

## نقد مؤلفه‌های بنیادین ابوزید پیرامون وحی‌پژوهی قرآنی محمدصادق اردلان<sup>۱</sup>، و آبادی یونو<sup>۲</sup>، و جامع آمانو صالح<sup>۳</sup>

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اطلاعات مقاله	چکیده
<b>نوع مقاله:</b> مقاله پژوهشی	ابوزید، متفکر معاصر مصری، مؤلفه‌های چالشی شاخصی پیرامون وحی قرآنی مطرح نموده است. وی در رویکرد اول، وحی را نوعی رابطه زبانی وابسته به مؤلفه های وحی یعنی پیام دهنده و پیام گیرنده می داند که اجزای تشکیل دهنده آن، خداوند، پیامبر اکرم (ص) و روح القدس هستند. او قرآن را از سنخ متن و معجزه ادبی می داند و بر وحیانی بودن محتوا دون الفاظ تأکید دارد. ابوزید در رویکرد دوم خویش، وحی را متنی و ثمره رابطه زبانی خداوند و رسول اکرم (ص) می داند. در نهایت در رویکرد سوم، وحی را مجموعه گفتمان‌هایی قلمداد کرده است که نزول هر کدام از لحاظ مکانی و زمانی، در یک شرایط ویژه بوده و نمی‌توان احکام آنها را به سایر مکانها و زمانها تسری داد (تاریخ‌مندی قرآن کریم). به بیان دیگر، ابوزید بر این باور است که وحی الهی به صورت گفتمانی در قالب رابطه بین امر خداوند و امر بشری به وجود آمده است. هدف این نوشتار، بازپژوهی نقادانه مولفه های نظریه التقاطی ابوزید درباره وحی قرآنی و نقد مستندات وی با روش توصیفی-تحلیلی و با مطالعه کتابخانه‌ای است. از یافته‌های پژوهش این است که ابوزید ابتدا قرآن کریم را متنی با اعجاز ادیبانه قلمداد نموده که بعد از قرائت رسول اکرم (ص)، به متن بشری مبدل گشته است. این دیدگاه سبب می‌شود که علم یقینی رسول اکرم (ص)
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موقع تلقی وحی، نادیده گرفته شود و این با حکمت خداوند، در تضاد است.

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### 1. مقدمه

نصر حامد ابوزید از متفکران برجسته معاصر مصری و از چهره‌های شاخص مکتب نومعتزله به شمار می‌رود که آراء و نظریات وی در حوزه قرآن پژوهی، به ویژه در مورد ماهیت وحی، جنجال‌های فراوانی را در محافل آکادمیک و دینی برانگیخته است. دیدگاه‌های او که متأثر از مطالعات هرمنوتیکی، ساختارگرایی و نیز آشنایی با مکاتب ادبی مدرن است، بازخوانی رادیکالی از مفهوم وحی ارائه می‌دهد. ابوزید در طول حیات فکری خود، سه رویکرد متمایز و در عین حال مرتبط را در باب وحی قرآنی طرح نموده است. در رویکرد اول، وحی را نوعی رابطه زبانی وابسته به مؤلفه‌های فرستنده (خدا)، گیرنده (پیامبر) و واسطه (روح‌القدس) می‌داند و قرآن را متنی با اعجاز ادبی قلمداد می‌کند که پس از قرائت پیامبر(ص)، به متنی بشری تبدیل شده است. در رویکرد دوم، وحی را به تجربه دینی پیامبر(ص) تقلیل داده و الفاظ قرآن را ساخته ذهن ایشان می‌داند. در نهایت، در رویکرد سوم، قرآن را مجموعه‌ای از گفتمان‌های تاریخمند معرفی می‌کند که در بستر خاص فرهنگی-اجتماعی عصر نزول شکل گرفته و قابلیت تعمیم به همه زمان‌ها و مکان‌ها را ندارد. این پژوهش با هدف نقد و واکاوی

مستندات این سه رویکرد التقاطی و نشان دادن تناقضات درونی آنها با مبانی مسلم اسلامی و نیز حکمت الهی انجام شده است.

## 2. روش تحقیق

این پژوهش با روش توصیفی-تحلیلی و با رویکرد کتابخانه‌ای انجام شده است. داده‌های مورد نیاز از طریق مطالعه مستقیم و فیش‌برداری نظام‌مند از آثار اصلی ابوزید (همچون «مفهوم النص»، «نقد الخطاب الدینی» و «معنای متن») و نیز منابع نقد اندیشه‌های وی گردآوری شده است. در فرآیند تحلیل، ابتدا مؤلفه‌های اصلی سه رویکرد ابوزید به طور جداگانه استخراج و تبیین گردید. سپس، مبانی فکری و منابع الهام‌بخش او (مانند آرای یاکوبسن در زبان‌شناسی، سوسور در نشانه‌شناسی و ارکون در تاریخ‌مندی متون دینی) شناسایی شد. در گام نهایی، با استناد به دلایل عقلی، شواهد قرآنی و روایی، و نیز با توجه به لوازم و پیامدهای هر یک از دیدگاه‌های ابوزید، نقدهای ساختاریافته‌ای ارائه گردید تا ناسازگاری این نظریات با آموزه‌های قطعی دینی و اعجاز قرآن به اثبات برسد.

