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## The Functions of Preunderstandings in 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī's Hermeneutics

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### ABSTRACT

Drawing upon the hermeneutic basis that understanding and interpretation of a text is conditioned by the reader's preunderstanding, this article examines 'Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī's interpretive preunderstandings. In so doing, the article first, will explore 'Allamah's constitutive and non-constitutive preunderstandings. As the foundation of his Qur'anic interpretation, the constitutive category is divided into three subcategories: text-specific, interpreter-specific, and interpretation-specific. The non-constitutive category is studied under the following two subcategories: the imposed and non-imposed preunderstandings. Although the article studies 'Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī's interpretive preunderstandings, this categorization can be applied in studying any scriptural hermeneutic discourse. The contribution of this article to the field, is not limited to Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī's interpretive preunderstandings. The method applied in this study can be used in the study of any scriptural hermeneutics.

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## Introduction

The modern hermeneutics has emerged as the means that allows for the combination of interpretation of texts and a spectrum of understandings with new concepts and novel meanings, resulting in the formation of what is known as 'preunderstandings' that requires the presence of background knowledge vis-à-vis concepts and meanings in the process of understanding and interpreting texts. Prior to the rise of modern hermeneutics, it was widely believed that one can interpret and understand texts without preconceptions or any form of prejudice; such a belief, has been challenged by *Hiedegger* and *Gadamer's* philosophical hermeneutics.

In chapter thirty-two of *Being and Time Heidegger* explicates that interpretation can never exist without preunderstanding of a given "something". Rather, interpretation as being the "development of understanding" is structured around pre-structures of understanding, or in Heidegger's terms: in interpretation "understanding appropriates what is understood" as it never becomes "something different", but rather itself. Interpretation is existentially based in understanding, [...] interpretation is not acknowledgement of what has been understood, but rather the development of possibilities projected in understanding (Heidegger, 1996, 141). In *Truth and Method*, the second section of Chapter four, after evaluating Heidegger's conception of pre-structures of understanding, Gadamer engages with an analytical reading of the concept of prejudice, introducing it as an inseparable element in the process of understanding and interpretation (Gadamer, 2004, 267-273). Gadamer begins his analysis by reflecting on the concept of prejudice, analyzing a contextualized conception of the term as given during the Enlightenment and Romanticism; only then he reads "prejudice" and its connection with "authority" and "tradition", eventually confirming prejudice as a justifiable form of authority of tradition (Gadamer, 2004, 277-305). Gadamer's shows that Enlightenment and Romanticism go wrong, becaous there is no contradiction between tradition and reason.

Examining the concept of interpretive preunderstandings and their implications in the process of interpreting and understanding the Qur'an is a new research phenomenon in the world of Islam, attracting the attention of scholars in the Qur'anic studies and other religious intellectuals. For instance, in the field of contemporary Iranian thought, in his article *The Text in the Context AbduldKarim Soroush* discusses the relevance and presence of preunderstandings and preconceptions in the process of interpreting the Qur'an; moreover, in *Hermeneutics, the Scripture, and the Tradition* (1996), also in his various writings entitled "Prophetic Reading of the Universe", *Muhammad Mojtahed Shabestari* makes distinguishing references to the necessity of interpretive preunderstandings and preconception in one's reading and interpretation of the Qur'an. Although other Muslim scholars have widely written on the method and principles of interpreting the Qur'an, which can be regarded as the presence of interpretive understanding in their studies, it has been commonly believed that understanding the Qur'an requires no specific presupposition or preconception.

'Allāmah Sayyid Muḥammad Husayn Ṭabātabā'ī (1903-1981) a notable exegete in the *Shi'ī* world and a renowned disciple in Ṣadrā's transcend theosophy, has written extensively on the principles, methods and the bases of interpreting the Qur'an, especially in his *Tafsir-e al-Mīzān*<sup>1</sup> which exceeds twenty volumes. By reading through his works, we can form a harmonious and unified theory of interpretation that can address metatextual questions, namely, questions that are bound by neither the contentual nor structural propositions of the given text. Rather, these questions target the epistemological as well as ontological essence of interpretation and understanding texts, appearing as questions about the methodological and perceptual aspects of interpreting Qur'an, and about the norms of interpretation, and eventually about the constitutive preunderstandings necessary for the process of interpreting and understanding the Qur'an.

