaning will become "illuminating". In the AYA, there are three interpretations written in describing the holy Quran each of which underlines the other: "proof", "light" and "elucidator".

Of course, some interpreters have also considered it likely that by "proof", the great apostle (may Allah bestow him and his sacred progeny the best of His regards) is intended: "this possibility can be confirmed by the idea that the sentence has been stated under AYAT speaking of the honesty of the God's apostle (may Allah bestow him and his sacred progeny the best of His regards) in his prophecy and another confirming idea is that the holy Quran has been descended by the eminent God and the use of the term "Ja'akom" is far from being thinkable about it and the third confirmation is that the AYA is a conclusion of a discussion and, also, another confirmation is that the sentence "Va'atasemu Beh" has been mentioned in the next AYA; and, it is stated in the interpretation of AYA 101 of SURAH AL-E-Emran that by "E'etesam", resorting to the book of the God and obeying the God's apostle (may Allah bestow him and his sacred progeny the best of His regards) is intended" (Tabataba'ei, 1996, 5: 160).

Accepting the idea that by proof, the great apostle (may Allah bestow him and his sacred progeny the best of His regards) is intended not the holy Quran, then, definitely, by "light" and "elucidator", the holy Quran is intended because it has been ordered that "we have descended down an illuminating light before you" and it negates the muteness of the holy Quran in any of the cases because attributing the attributes "light" and "illuminating" to the divine discourse is to be accompanied by the speak-ability and guidance of it hence not actualized assuming the muteness thereof.

2) It is stated in AYA 89 of SURAH NAHL that "[and remember] the day we appointed in every nation an evidence from themselves and we brought you as evidence to these; and we descended this book onto you while it is elucidative of everything and it is guidance and mercy and annunciation for the ones submitting to Islam". Some of the interpreters know the sentence "and we have descended this book to you" as some sort of appeal and irrelevant to the beginning of the AYA (Kashani, 1957, 5: 218); but it is more accurate to know it of a noun phrase type for the addressing pronoun that is used in the sentence "Wa Je'ena Bek"; some other interpreters have corroborated the possibility (Tabataba'ei, 1996, 12: 345) and, considering such an assumption, it does not make any difference to consider the auxiliary "Qad" in the beginning of the noun phrase and then consider the statement as "Qad Nazzalna" or disregard it<sup>2</sup>.

Anyway, the meaning of the AYA would be as follows: "we have sent you as witness to this nation while we had previously sent you a book that was the elucidator of everything and it was considered as guidance and mercy and annunciation for the Muslims".

The term "Tebyan", rhyming with "Tef'al", has been used to serve exaggeration and it means that the Holy Quran is an eloquent and perfect and illuminating expression of everything. As for the phrase "Tebyanan Lekolle Shay'e", some believe that because the holy Quran is the book of guidance for the entire people and it cannot be given any rank below this, so the phrase "Lekolle Shay'e" encompasses all the things that refer to guidance such as the teachings on the origin and end and the good virtues and the divine rules and the stories and preaching needed by the people to be guided towards the right path. Thus, the holy Quran is enumerated as an elucidator for all these cases and not elucidator for everything and every science (Tabarsi, 1993, 3: 379; Tusi, [no date], 6: 417).

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<sup>2</sup>There is a discrepancy between Basris and Kufis regarding the idea as to whether "Qad" should be regarded or disregarded in noun phrase beginning with a past tense verb (see also Tabataba'ei, 1996, under the honorable AYA's interpretation).