## 3. یافته‌های تحقیق

یافته‌های این پژوهش را می‌توان در نقد سه رویکرد ابوزید به شرح زیر دسته‌بندی نمود:

الف) نقد رویکرد اول: رابطه زبانی و اعجاز ادبی

ابوزید در این رویکرد که متأثر از نظریه ارتباطی یاکوبسن و مکتب ادبی تفسیر (امین خولی، احمد خلف الله) است، وحی را یک فرآیند ارتباط زبانی متشکل از فرستنده، گیرنده، پیام و رمز مشترک می‌داند. به زعم او، قرآن پس از دریافت توسط پیامبر(ص) و بیان ایشان، به متن بشری تبدیل می‌شود. این نگاه چند اشکال بنیادین دارد:

تعارض با علم یقینی پیامبر(ص): اگر قرآن پس از قرائت پیامبر(ص) به متنی بشری تبدیل شود، مستلزم آن است که علم حضرت به وحی، علمی حضوری و یقینی نباشد. این با جایگاه نبوت و حکمت الهی در انتخاب رسولی مطمئن برای ابلاغ پیام در تضاد است. غفلت از ماهیت فرابشری وحی: این دیدگاه، نقش فعال و مستقل فرشته وحی (جبرئیل) به عنوان واسطه فیض را نادیده گرفته و وحی را به یک فرآیند صرفاً زبانی و درونی تقلیل می‌دهد. ابطال اعجاز قرآن: اگر قرآن صرفاً یک متن ادبی برجسته باشد، همانند سایر متون بشری در معرض نقد و حتی تقلید قرار می‌گیرد، در حالی که قرآن خود را معجزه جاویدان و تحدی‌ناپذیر معرفی می‌کند.

(ب) نقد رویکرد دوم: تجربه دینی پیامبر(ص)

در این مرحله، ابوزید تحت تأثیر پست‌مدرنیسم و هرمنوتیک رادیکال، وحی را به تجربه درونی و شخصی پیامبر(ص) تفسیر می‌کند و الفاظ قرآن را برساخته ذهن ایشان می‌داند. مستندات او برای این مدعا، آیاتی مانند شوری: ۵۱ و وجود قرائات مختلف است. نقدهای وارد بر این دیدگاه عبارتند از:

مغایرت با صریح قرآن: آیات متعددی (مانند نمل: ۶، طه: ۱۳، انبیا: ۲۳، شعراء: ۱۹۲-۱۹۴) به صراحت بر «تلقى» و «دریافت» قرآن از جانب خداوند، «نزول» آن توسط «روح الامین» و «تلاوت» آن توسط پیامبر(ص) دلالت دارند، نه بر تولید و ساخت آن توسط ایشان.

ابطال عصمت پیامبر(ص): اگر الفاظ قرآن ساخته پیامبر(ص) باشد، احتمال خطا و سهو در انتقال معانی الهی منتفی نیست. این با عقیده قطعی به عصمت انبیاء در ابلاغ وحی ناسازگار است.

تفسیر نادرست از قرائات: قرائات سبعة، ناظر به لهجه‌ها و شیوه‌های مختلف خوانش متن واحد و ثابتی است که از پیامبر(ص)

نقل شده است، نه دلیلی بر چندگانگی و عدم قطعیت خود متن وحیانی.

پیامدهای مخرب: این دیدگاه به بشری دانستن مطلق دین، نسبی‌گرایی در فهم متون دینی و تنزل وحی به یک احساس شخصی می‌انجامد.

(ج) نقد رویکرد سوم: تاریخمندی و گفتمان‌های چندصدا

ابوزید در آخرین دوره فکری خود، تحت تأثیر آرای محمد ارکون و فردینان دو سوسور، قرآن را مجموعه‌ای از گفتمان‌های تاریخمند و منکثر می‌داند که برخی ریشه در تجربه نبوی و برخی دیگر متأثر از فرهنگ و گفت‌وگوهای جامعه عربستان عصر نزول دارد. او با استناد به وجود برخی عناصر فرهنگی (مانند اشاره به اساطیر) در قرآن، نتیجه می‌گیرد که احکام و معارف آن قابل تسری به همه اعصار نیست. نقدهای این دیدگاه عبارتند از:

نقض غرض هدایتگری قرآن: اگر قرآن بازتاب صرف فرهنگ زمانه باشد و احکام آن تاریخمند باشد، دیگر نمی‌تواند برنامه جامع و جاودانه برای هدایت بشر باشد.

غفلت از تحول معنایی واژگان: قرآن اگرچه از لغات رایج عصر استفاده کرده، اما به بسیاری از آنها معنایی جدید، عمیق و الهی بخشیده است (مانند تبدیل معنای «صلاة» از دعا به عبادتی خاص).




تناقض با اعجاز علمی و تشریحی قرآن: بسیاری از حقایق علمی و احکام تربیتی-اجتماعی قرآن فراتر از دانش و فرهنگ عصر نزول است که خود گواهی بر منشأ الهی آن است.

یکسان‌انگاری نادرست: وجود برخی اشارات به باورهای رایج در قرآن (برای نقد یا هدایت آنها) به معنای پذیرش و تأیید آن فرهنگ توسط قرآن نیست.