### Contradiction between intratextual interpretation of the Qur'an and interpreters' preunderstandings

A notable feature of *Tafsir-e al-Mīzān* lies in its wide practicality of intratextual method in interpreting the Qur'an, namely, interpreting the Qur'an by Qur'an. In his preface to *Tafsir Al-Mīzān*, while assessing a number of other common interpretive approaches, 'Allāmah Ṭabātabā'ī introduces the intratextual interpretation of the Qur'an and at once claims that each of these approaches is founded on the commentator's various presuppositions. On the contrary, he postulates that to understand and interpret the Qur'an one should distance themselves from any preunderstandings, instead only referring to the verses (*Āyyāt*)<sup>2</sup>. The approaches assessed and critiqued by 'Allāmah are as follows: interpretive methods of some philosophers (*Fīlsūfān*)<sup>3</sup>, Sufis (*Ṣūfīyān*)<sup>4</sup>, theologians (*Mutikalimān*)<sup>5</sup>, and descriptivists (*Ikhbārīyan*)<sup>6</sup>, as well as the interpretive method of contemporary commentators (*Mufasssīrān*)<sup>7</sup> familiar with the modern sciences (Ṭabātabā'ī, 1996, Vol. 1, 3-10).

For some narrators of *hadīth* (*Muḥadīthān*)<sup>8</sup> and descriptivists (*Ikhbārīyan*), understanding the meaning of the Qur'anic verses is only possible through mediators of description (*Ikhbar*) as for them the Qur'an is the word of God, allowing only for the Infallibles (*Maṣūmīn*)<sup>9</sup> to understand its meaning. Hence, to understand the meaning of the Qur'an we should turn to the Infallibles' statements, that is *hadīth*. Some narrators of *hadīth* and descriptivists have only examined the verbal

<sup>1</sup> *Al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'an*, which is well known as "*Al-Mīzān*"

<sup>2</sup> *Āyyāt* (plural) *Āyah* (singular)

<sup>3</sup> *Fīlsūfān* or *Falāsīfīh* (plural) *Fīlsūf* (singular)

<sup>4</sup> *Ṣūfīyān* (plural) *Ṣūfī* (singular)

<sup>5</sup> *Mutikalimān* (plural) *Mutikalim* (singular)

<sup>6</sup> *Ikhbārīyan* (plural) *Ikhbārī* (singular)

<sup>7</sup> *Mufasssīrān* (plural) *Mufasssīr* (singular)

<sup>8</sup> *Muḥadīthān* (plural) *Muḥadīth* (singular)

<sup>9</sup> *Maṣūmīn* (plural) *Maṣūm* (singular)

meaning of verses based on their perception of the claims made above, and thus have confined their examination of the Qur'an to recounting the statements made by infallibles (*Maṣūmīn*), prophet's companions (*Ṣaḥābīn*<sup>1</sup>), and followers (*Tābi'īn*)<sup>2</sup>. Confining one's reading of the Qur'an to only verbal meaning will prevent any intellectual attempt at understanding and examining the inner meaning, hence intellectual ability redundant. Nevertheless, a number of Sufis and mystics have adapted a different approach, the sort that differs from that of descriptivists, namely, disregarding the verbal meaning of verses and instead indulged in a reading of the Qur'an that emphasized inner meanings. Sufis, it should be noted, have highly emphasized the essence of creation; therefore, the realm of appearance and as a result sings upon horizons (*Āyyāt Anfusī*) were hidden from their attention, only examining signs in one's being (*Āyyāt Āfāqī*). 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī believes this approach will marginalize the common sense from having any share from the Qur'an and its meanings; for Sufis and mystics have only dedicated their reading to hidden or obscure meanings. Moreover, by ignoring the lingual structure of the Qur'an and disregarding verbal meanings this approach would lead to irrelevant understandings and at once arbitrary interpretations of the Qur'an, followed by various claims by Sufis and mystics that lacked proper foundation (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1996, vol. 1, 1 & 5; Mojtahed-e Shabestari, 2014, 125). Additionally, a number of theologians and philosophers too have interpreted the Qur'an so that it would match their readings and perspectives, contradicting 'Allāmah's definitional understanding of interpretation, and calling it appropriation (*Taṭbīq*). This latter approach has been appropriated by commentators familiar with modern sciences, accepting whichever verbal meaning that complies with their knowledge and for the rest engaging with an esoteric interpretation of the verses so much so that they would also confirm their points<sup>3</sup> (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1996, vol. 1, 4 & 6-7).