The statement is true in case that by “Tebyan”, only the expression of the intentions via words and verbal implications is intended but if the intention in using it also includes the expression in the form of verbal implication plus other things, then “Lekolle Shay’e” embraces everything in every field. The confirmation of this possibility can be exemplified in the narrations introducing the holy Quran as the elucidator of everything and have realized the knowledge of “Ma Kan wa Ma Yakun wa Ma Howa Ka’en” inserted in the Holy Quran. Amongst these narrations, the one by Imam Sadeq (PBUH) can be pointed out who orders that “I swear to the God that we have knowledge of whatever there is in the skies and on earth and in the heave and in the hell and whatever the thing existing between them”. Then his highness ordered “all this knowledge has been presented in the book of the God” (then his highness recited the aforesaid AYA” (Faiz Kashani, 1994, 3: 150). Based on such a possibility, it is not far to think of the holy Quran as containing cues pointing to the latent things not perceivable by ordinary minds; and, in any case, whether considering “Tebyanan Lekolle Shay’e” limited to the affairs that are related to the divine guidance or considering it all-inclusive and pervasive, the AYA’s implication to the idea that the divine discourse is not mute and silent and transfers its intention to the audience is clear and vivid as it is asserted under the interpretation of the honorable AYA, meanwhile objecting the utterances claiming the muteness of the holy Quran, by Sheikh Tusi that: “the honorable AYA implies the invalidation of the sayings by the ones claiming that the divine discourse does not imply anything [and is mute]; because the words of a wise individual feature implications in two respects: firstly, his words imply the same purport required by them and secondly his words imply the accuracy of the meaning that needs proof. Otherwise, if the words by a wise person lack the two abovementioned implications they are to be excluded from the wisdom circle and considered as babbling serving no specific use” (Tusi, [no date], 6: 417).

**Conclusion.** The present study recounted the premises of epistemological pluralism theory and criticized and challenged them. The most important of these premises are: the relativity of the human cognition, the originality of senses and human materialism, non-specification of the text’s meaning. In criticizing the relativity of the human cognizance, the holy Quran, firstly, knows the principle of reality as sure and definite and, secondly, realizes it reachable by the cognition and speaks of the possibility of the humans’ correct recognition. In the meanwhile, these statements do not mean that the human beings can gain knowledge of everything and that in every existential level of them rather some things are beyond the humans’ insight, including the knowledge of time, the occurrence of resurrection and the nature of the soul. The holy Quran takes advantage of various methods to direct the doubters towards the real cognizance compliant with reality and prevents them from diversion. These methods are: referring to the correct and reality-conforming foundations in which they themselves have no doubt; following the proof and referring to the experts. In criticizing the originality of the senses and materialism, it was concluded that all of the philosophical reasons are laid on the foundation of the knowledge’s being of an abstract and nonmaterial nature and the stability and persistence of the knowledge were also proved. Thus, science is not a material reality and the nonmaterial things are clear of movement and gradation hence they should be considered fixed and permanent. So, science or knowledge is abstract form of matter and it is fixed and unchangeable and non-relative.

It was concluded in criticizing the non-specifiable nature of the text’s meaning that the religious texts possess specific and ultimate meanings because the canonical ruler intends a special purport in offering a text and he has poured his intention within the format of words and the people can have a correct understanding and credible comprehension and substantiation of the holy Quran and, of course, it is not correct to give way to any sort of interpretation; on the other hand, the holy Quran introduces itself with such characteristics as illuminator, expressive, deliverer of a message, preacher, proof and elucidator; the expressiveness and elucidator traits pertain to its clear-cut expression of an issue. It is an illuminator in that it is per se brilliant and enlightens other things under the radiance radius of it. How can the holy Quran guide to the most robust religions if it is not understandable? Therefore, the prerequisite of the guidance by the holy Quran is its correct understanding and sure recognition both of which reveal the speak-ability of the holy Quran. Furthermore, the premises of the epistemological pluralism theory are faced with substantial pitfalls based on the intellectual understanding logic in such a way that giving up to its instruments renders the theosophy and the religious statements essentially meaningless and many of the theosophical verdicts will become devoid of any cognition-bearing implication and the meaningfulness and cognition-bearing characteristics of the language of religion and the holy Quran have been signified and elaborated in the discussions on the philosophy of religion.

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