## 4. نتیجه‌گیری

بررسی و نقد سه گانه نظریه وحی از منظر نصر حامد ابوزید نشان می‌دهد که این دیدگاه‌ها، با وجود ادعای ارائه خوانشی مدرن و منطقی از قرآن، از کاستی‌های بنیادین نظری و روشی رنج می‌برند. رویکرد زبانی-ادبی او با نادیده گرفتن علم یقینی پیامبر(ص) و ماهیت فرابشری فرآیند وحی، اعجاز قرآن را تضعیف می‌کند. رویکرد تجربه دینی با تغلیل وحی به پدیده‌ای درونی و شخصی، نه تنها با صراحت آیات قرآن در توصیف نحوه نزول و تلقی وحی در تضاد است، بلکه به نسبی‌شدن دین و سلب حجیت از الفاظ قرآن می‌انجامد. در نهایت، رویکرد تاریخمندی و گفتمانی نیز با قائل شدن به چندصدایی و محدودیت زمانی-مکانی قرآن، غایت هدایتگری جهان‌شمول و جاودانه این کتاب آسمانی را نادیده گرفته و آن را در حد متنی بشری و متأثر از فرهنگ دوره جاهلیت تنزل می‌دهد. نقطه مشترک تمامی این نقدها، تعارض آشکار آنها با حکمت الهی است. خدای حکیمی که پیامبری معصوم را برای ابلاغ پیام خود برمی‌گزیند، قطعاً متنی را نازل می‌کند که هم در الفاظ و هم در معانی، از هرگونه خطا مصون باشد و توانایی هدایت بشر در همه اعصار را دارا باشد. بنابراین، نظریات ابوزید در باب وحی، با وجود پوشش علمی و پیچیده، در نهایت نمی‌توانند تبیین‌کننده مناسبی از پدیده وحی و ماهیت قرآن به عنوان کلام الله مجید باشند.

# A Critique of Abu Zayd’s Foundational Components in Quranic Revelation Studies

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## ABSTRACT

Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, a contemporary Egyptian thinker, proposed several significant yet controversial components concerning Quranic revelation. In his first approach, he interprets revelation as a linguistic relationship dependent on its elements—the message-giver and the message-receiver—whose constituent parts are God, the Prophet (pbuh), and the Holy Spirit. He regards the Qur’an as a textual and literary miracle, emphasizing the revelatory nature of its content rather than its verbal form. In his second approach, Abu Zayd conceives revelation as a text, the product of a linguistic interaction between God and His Messenger (pbuh). Finally, in his third approach, he views revelation as a set of discourses, each revealed within a particular spatio-temporal context, whose rulings, he claims, cannot be extended to other times and places—thus asserting the historicity of the Qur’an. In other words, Abu Zayd maintains that divine revelation emerged discursively within the framework of a relationship between divine command and human agency.

This paper critically re-examines the key components of Abu Zayd’s eclectic theory of Quranic revelation, assessing his evidence through a descriptive-analytical method and library-based research. The study concludes that Abu Zayd initially considered the Qur’an a text possessing literary i’jāz (inimitability), which, upon being recited by the Prophet (pbuh), transformed into a human text. This claim leads to the neglect of the Prophet’s (pbuh) certain and direct knowledge during the reception of revelation—an assumption that stands in contradiction to divine wisdom.

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## Introduction

Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd is a prominent figure of the Neo-Mu‘tazilite school, whose thoughts on revelation have influenced and been adopted by numerous contemporary Muslim intellectuals. Born on July 10, 1943, in the village of Quḥāfah, Gharbiyah governorate, northern Egypt, his father named him Nasr (“victory”) to commemorate the Allies’ triumph over the Axis powers in World War II.

Abu Zayd earned his bachelor’s degree in Arabic Literature in 1972, followed by a master’s in Arabic Language and Literature in 1976. Awarded a research fellowship, he spent two years in the United States, where he encountered the principles of hermeneutics as articulated by Hirsch, Gadamer, and Ricoeur, and engaged deeply with modernism, postmodernism, and structuralism (Abu Zayd, 2001: 94). In 1981, he received his PhD from Cairo University with a dissertation entitled *The Philosophy of Ta’wīl: A Study of the Interpretation of the Qur’an according to Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabi*.

In 2010, while visiting Indonesia, Abu Zayd contracted an unidentified viral illness and passed away shortly after his return to Egypt at the age of 66. It should be noted that Abu Zayd did not have a son named Zayd—the kunya “Abu Zayd” was an honorary title traditionally used as a surname (Tavakkoli Bina, 2017: 61).

His major works include:

1. *Al-Ittijāh al-‘Aqlī fī al-Tafsīr: Dirāsah fī Qaḍīyyat al-Majāz fī al-Qur’ān ‘ind al-Mu‘tazilah* (The Rational Trend in Interpretation: A Study of Metaphor in the Qur’an among the Mu‘tazilites)
2. *Falsafat al-Ta’wīl: Dirāsah fī Ta’wīl al-Qur’ān ‘ind Muhyī al-Dīn ibn ‘Arabī* (The Philosophy of Hermeneutics: A Study of Ibn ‘Arabi’s Interpretation of the Qur’an)
3. *Mafhūm al-Naṣṣ: Dirāsah fī ‘Ulūm al-Qur’ān* (The Concept of the Text: A Study in Qur’anic Sciences)
4. *Al-Khiṭāb wa al-Ta’wīl* (Discourse and Hermeneutics)
5. *Hākadhā Takallama Ibn ‘Arabī* (Thus Spoke Ibn ‘Arabi)
6. *Rethinking the Qur’an*
7. *Mohammad und die Zeichen Gottes* (Muhammad and the Signs of God)

### Literature Review

In terms of general background, important studies include *Naqd va Barrasī-hā-yi darbārah-yi Andīshah-hā-yi Naṣr Ḥāmid Abū Zayd (Critiques and Reviews of Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd's Thoughts)* (2001) by Sa'īd Adelnejad; *Nūmu'tazilīyān: Guftugū bā Naṣr Ḥāmid Abū Zayd (Neo-Mu'tazilites: A Dialogue with Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd)* (2009) by Mohammad Reza Vasefi, which includes dialogues with Mohammed Abed al-Jabri, Mohammed Arkoun, and Hassan Hanafi; *Dīdgāh-i Mufakkirān-i Mu'āṣir-i Qur'ānī: Jaryān-hā va Nazarīyah-hā (Views of Contemporary Qur'anic Thinkers: Trends and Theories)* (2015) by Mohammad Ali Rezaei Esfahani; and *Barrasi va Naqd-i Mabānī-yi Naṣr Ḥāmid Abū Zayd dar Fahm-i Mutūn-i Dīnī (A Study and Critique of Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd's Foundations in Understanding Religious Texts)* (2018) by Safdar Ali Ziaei.