As 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī argues, these methods of interpretation all draw upon presuppositions and preconceptions or in other words commentators' preunderstandings to form. For 'Allāmah, however, the presence of such preunderstandings in the process of interpretation leads to distortion and falsification of understanding, claiming that by departing from preunderstandings and preconceptions and only by referring to the text one can have proper perception of the meaning of the Qur'an. To this end, 'Allāmah regards intratextual reading as the proper method of understanding the Qur'an, namely, interpreting the Qur'an by way of reading and understanding the Qur'an; for 'Allāmah, therefore, intratextual reading of the Qur'an requires no recourse to any statement of infallibles (Hadith), philosophical, scientific, or mystical preunderstandings

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<sup>1</sup> *Ṣaḥābīn* (plural) *Ṣaḥābī* (singular)

<sup>2</sup> *Tābi'īn* (plural) *Tābi'ī* (singular)

<sup>3</sup> In his preface to *Tafīr al-Mīzān*, 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī reads *Ta'wīl* within a common perception of the word, namely, a reading of meaning that is obscure, especially as appropriated by philosophers and theologians; for he has yet to introduce his definition of *Ta'wīl* as an objective reference of verses.

(Ṭabātabā'ī, 1996, vol. 1, 13-14). Nevertheless, preunderstandings of this essence can be examined in 'Allāmah's various sections of *Al-Mīzān* and his hermeneutic discourse.

In *Al-Mīzān*, philosophical tenets have been used to the extent that the Aouteor of *interpretive schools* refers to it as a contemplational exegesis (*Tafsīr Ijtihādī*) of the Qur'an and compared to other contemplational exegeses, remarks *Al-Mīzān* as philosophical commentary (Babaei, 2010, 200). In his reading of interpretations of the Qur'an by *Ṣadrā*<sup>1</sup> (1571-1640), *Seyed Hossein Nasr* (1933-) [1312 SH] too believes that *Ṣadrā*'s interpretive work on the Qur'an can be regarded as the most extensive work of commentary done by a scholar wellversed in the tradition of Islamic philosophy; yet, it pales in comparison with *Al-Mīzān* and its depth and breadth (Nasr, 2003, 201). Moreover, in his introduction to *The Principles of Philosophy and the Method of Realism*, *Murtḍa Muṭahharī* (1920-1979) alludes to the presence of a philosophical perspective in 'Allāmah's conception of *Al-Mīzān*, understanding such a presence as his scientific and philosophical depth (Muṭahharī, 1971, 23-24). These remarks confirm the philosophical essence of *Al-Mīzān*, and in return the structure of the work confirms the author's intellectual prowess in using philosophical teachings or tenets; in other words, the work confirms the author's close and deep familiarity with philosophical presuppositions.<sup>2</sup>

The other source of insight and understanding in 'Allāmah Ṭabātabā'ī's interpretive preunderstandings is mystical doctrines. Scholars such as *Seyed Hossein Nasr* in *Islamic Philosophy from its Origins to the Present* (2007) and *Majed Fakhri* (1923-) in *Islaimic Philosophy Theology, and Mysticism: A Short Introduction* (2000) both confirm 'Allāmah's illuminative attitude and praise his mystical taste, highlighting his remarkable knowledge to be highly influenced by mystical teachings (Fakhri, 2000, 128; Nasr, 2007, 252). *Massimo Campanini*, the renowned contemporary Islamologist and scholar in Islamic philosophy, engages in a critical discourse analysis of 'Allāmah teachings in a chapter of his book, *the Qur'an: Modern Muslim Interpretations* (2010). In his careful engagement with CDA, Campanini find a close affinity between 'Allāmah's ideological tenets and those of Henry Corbin, introducing both scholars as thinkers with commendable mystical taste (Campanini, 2010).

Knowledge acquired by examining statements of the infallibles is the other source of knowledge and insight to 'Allāmah Ṭabātabā'ī's interpretive preunderstandings. Although he finds the process

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<sup>1</sup> *Ṣadr al-Dīn Mohammad ibn Ibrāhīm Shīrāzī* is well Known also as "*Ṣadr al-Mutī'alihūn*" or "*Mullā-Ṣadrā*"

<sup>2</sup> The authors of '*Allāmah's Philosophical Ideas in "Al-Mīzān"*' finds the following examples among many as accurate instances of Allamah's philosophical interpretation in *Al-Mīzān*:

- Interpreting *Sūrah al-Ḥamd*, Verse 1: on causality and its rules
- Interpreting *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, Verse 1: cognition and the credibility of senses
- Interpreting *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, Verses 26 & 27: on the concept of free will or its lack there of
- Interpreting *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, Verse 48: on the concept of intercession (*Shifā'at*) (*Mūsāwī-e Tabrīzī*, 1984, 321-327)

of interpreting the Qur'an impartial to statements by the infallibles, and emphasizes that the Qur'an must be interpreted depending only on the Qur'an itself (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1974, 75-76), he allows for commentators to refer to *Hadith* for a proper understanding of the Qur'an to the extent that sometimes understanding the Qur'an essentially demands such references to be formed (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1977, vol. 5, 335 & vol. 10, 243). To provide a richer reading of the Qur'an in *Al-Mīzān*, except for a few instances,<sup>1</sup> 'Allāmah offers a sub-heading as a "Discussion of Statements by the infallibles" wherein a *hadith* that relates to the verse he had just examined is selected from *Sunni* and *Shi'i* sources and discussed at length. In *Interpretive Schools*, Babaei highlights 'Allāmah's various references to hadith and infallibles' statements and their influence on his interpretation as follows:

In *Al-Mīzān* 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī's interpretation Qur'anic verses (*Āyyāt*) has remained loyal to this school of exegesis wherein no references to Infallibles' statement (*Hadith*) is required, yet the meaning he offers as his understanding of the verse (*Āyah*) is closely tied to the infallibles' interpretations and statements on those verse, spreading the possibility that he had sought help from hadith and the infallibles' statement. In other words, first the statement has referred him to the verse and then by examining the style of that verse and other verses he has found the meaning (Babaei, 2010, 265).

In *Methodology for Interpretation of the Qur'an*, Babaei discusses "the significance of tradition (*Sunnah*) and the infallibles' statement (*Ahādith*<sup>2</sup> or *Riwāyāt*<sup>3</sup>) as sources required for a proper understanding of the knowledge imparted in the Qur'an" again refers to *Al-Mīzān*, highlighting it as an exemplar of intratextual interpretation of the Qur'an. He claims that even in the most notable examples of intratextual the Qur'anic interpretation, the interpreter inevitably refers to the ineffable role of tradition as a source of interpretation and understanding the Qur'anic. For instance, in his interpretation of *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, verse 6, 'Allāmah notes:

It's not clear in God's word what does middle prayer (*Ṣalāt Wustā*) mean and only tradition (*Sunnah*) interpretes it (Babaei, Azizi-Kia & Rowhani-Rad, 2013, 199; Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1996, vol. 2).

Along with philosophy, mysticism and *hadith*, theology is among the sources of 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī's interpretive preunderstandings; since the foundations of some of discourses of *Al-*

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<sup>1</sup> According to a recent computerized report, there are 527 instances of discussions with the infallibles' statements (*Riwāyāt*) as the sources of insight. After each discussion, 'Allāmah had examines connections between the Qur'an and relevant *Riwāyah*, except for a few instances wherein only the verse of the Qur'an has been examined without any references to infallibles' statements. For instance, the following verses in *Sūrah al-Baqarah* are dealt discussions with the infallibles' statements: 28, 29, 40, 44, 118 (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1996, vol. 1; Babaei, 2010, 208 & 266)

<sup>2</sup> *Ahādith* (plural) *Hadith* (singular)

<sup>3</sup> *Riwāyāt* (plural) *Riwāyah* (singular)

*Mīzān* can be traced back to the religious beliefs and theological ideas of the author, while examining their coherent expression in other works such as the *Qur'an in Islam*. In this book, while discussing prophecy (*Nabuwwat*), 'Allāmah outlines the principles and foundations (Ṭabātabā'ī, 1974, 5-11 & 24-26), which are understood by Mojtabeh Shabestari as 'Allāmah Ṭabātabā'ī's preunderstandings, Shabestari claims that the most important interpretive issues in *Al-Mīzān* are based on such preunderstandings. *Muhammad Mojtabeh Shabestari*, citing topics in *The Qur'an in Islam*, has cited All's preunderstandings within twelve clauses, referring to them as 'Allāmah Ṭabātabā'ī's presuppositions. Shabestari claims, although 'Allāmah directly deals with the issue of prophecy in this discussion, these also inform the foundations of his conception of prophecy and revelation; hence, these can be considered as the most important interpretive preunderstandings of the author of *Al-Mīzān* in his understanding of the Qur'an and tradition (Mojtabeh-e Shabestari, 2014, 127-128).

On the basis of what has been examined, for 'Allāmah Ṭabātabā'ī, on the one hand, presuppositions in the form of philosophical, theological, scientific, mystical, as well as examination of hadith result in nothing but an arbitrary interpretation or semantic misunderstanding, replacing interpretation with appropriation; and on the other, such presuppositions have not only greatly contributed to the consistency of his interpretive theory and to the discussion of the mechanism of understanding and interpreting the Qur'an, but also positively affected his interpretations of the Qur'anic verses. In this respect, in a hermeneutic analysis of the preunderstandings and evaluation of their role and function in their interpretive discourse are inherently met with difficulties, forcing the researcher and the reader familiar with modern hermeneutics to choose between either of the approaches: ignoring 'Allāmah Ṭabātabā'ī's preunderstandings, or underestimating the significance of the method which interprets the Qur'an by Qur'an; that is, the reader either simply ignores his interpretive preunderstandings, or by regarding that 'Allāmah Ṭabātabā'ī's approach is ultimately not free of any presuppositions or preconceptions the reader discards intratextual interpretation as an unrealistic approach, calling it an regulative ideal in the process of interpretation.