Regarding more specialized works, key references include *Naqd va Bar-rasī-yi Chīstī-yi Waḥy-i Qur'ānī dar Nigāh-i Nūmu'tazilah (A Critique and Study of the Nature of Qur'anic Revelation from the Neo-Mu'tazilite Perspective)* (2013) by Jawad Goli; *Muḥammad (pbuh) wa Āyāt-i Khudā: Qur'ān va Āyandah-yi Islām (Muhammad (pbuh) and the Signs of God: The Qur'an and the Future of Islam)* (2014) by Abdullah Nasri, Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, and Hilal Sezgin; and *Maktab-i Ta'wīlī va Guftumān-i Waḥy (The Hermeneutical School and the Discourse of Revelation)* (2017) by Mitham Tavakkoli Bina.

Among the most relevant articles are “*Muṭālī'ah-yi Intiqādī-yi Dīdgāh-i Naṣr Ḥāmid Abū Zayd dar Bāb-i Māhiyyat-i Waḥy*” (A Critical Study of Abu Zayd's View on the Nature of Revelation) (2012) by Mitham Tavakkoli Bina, and “*Bar-rasī va Naqd-i Chīstī-yi Waḥy az Dīdgāh-i Naṣr Ḥāmid Abū Zayd*” (A Study and Critique of the Nature of Revelation from Abu Zayd's Perspective) (2019) by Ali Askari Yazdi and Saeed Mirzaei.

While both discuss revelation, they approach the topic from different angles, using distinct evidence from Abu Zayd's writings and failing to present conclusive arguments. The present paper seeks to fill this gap by analyzing Abu Zayd's intellectual evolution - his Egyptian (first

approach) and European (second and third approaches) phases - and refuting the inconsistencies within his threefold theory of revelation.

Furthermore, two theses - “Revelation from the Perspective of Martyr Motahhari and Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd” by Ebrahimi Sehgonbad (2011), and “A Comparative Study of the Process of Revelation from the Perspectives of Allamah Tabataba’i and Abu Zayd” by Mohammadpur Shahkolahei (2018) - explored revelation comparatively, yet without delving sufficiently into Abu Zayd’s theoretical structure or the evolution of his hermeneutical framework.

### **Fundamental Research Assumptions**

Before engaging in analysis, it is essential to clarify the conceptual foundations and key terms—particularly *waḥy* (revelation). Linguistically, *waḥy* is the verbal noun of *waḥā-yawḥī*, encompassing meanings such as indication, inspiration, writing, message, and hidden communication (Farāhīdī, 1985, 3:1932; Jawharī, 1984, 3:2519). Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī defines it as “a swift and subtle indication,” hence the expression *amrun waḥyun*—a quick command (Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, 1992, 1:858). Ibn Fāris identifies its root as denoting “concealed impartation of knowledge,” to which all usages ultimately return (Ibn Fāris, 1991, 6:93).

In Qur’anic terminology, revelation refers to the specific communication of divine truths and knowledge from Almighty God to His chosen servants—the prophets—through means other than ordinary channels of cognition (reason, experience, or mystical intuition), for the purpose of conveying guidance to humankind (‘Abduh, 1994: 102; Ṣobḥānī, 1992, 3:128; Michel, 1998: 28; Ma‘rifat, 1996, 1:51).

### **The Concept of Revelation from Abu Zayd's Perspective**

Abu Zayd examined the meaning of revelation through two principal components. In the first, prior to the emergence of Islam, he considers revelation a communicative act involving a process of declaration, expression, and information transmission. His analysis relies exclusively on *Lisān al-‘Arab*, from which he begins his inquiry into the term’s linguistic roots. However, this approach remains incomplete,

as it limits itself to a single lexicographical source. On this basis, Abu Zayd defines *i'lām* (declaration) as encompassing indication, inspiration, gesture, writing, and speech (Tavakkoli Bina, 2017: 142).

Beyond the literal meaning, Abu Zayd attributes to revelation a symbolic dimension, arguing that every communicative act necessarily depends on shared symbols between the two parties involved. Thus, symbolism becomes an integral element of revelation, a feature which, according to him, can also be observed within the Qur'an (Mohammadpur, 2018: 15). Consequently, in the second stage, Abu Zayd expands the scope of revelation to encompass all texts—Islamic and non-Islamic alike—that represent a discourse between God and humanity. Hence, in his view, revelation constitutes a secret form of declaration between God and humankind (Abu Zayd, 2000: 76).

### Critique and Analysis

While Abu Zayd interprets *i'lām* as inclusive of all the aforementioned meanings of revelation, Arabic lexicographers emphasize the speed and immediacy of transmission as essential to its meaning (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1974: 18:76). It should be noted that Lisān al-'Arab - the very source Abu Zayd depends on - cites this meaning from Abū Ishāq and eventually acknowledges speed as a central aspect of the term. Thus, in the various usages of *waḥy*-including inspiration, prophetic revelation, and indication - the dominant characteristic is its rapid and concealed nature, as if the indication occurs instantaneously and remains hidden from public perception.

Abu Zayd often appeals to Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddimah* to support his position (Tavakkoli Bina, 2017: 142). However, Ibn Khaldun's statement does not substantiate his claim. Ibn Khaldun explicitly states:

“Receiving the message from Gabriel, referring to human faculties, and understanding the revealed message all occur in an instant—even faster than the blink of an eye—because these processes are not temporal; rather, they happen simultaneously and instantaneously. This phenomenon is therefore termed *waḥy* (revelation) because it lexically denotes swiftness and rapidity.” (Ibn Khaldun, 1996: 98)

### The Difference Between Revelation and Inspiration

Although human beings are incapable of perceiving the essences of revelation (wahy) and inspiration (ilhām), the essential distinctions between prophetic revelation and saintly inspiration may be outlined as follows (Miṣbāḥ Yazdī, 1988: 24–25):

1. Nature and Function – Revelation is an exclusive attribute of prophethood, while inspiration pertains to sainthood (walāyah) (Qaysarī, 1956: 111). Thus, revelation ceased with the end of prophethood, whereas inspiration continues as a feature of sainthood (Shīrāzī, 1984: 145; Ashtiyānī, 1951: 586). Ibn ‘Abbās reports that the Prophet (pbuh) said:

*“God granted me five things and granted ‘Alī five things... He gave me revelation and gave him inspiration.”* (Majlisī, 1983: 18:37)

2. Source and Certainty – The source of revelation is explicitly known to the Prophet (pbuh), who recognizes it as divine. In contrast, the source of inspiration is often indeterminate; hence, if the recipient (mulham) is not infallible, he cannot be certain of the origin of his inspiration (Ibn ‘Arabī, 1994: 3:238–239; Shīrāzī, 1975: 608).

3. Purpose and Obligation – The content of revelation contains universal truths and divine laws essential to human perfection, obligating the Prophet (pbuh) to convey them to the people. Inspiration, by contrast, is personal and imposes no duty of public transmission (Shīrāzī, 1984: 146).

4. Epistemic Authority – Revelation serves as binding proof for others beyond its recipient, whereas inspiration holds certainty only for the inspired individual. It must also conform to the standards of the Shari‘ah (Naṣrī, 1997: 118). Nevertheless, the inspiration of an infallible Imam (as), due to his infallibility, is authoritative for others as well.

**First Approach:** The Component of the New Literary Approach in Interpreting the Qur’an and Its Language

In Abu Zayd’s first approach, revelation is conceived as a linguistic dependency whose constituent parts are God Almighty, the Prophet (pbuh), and the Holy Spirit. Within this framework, Abu Zayd regards the Qur’an as a textual and literary miracle, asserting that once the Prophet (pbuh) understood and recited it, the Qur’an transformed into a human text—an outcome of human expression (Abu Zayd, 2004: 155).

This approach reflects the influence of contemporary literary schools and Neo-Mu‘tazilite thought. The literary study of the Qur’an traces back to Muhammad ‘Abduh, who held that Qur’anic expressions should be understood within the linguistic and cultural context of its first audience (Khalaf Allāh, 1984: 8). Proponents of this new literary school—such as Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, Amīn al-Khūlī, Khalaf Allāh, and Ḥasan Ḥanafī—emphasized the Qur’an’s literary aspects and employed literary methodologies in interpretation. Abu Zayd’s perspective represents the culmination of this intellectual trajectory: originating with ‘Abduh and Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, maturing through al-Khūlī, and reaching its fullest expression with Khalaf Allāh and Ḥanafī (Golī, 2013: 71).

#### **Influence of Muhammad ‘Abduh**

Confirming ‘Abduh’s view that Qur’anic narratives serve primarily for admonition, Abu Zayd argues that “it is inappropriate to extract historical facts from the Qur’an’s narratives” (Abu Zayd, *The Qur’an as Text; The Qur’an as Various Discourses*). He contends that the imagery and conceptions of the revelation era were employed as literary devices (Nāzīm al-Sayyid; [www.nasr-hamed-abuzayd.blogfa.com](http://www.nasr-hamed-abuzayd.blogfa.com))

#### **Influence of Amīn al-Khūlī**

Abu Zayd explicitly acknowledges his intellectual debt to Amīn al-Khūlī (Vasefī, 2008: 18). He holds that the Qur’an, possessing narrative, poetic, and allegorical dimensions, should be analyzed through a literary method compatible with its linguistic nature (Abu Zayd, 2000: 234). His insistence on viewing the Qur’an as a human text reflects al-Khūlī’s position that its study must proceed independently of religious presuppositions (al-Khūlī, 1952: 304).

#### **Influence of Khalaf Allāh**

Following Aḥmad Khalaf Allāh, Abu Zayd maintains that the Qur’an contains mythic narratives (Golī, 2013: 91). He claims that “signs of myth appear in the Qur’an—for instance, in the stories of Dhul-Qarnayn

or the Queen of Sheba, which belong to pre-Islamic Arabian mythology” (Abu Zayd, *The Qur’an as Text*). He also asserts that certain rulings, such as the subordination of the People of the Book and the *jizyah*, were context-bound and are no longer applicable (Abu Zayd, 2004: 285–287).

### **Influence of Ḥasan Ḥanafī**

Like Ḥanafī, Abu Zayd argues that revelation becomes a human phenomenon upon its reception and comprehension by human beings (Golī, 2013: 92). He believes this humanization begins with the Prophet’s (pbuh) very first recitation of the Qur’an (Abu Zayd, 2004: 155) and that the Qur’an itself is influenced by socio-historical realities (Vasefī, 2008: 28).

### **Influence of Roman Jakobson’s Views**

Drawing from Jakobson’s linguistic theory—rooted in Russian Formalism—Abu Zayd views revelation as a communicative act composed of six interrelated elements: sender, receiver, message, code, contact, and context. For revelation to be understood, the Prophet (pbuh) must have been familiar with the linguistic and cultural context of the message, while comprehension among later audiences depends on their own linguistic and cultural competence (Abu Zayd, 1997: 415; 2006: 101).