However, we can also form a more liberal approach by neither ignoring 'Allāmah Ṭabātabā'ī's preunderstandings nor downgrading his interpretive method to a mere or regulative ideal; and also, by organizing preunderstandings in his discourse into a range of constitutive, non-constitutive, authentic and non-authentic, destructive and non-destructive. To this end, first this range of preunderstandings such as preconceptions or presuppositions must be identified and categorized within 'Allāmah Tabtabai's corpus.

### **Categorization of 'Allāmah Ṭabātabā'ī's Interpretive Preunderstandings**

Given the breadth of the term 'preunderstanding' in 'Allāmah's exegetical discourse, in what follows first by delving into his interpretive theory it is aimed to categorize whatever that can be

found as a variety of preunderstanding in the form of presupposition, preconception, prejudice, or conceptual equivalent of the term; and then, by analyzing the features of each, we can systematically categorize the preunderstandings that dominate 'Allāmah's interpretive theory. Of course, different patterns can be used to make such a classification; the model used in this essay, however, divides the interpretive preunderstandings of 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī into constitutive and non-constitutive. The constitutive preunderstanding can be regarded as the foundation of 'Allāmah's interpretive discourse and forms his theoretical principle in the process of interpreting the Qur'an. Nevertheless, the non-constitutive preunderstandings have no role in the process of interpretation and only conduct it. Constitutive preunderstandings include both presuppositions that are conditions of possibility of understanding and interpreting the Qur'an in All's theory of hermeneutics and presupposition that relate to functions of interpreting the Qur'an usually used in jurisprudence or inferring tasks of worship. In this respect, the category of constitutive preunderstandings includes both structural and contentual preunderstandings, while the non-constitutive preunderstandings only include contentual preunderstandings.

The constitutive preunderstandings, however, include preconceptions and presuppositions vis-à-vis hermeneutic structure of the divine text, the method of interpretation and the interpreter's hermeneutic nature on the one hand, while the non-constitutive preunderstandings might prove valid and be useful in the process of interpreting the Qur'an or might be invalid, distorting the process entirely. Hence, within the secondary division constitutive preunderstandings we shall form three sub-categories of: constitutive text-specific preunderstandings, constitutive interpreter-specific preunderstandings, constitutive interpretation-specific preunderstandings; same applied to non-constitutive preunderstandings, dividing them into imposed or destructive preunderstandings, and non-imposed or non-destructive. As this article proves, there are no differences between destructive and non-destructive preunderstandings, rather the only difference lies in the method and mechanics of use in the process of interpretation. In this respect, a teaching with roots in the hadith, a scientific knowledge or a philosophical idea can be destructive or non-destructive. indeed, we shall prove that what makes a non-constitutive preunderstanding destructive or non-destructive doesn't lie in its content but in its compatibility or non-compatibility with other constitutive preunderstandings.

### **Constitutive Preunderstandings**

The constitutive preunderstandings include an array of preconceptions on the hermeneutic structure of the Qur'an, hermeneutic nature of the man as the interpreter and subject of understanding the Qur'an, as well as preunderstandings vis-à-vis the applicability of hermeneutics. Under this category there are also preunderstandings on the epistemological and ontological process of interpreting and understanding the Qur'anic meaning, each standing as a methodological agent of interpreting the Qur'an. Due to the wide range of preunderstandings that fall into this group, we



will continue to analyze them in three subgroups: text-specific, commentator-specific, and interpretation-specific preunderstandings. In this categorization text-specific preunderstandings permit the Qur'an to be meaningful, while the interpreter-specific preunderstandings enable the interpreter to find meaning in divine text; and eventually interpretation-specific preunderstandings make permit the interpretation and understanding the Qur'an to be possible.

### **Constitutive Text-specific Preunderstandings**

This subgroup of constitutive preunderstandings includes those that examine the hermeneutic structure of the Qur'an, as well as those about its hermeneutic functions and purposes. Longitudinal plurality and autonomy of meaning are the most prominent structural preunderstandings dominant in the hermeneutic structure of the Qur'an.

These preunderstandings can be defined as follows:

- The text of the Qur'an is constituted of several semantic levels, the relation between these levels is a longitudinal relation, proving that the meaning at each level completes the meanings of the previous levels.
- The text of the Qur'an is formed from a coherent and consistent network of meanings, so each verse of the Qur'an must be understood with respect to the other verses.