### **Analysis**

Although Jakobson’s communication model helps clarify Abu Zayd’s linguistic conception of revelation, it remains limited in explaining the metaphysical nature of the revelatory act. From an Islamic perspective, revelation is a divine act in which God conveys His Word to the Prophet (pbuh) through a non-human mode of transmission. While the model identifies essential components—sender, receiver, message, code, contact, and context—it fails to capture the transcendental reality of revelation. The challenge lies not in describing its linguistic form but in understanding the divine-human relationship underlying this unique communication.

### Examination of the Literary School's Views

Although the Qur'an undoubtedly displays profound literary and artistic qualities, it differs fundamentally from human literary works. The Qur'an's primary aim is guidance, and attributing mythic or fictional content to its narratives undermines this divine purpose and contradicts God's wisdom. The Qur'an presents its stories as moral exemplars, not as imaginative creations, stating:

*"Indeed, in their stories there is a lesson for those of understanding"* (Yūsuf: 111).

As Ayatollah Ma'rifat (2009: 540) remarks, it is inconceivable that God would employ myths or legends when authentic and instructive historical events suffice for moral admonition. Detaching Qur'anic narratives from their objective truth transforms them into myth rather than divine instruction (ibid., 518). Hence, the belief that the Qur'an draws from unreal imaginings of its time contradicts both rational and theological principles governing divine speech (Sajedi, 2006: 292–294).

#### **Second Approach: Religious Experience**

According to Abu Zayd's second approach, Qur'anic revelation is the outcome of the Prophet's (pbuh) religious experience. This approach is founded upon several principles:

a) Divine communication with humankind: Abu Zayd asserts that God communicates with every human being directly, without the mediation of an angel. However, in His communication with prophets, revelation occurs through the mediation of the angel of revelation.

b) Nature of revelation: The angel of revelation inspires the Prophet (pbuh) in Arabic, yet this inspiration is of the category of thought and reflection, not of word and language.

c) Human authorship of the Qur'an: From Abu Zayd's perspective, the words of the Qur'an cannot be considered the literal speech (kalām) of God. Rather, Kalām Allāh denotes the thoughts and ideas that the angel of revelation inspires in the Prophet (pbuh). Consequently, the Qur'an is a historical text influenced by the cultural context of its time (Abu Zayd, 2000: 13–15), possessing a two-way relationship with reality: on one hand, it is shaped by the realities of its environment; on the other, it acts upon them. Accordingly, pre-Islamic Arab beliefs—

such as those concerning magic, jinn, and similar notions—are reflected within it (Abu Zayd, 1966: 213).

d) The Prophet’s spiritual practice: Abu Zayd further contends that the Prophet’s (pbuh) retreat to Mount Hira and his spiritual unveiling there were practices consistent with an existing religious tradition. He compares this to the ascetic seclusion of monks who withdrew to remote and difficult places, concluding that the Prophet (pbuh) adopted a similar customary method (Khodabakhsh; [www.nasr-hamed-abuzayd.blogfa.com](http://www.nasr-hamed-abuzayd.blogfa.com))

Abu Zayd’s Evidence for Adopting this Approach

#### *a) Qur’anic Verses*

Abu Zayd cites the verse:

*“And it is not for any human being that Allah should speak to him except through revelation or from behind a partition or that He sends a messenger to reveal, by His permission, what He wills. Indeed, He is Most High and Wise.”* (Ash-Shura: 51)

He argues that God’s communication with His servants occurs in different forms- sometimes from behind a veil (as in the case of Moses (as)), but in other cases through the angel of revelation who conveys what God intends (Abu Zayd, 2000: 13–14). Therefore, revelation, according to Abu Zayd, does not occur in linguistic form; rather, the angel inspires the Prophet’s (pbuh) thought. Verses such as:

*“Say, ‘Whoever is an enemy to Gabriel—it is [none but] he who has brought it [i.e., the Qur’an] down upon your heart, by permission of Allah.’”* (Al-Baqarah: 97)

*“[It is] a revelation from the Lord of the worlds. The Trustworthy Spirit has brought it down upon your heart [O Muhammad]—that you may be of the warners.”* (Ash-Shu‘ara: 192–194)

are interpreted by Abu Zayd to mean that the angel of revelation inspires the Prophet (pbuh) rather than dictating words; thus, the Qur’an’s words are attributable to the Prophet himself (Abu Zayd, 2000: 12–13).

### Analysis

The cited verses, however, do not support Abu Zayd's claim. They affirm that both the wording and meaning of the Qur'an are from God. Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, interpreting verses 193–194 of Surah Ash-Shu'ara, explains that the pronoun in “nazala bihi” refers to the Qur'an, which is composed of words that embody divine meanings. Hence, revelation includes both wording and meaning; it is not that the Prophet expressed the revealed meanings in his own words. Verses such as “So when We have recited it [through Gabriel], then follow its recitation” (Al-Qiyāmah: 18) and “[These are] the verses of Allah which We recite to you in truth” (Al-Jāthiyah: 6) explicitly affirm that both meaning and wording are divinely revealed (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1995, 15:448–449). Moreover, the Qur'an's tahaddi (challenge) verses, which defy others to produce a text like it, confirm that the Prophet (pbuh) was not the originator of its words.

### *b) Variant Readings (Qirā'āt)*

Another of Abu Zayd's evidences is the existence of variant readings. He argues that the narrations on the Qur'an being revealed upon seven ahruf (modes) imply interpretive plurality. According to him, if the revelatory nature of the words is denied, doubts regarding textual distortion (taḥrīf) are nullified (Abu Zayd, 2000: 12). Thus, the Qur'an, like all texts, accommodates multiple legitimate readings and interpretations (Dialogue between Yoginder Sikand and Abu Zayd, 2010: 66).

### Analysis

This reasoning is insufficient. The narrations of sab'at ahruf refer to the allowance for Muslims to recite the Qur'an in their respective dialects to ease recitation—not to the later qirā'āt standardized centuries after revelation. The Qur'an was received directly from the Prophet (pbuh), whereas the qirā'āt reflect later interpretive efforts by reciters to determine pronunciation and textual form. Therefore, the Qur'an and qirā'āt are distinct categories: the former is divinely revealed and

inimitable, while the latter represents human attempts to read and transmit it (Ma‘rifat, 2009: 351; Zarkashī, 1957, 1:318). Furthermore, the canonical seven qirā‘āt rest upon solitary reports (khabar al-wāḥid), which are not sufficient to establish the textual essence of the Qur’an.

### Problems with Analyzing Revelation as Religious Experience

#### 1. Prophets as recipients, not agents:

The Qur’an presents prophets as receivers of revelation: “And indeed, you [Muhammad] receive the Qur’an from one Wise and Knowing” (An-Naml: 6), and “And I have chosen you, so listen to what is revealed” (Ta-Ha: 13). Thus, they are not active agents generating revelation.

#### 2. Revelation as divine descent:

“Indeed, it is We who have sent down the Qur’an to you [O Muhammad] in stages” (Al-Insan: 23). Revelation descends from God, distinguishing it from human experience.

#### 3. Mediation of the angel of revelation:

“The Trustworthy Spirit has brought it down upon your heart” (Ash-Shu‘ara: 192–194). The Prophet (pbuh) himself stated: “Sometimes the angel appears to me as a man and speaks to me.” (Majlisī, 1983, 1:41).

#### 4. Revelation beyond prophetic control:

The Qur’an states: “We [angels] descend not except by the command of your Lord.” (Maryam: 64). Thus, the descent of revelation is not initiated by the Prophet (pbuh).

#### 5. Prophets’ obedience to revelation:

“Say, ‘It is not for me to change it on my own accord. I only follow what is revealed to me.’” (Yunus: 15). Hence, revelation does not originate from the Prophet’s (pbuh) experience.

#### 6. The Prophet follows revelation, not vice versa:

“And follow what is revealed to you” (Yunus: 109). Abu Zayd’s claim that revelation follows the Prophet contradicts this.

#### 7. Predetermination of revelation:

“But this is an honored Qur’an in a Register well-protected” (Al-Buruj: 21–22). The Qur’an existed in a preserved form before its descent, disproving claims of experiential generation.

### Consequences of Abu Zayd's Second Approach

#### a) Considering Revelation Fallible:

By interpreting revelation as the Prophet's human experience, Abu Zayd's view undermines prophetic infallibility in conveying divine truth. As in Christian theology, where revelation is considered fallible due to its experiential nature (Karimi, 2008: 137), this approach questions the certainty of the prophetic message.

#### b) Humanization of Religion and Revelation:

This approach renders revelation a human product influenced by external and psychological factors (Karimi, 2008: 138). Abu Zayd explicitly asserts that Qur'anic expressions are those of the Prophet (pbuh), not of God (Abu Zayd, 2002: 517), a position contradicted by numerous verses affirming the divine origin of the Qur'an.

#### c) Inaccessibility of Revelatory Truths:

If revelation is purely experiential, human access to its truths is impossible, since experiences are inherently personal. Consequently, what the Prophet (pbuh) conveys would be an interpretation of his experience, not revelation itself (Barbour, 2010: 246). However, the Qur'an commands: "O Messenger, announce that which has been revealed to you from your Lord" (Al-Mā'idah: 67), showing that the message is objective and communicable.

#### d) Reduction of Revelation to Subjective Emotion:

Religious experience theory reduces revelation to an inner feeling or sentiment, neglecting its rational, social, and moral dimensions. Wayne Proudfoot holds that religion, in this view, becomes a matter of feeling rather than belief or moral principle (Proudfoot, 1998: 29). Yet, the Qur'an explicitly ties revelation to social justice and moral order: "We have already sent Our messengers with clear evidences and sent down with them the Scripture and the balance that the people may maintain [their affairs] in justice" (Al-Hadīd: 25).

#### **Third Approach:** The Historicity of the Qur'an

In his final work *Muhammad and the Signs of God* and in his interview with Hilal Sezgin, Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd views the Qur'an as a collection of discourses, each revealed within a specific spatio-

temporal context, whose rulings cannot be extended beyond their historical setting. In other words, although Abu Zayd continues to interpret revelation as a religious experience, he holds that divine revelation emerged discursively, within the framework of interaction between the divine command and the human element (Khodabakhsh; [www.nasr-hamed-abuzayd.blogfa.com](http://www.nasr-hamed-abuzayd.blogfa.com))

This third approach rests upon several principles:

1. Abu Zayd argues that since the Qur'an was not revealed to the Prophet (pbuh) as a complete book, it cannot be regarded as a single, unified text, but rather as a collection of distinct discourses (Abu Zayd; Interview with Stefan Orth).

2. According to Abu Zayd, part of the Qur'an originates from the Prophet's (pbuh) own religious experience - that is, divine revelation - while another part reflects the experiences and discourses of the society in which revelation occurred. Hence, the numerous dialogues in Mecca and Medina played a crucial role in shaping the Qur'anic text (Abu Zayd; Interview with Akbar Ganji, <http://nasr-hamed-abuzayd.blogfa.com/post/9>)

## Abu Zayd's Evidence for the Third Approach

### *1. Influence of Mohammed Arkoun*

Abu Zayd was notably influenced by Mohammed Arkoun, who argued that revelation was initially oral and only later transformed into a written form. Thus, the Qur'an, which began as an oral revelation, ultimately became a muṣḥaf (codex). Arkoun emphasized the discursive nature of revelation and distinguished between the revealed Qur'an and the compiled muṣḥaf (Arkoun, 1993: 77).