These preunderstandings require acceptance of the coherence, consistency, and semantic integrity of the text, since the interpretation of a text cannot be mediated by the same text unless we have already assumed a comprehensive meaning for that text, so that understanding the meaning of that text requires nothing but the text itself; hence the semantic integrity is a prerequisite for the exegetical method of interpreting the Qur'an by Qur'an. In addition, the different parts of the text should be considered as consistent as possible so that the meaning of each part can be understood by referring that part to other parts of the text. However, accepting the Longitudinal plurality and Autonomy of meaning also depends on accepting coherence and consistency of meaning on multiple levels. As a result, the integrity, coherence, and consistency of the meaning of divine text are preunderstandings about hermeneutic structure of the Qur'an, all falling into the group of structural and constitutive preunderstandings in 'Allāmah Ṭabātabā'ī's hermeneutics. These issues can be better understood by examining 'Allāmah Ṭabātabā'ī's writing that follows:

The Qur'an is a universal book (Ṭabātabā'ī, 1974, 22).

The Qur'an is complete book (Ṭabātabā'ī, 1974, 24).

The Qur'an is an everlasting book, as its expression regarding the concepts it address is complete and full, impartial to temporal specificity (Ṭabātabā'ī, 1974, 25).

The Qur'an is independent in its denotation (Ṭabātabā'ī, 1974, 30).

The Qur'an has both inner and outer reality (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1974, 32).

It is obvious that there is layer of interpretability of verses (*Āyyāt*) of the Qur'an whereby some may lend themselves more to interpretation than others, hence explaining a concept (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1996, vol. 3, 121).

There are varieties of meaning present in the text of the Qur'an, each being set up next to one another; these are not opposing each other, which allows for the formation of lexical meaning<sup>1</sup> (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1996, vol. 3, 121).

In addition, although all of structural preunderstandings about the hermeneutic structure of the Qur'an, all's interpretive discourse rests on a number of exegetical presuppositions, namely, those that engage with a hermeneutic application of the Qur'an. These preunderstandings which can be called contentual or material preunderstandings are commonly used to infer jurisprudence rules and tasks of worshiping God. These preunderstandings are:

The Qur'an warrants the richness of worldview and completeness of man's life (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1974, 5).

The Qur'an seeks and offers human perfection, expressing it in the clearest form (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1974, 24).

The issue of knowledge by faith as pointed in the Qur'an, is pure truth and pure reality; so is true with the ethical and scientific rules it has set (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1974, 26).

### **The Constitutive, Interpreter-specific Preunderstandings**

Just as the longitudinal plurality of meaning and Autonomy of meaning are the most important items in the subgroup of constitutive text-specific preunderstandings, the most prominent items in the subcategory of constitutive interpreter-specific preunderstanding are the human spiritual degree as the interpreter and the subject of understanding. 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī has repeatedly highlighted that the higher the level of human spiritual degree and his affinity with God, the deeper and better his understanding of the Qur'an; hence, such a man can have access to the deepest layers of meaning of God's word (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1974, 30-39).

Moreover, it seems that the historical and social situation of man as an interpreter and subject of understanding the Qur'an is also a constitutive interpreter-specific preunderstanding; since as 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī occasionally points to differences in the historical and social situation of man as agents affecting the understanding and the interpreting the Qur'an; for instance, while discussing *Mohkamat* and *Tashabohat*, although he considers the existence of *Mohkam* and

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<sup>1</sup> Lexical meaning or the problem of using a word more than one meaning (*Isti'māl-e lafẓ dar akthar az ma'nā-ye wāhid*)

*Moshabeh* verses in the Qur'an to be essential, he also believes that the *mohkamat* and *moshabehat* discussed in the Qur'anic sciences can be regarded as "relational attributes" (*Wasf-e Idāfi*); he claims that each verse of the Qur'an will be regarded as *mohkam* or *moshabeh* when compared to other verses (Ṭabātabā'ī, 1996, Vol. 3, 121). In this respect, the question remains: on what basis can *mohkam* and *moshabeh* be verified between two verses?

The answer to this question lies in his discussion of "incorporating *Mohkam* and *Moteshabeh* in the Qur'an" (Ṭabātabā'ī, 1996, Vol. 3, 105-128). In this discussion, in addition to the differences between individuals in terms of spiritual virtue, 'Allāmah also explains the diversity of human beings and the difference between human beings in terms of social and historical status as the relevant reason vis-à-vis the inclusiveness of the Qur'anic verses of *mohkamat* and *moshabehat*. He thus considers the significance of the social and historical context of the interpreter in the process of understanding and interpreting the Qur'an. However, if the historical situation of the interpreter influences the process of understanding and interpretation, then it may be concluded that some of the interpreter's preunderstandings that have derived from his situation can also influence his understanding of the meaning of the text.