Following this line, Abu Zayd maintains that the Qur'anic revelation must be separated from the muṣḥaf text and that the Qur'an should be viewed as a collection of discourses rather than a single continuous composition. Unlike Arkoun, who perceived a unified literary structure in the Qur'an, Abu Zayd describes it as a polyphonic discourse, asserting that the Qur'anic speaker is not always God alone (Abu Zayd; *A New Approach to the Qur'an: From Text to Discourse, Towards a Humanist Hermeneutic*).

Analysis:

Although the Qur'an contains numerous discourses reflecting the

speech and interactions of the Prophet's (pbuh) time, it remains, in its entirety, divine revelation, revealed for the guidance and education of humankind. Therefore, contrary to Abu Zayd's claim, polyphony does not apply to the Qur'an, and the inclusion of the speech of the Prophet's contemporaries serves a pedagogical purpose - guiding and reforming their conduct - rather than indicating multiple, independent voices.

## *2. Reliance on Saussure's Linguistic Theory*

Abu Zayd draws heavily upon the linguistic theory of Ferdinand de Saussure, who viewed language as a social phenomenon subject to temporal change (Harris, 2002: 90). Saussure defined language as a system of signs that express thought (de Saussure, 1999: 45–46) and understood the relationship between language and the world only within the context of cultural concepts (Abu Zayd, 1997: 345).

He famously distinguished between *langue* (the structured system of language) and *parole* (individual speech acts). For Saussure, language provides the rules and structures, while speech represents the individual's creative use of these structures (Ahmadi, 2009: 14).

Building on this, Abu Zayd argues that religious texts, including the Qur'an, are linguistic phenomena deeply rooted in their cultural and linguistic environments. However, he also claims that the Qur'an, while formed according to the religious language of its time, simultaneously reconstructed and renewed that culture and its linguistic structures (Abu Zayd, 1997: 352; Golī, 2013: 134).

### Analysis:

It is not accurate to assume that all Qur'anic concepts are mere reflections of the culture of revelation. Only certain concepts reflect the linguistic environment of that era. Although the referents (*maṣādiq*) of some terms evolve with changing cultural and scientific contexts, the meanings (*mafāhīm*) of those terms remain stable. For instance, the referent of the word *silāh* ("weapon") evolved from sticks and clubs to swords and then to firearms, yet the underlying meaning of "an instrument of defense or combat" persists (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1995, 1:16).

Thus, linguistic evolution does not undermine the permanence of Qur'anic concepts.

### *3. The Qur'an's Interaction with the Culture of its Time*

Following Saussure's linguistic framework, Abu Zayd argues that the Qur'an reflects the culture of the revelation era (Abu Zayd, 1997: 351–352). He identifies cultural elements in the Qur'an, such as:

- Pre-Islamic Arab myths (e.g., the stories of Dhul-Qarnayn and the Queen of Sheba),
- The Qur'an's resemblance to rhymed prose (saj') and poetry, and
- The inclusion of narratives from earlier traditions, particularly the Gospel accounts of the miracles of Jesus (as) and Moses (as) (Golī, 2013: 253).

Analysis:

If the Qur'anic narratives were purely mythological or contrary to fact, they would conflict with the Qur'an's self-declared role as a book of guidance and contradict divine wisdom. Moreover, if the Qur'an merely resembled saj' or poetry, it would not have posed a genuine challenge (taḥaddī) to the Arabs, nor provoked their severe resistance.

The Qur'an, in fact, corrects distortions found in earlier scriptures, reaffirms their authentic truths, and transforms cultural language by infusing new meanings into familiar words. For instance, while ṣalāh in pre-Islamic usage meant "supplication," the Qur'an redefined it as a ritual act of devotion marking the human connection with God (Ṭālib Tāsh, 2008: 86). Thus, far from being shaped by the culture of its time, the Qur'an reshaped that very culture linguistically, morally, and intellectually.

### **Conclusion**

Abu Zayd's three approaches to revelation reflect a gradual move from linguistic formalism to historical contextualism:

#### 1. First Approach – Linguistic-Textual:

Influenced by Jakobson, Izutsu, and literary theory, Abu Zayd regarded revelation as a linguistic relationship between God and the Prophet (pbuh). He considered the Qur'an a text with unique literary inimitability that, once articulated by the Prophet (pbuh), became a human text. This approach,

however, disregards the Prophet's (pbuh) certain knowledge at the moment of revelation, contradicting divine wisdom.

## 2. Second Approach – Religious Experience:

Abu Zayd defined revelation as the religious experience of the Prophet (pbuh)—a reception of divine meanings conveyed by the angel of revelation, later expressed by the Prophet in Arabic words. Yet, by neglecting the divine origin of Qur'anic wording and misinterpreting variant readings, this view undermines the revelatory nature of the Qur'anic text, permitting alteration and weakening the inimitability (i'jāz) of the Qur'an.

## Third Approach - Historicity of the Qur'an:

Abu Zayd ultimately presents revelation as a series of historically contingent discourses, some divine and others shaped by the Prophet's (pbuh) society. Drawing upon Arkoun and Saussure, he interprets revelation as a culturally embedded discourse. However, this reading neglects the timeless universality and inimitable nature of the Qur'an, both of which are affirmed by its continued incapacity to be imitated or replaced. Consequently, his approach conflicts with the wisdom of the Divine Lawgiver, who revealed the Qur'an as a perpetual and universal guidance for humanity.

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