Accordingly, while longitudinal plurality and self-sufficiency of meaning are included in the text's structural and constitutive text-specific preunderstandings, revealing the hermeneutic structure of the Qur'an, individuals' difference in terms of spiritual virtue as well as differences in social and historical situation shape the structural and constitutive interpreter-specific preunderstandings, which represent the hermeneutic nature of the human being as the interpreter and the subject of understanding the Qur'an. Nevertheless, just as the text-specific preunderstandings subgroup contains some contentual preunderstandings in addition to the structural ones, in the interpreter-specific category too exists contentual preunderstandings. Contentual interpreter-specific preunderstandings correspond to contentual text-specific preunderstandings, and these two categories of texts together provide the basis for inferring jurisprudences and the duties on worshipping God; for instance, the presupposition that "the Qur'an warrants the man's life and objective program" corresponds to "to achieve to happiness in life, the man needs a plan". Based on his readings as laid out in *The Qur'an in Islam*, one can perceive 'Allāmah Ṭabātabā'ī's definition of constitutive and contentual interpreter-specific preunderstandings as follows:

The Man has no purpose in his life except happiness, salvation, and good fortune (Ṭabātabā'ī, 1974, 6).

The work of human life is to pursue happiness and to success, whether it be in the realization of its true happiness or in its plight (Ṭabātabā'ī, 1974, 7).

The human's life never takes place without a plan. [This is] obviously an issue, and if it is done stealthily, it's due to intensity of clarity (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1974, 7).

Creation is specific to man, as well as the creation of the world, of which man is an integral part (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1974, 11).

The best and most enduring way of life is to direct human creation towards it, not what emanates society or individual's emotions or feelings (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1974, 9).

The rule of law is solely in the hands of God, and without him is not permissible for anyone to enact law and order (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1974, 14).

### **Constitutive interpretation-specific Preunderstandings**

'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī's interpretive discourse, along with the text-specific and the interpreter-specific preunderstandings, also warrant the interpretation-specific preunderstandings. Although this subgroup fits under the category of constitutive preunderstandings, unlike interpreter-specific and text-specific preunderstandings they are neither about the structural or hermeneutic function of the text, nor about the human hermeneutic nature; rather they are assumptions and preconceptions about the method of interpreting the Qur'an. This subgroup of constitutive includes assumptions about language and mechanism of interpretation and understanding, as well as some principles of logic and Islamic jurisprudence (*Usūl al-Fiqh*) by which the linguistic structure and semantic denotations of the text can be understood, leading to a uniform understanding of the author's intention.<sup>1</sup>

In 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī's Hermeneutics, the most prominent preunderstanding in the subgroup of constitutive interpretation-specific, is the intentionalism, which means that the meaning of the text is the intention of the author. Therefore, in the process of interpretation one must seek the intended meaning of the text. Each of these assertions is also followed by such complementary

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<sup>1</sup> There are three forms:

- a) Corresponding Denotation (*Muṭābiqah*)
- b) Including Denotation (*Taḍammun*)
- c) Accompanying Denotation (*'Itizām*) (See: Al-Muzafar. 2006, p37-38)

In addition to these forms of reasonings, scholars also introduced other forms such as:

- a) Requiring Denotation (*Iqtidāyī*)
- b) Admonishing denotation (*Tanbīhī*)
- b) Remarking denotation (*Ishārī*)
- d) conceptual Denotation (*Maḥūmi*)

In *Interpretive Schools*, Babaei refers to *Al-Mizān* and claims that although 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī hasn't used or referred to these forms directly in his reading, he hasn't limited his reasoning to conforming reasoning; rather, his reasoning and reading at times reveals concepts that can be understood by referring to other forms of reasoning. (Babaei, 2010, p299-305) & (Babaei and Azizi-Kia and Rowhani-Rad, 2013, p243-259)

notes, "in either human or revelatory text, the language is a human phenomenon, and thus the mechanism of understanding and interpreting the Divine Word, is similar to the mechanisms of understanding the human word." In this respect, "the language of the text and its application is the same as that of God's word and human's word." These two can be seen as constitutive interpretation-specific preunderstanding in 'Allāmah's interpretive discourse. Moreover, we can refer to what follows as subgroup of constitutive interpretation-specific preunderstanding: instrumental, preunderstandings by semantic signs, and preunderstandings raised by concentrating on the style.

Instrumental preunderstandings are the means of comprehending the text and understanding the author's serious intentions; although there are disagreements about the kinds of instrumental knowledge, familiarity with grammar, the knowledge of the Qur'anic pronunciation, as well as the discourse about words in principles jurisprudence are accepted as necessary instruments in understanding and interpreting the Qur'an, which have been confirmed as the instrumental knowledge by the experts in the field of the Qur'anic interpretation (Vaezi, 2011, 306).

The preunderstanding by semantic signs is also those that fall into the category of Constitutive interpretation-specific preunderstandings. The function of these preunderstandings is making meaning by textual analogy, helping the interpreter to understand the serious intention of the author beyond the verbal meaning of the text. In *Theory of Interpreting Text*, Ahmad Vaezi claims that although the preunderstanding by semantic signs play no role in the process of grasping verbal meaning, they appear to have an impact on the process of understanding the intended meaning of the author (Vaezi, 2011, 307-308).

Another constitutive interpretation-specific preunderstanding is preunderstanding raised by concerning the style. *Sayyid Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr* (1935-1980) considers the style in the text as a sign that helps in understanding the meaning of the text, whether it be literal signs or signs that conditioned the meaning to situation in the text that may signify a particular meaning. Literal signs include all the words that are associated with the word in question, and that together create a coherent meaning; the signs that condition meaning to situation are the conditions of creating the word and language that can provide the reader or the interpreter with accurate understanding of the text (Al-Ṣadr, 1989, 103). According to some scholars, 'Allāmah Ṭabātabā'i's method of interpretation of the Qur'an by itself has emphasized the style more than other commentators, and at time has interpreted other commentators by highlighting their stylistic presentation (Babaei, 2010, 278; Al-Uwsī, 2002, 254). Given that precision in style is one of the pillars of intratextual interpretation for understanding the meaning of the text, one can regard precision in style also as subgroups of constitutive preunderstandings and falling under the rubric of interpretation-specific preunderstanding.

### **Non-Constitutive Preunderstanding**

As noted earlier, constitutive preunderstandings shape the theoretical foundation of the process of understanding and interpretation; yet, there are other set of preunderstandings whose function is to guide this process. Thus, while the constitutive preunderstandings are the assumptions and knowledge about the hermeneutic structure and functions of the text, the hermeneutic nature of man as the interpreter and the subject of understanding, as well as the mechanisms of understanding and interpretation of the text, the non-constitutive preunderstandings are Interpreter's presuppositions and their anticipations of menaning, being rooted in his hermeneutic situation. Although many of the knowledge, wisdom, as well as theological, philosophical, scientific, mystical, and teachings on statements of Infallibles (*Ahādith*), are not constitutive of understanding and interpretation of the divine text, they create anticipations and interests in the interpreter that guide the process of understanding and interpreting the Qur'an; these expectations too influence the process of understanding. In the following sections, these preunderstandings will be introduced as non-constitutive and will be divided in two categories: imposed and non-imposed preunderstandigs.

### **Imposed Preunderstandings**

It was suggested earlier, 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī refers to the interpretive approach of some scholars, philosophers, theologians, mystics and a number of commentators familiar with the new sciences, criticizing their approach for imposing presuppositions on interpretation reading of the Qur'an; although he does not explicitly name any philosopher, theologian, or mystic, and only mentions the tendency of the Prepatetics and pragmatists, it appears that 'Allāmah only intends to emphasize the approaches that he considers destructive to the process of interpretation. Such approaches, he argues, ultimately lead to appropriating the text instead of interpreting it, leading to a semantic misunderstanding or an arbitrary, idiosyncratic interpretation of the Qur'an. 'Allāmah's claim regarding appropriation can be concluded that appropriating the revelatory text with pre-interpretative knowledge and beliefs is the result of two destructive interpretive approaches: one ignoring the verbal and outer meanings of the verses, and the other ignoring their inner meanings. Disregard for outer meanings has led to an arbitrary interpretation, while ignoring the inner meanings has been accompanied by a stasis of intellect and a halt in the verbal structure of the divin text; remaining statically in the verbal structure verses, as well as the context has paved the way for semantic misunderstandings. In this respect, appropriation usually has been accompanied by two interpretive deflections:

- The deviation that results from ignoring the outer meanings and leading to an arbitrary, idiosyncratic interpretation of the text.
- The Deviation that results from ignoring the inner meanings and leads to semantic misunderstandings.

It is worth noting that analyzing 'Allāmah Ṭabātabā'ī's claims implies that the use of imposing preunderstandings in the process of interpretation is invalid, irrespective of whether such preunderstandings are as such accurate or inaccurate and regardless of their practical functions in the process of interpreting the Qur'an. In other words, a philosophical thought can be considered right or wrong, a scientific finding can be true or false, a hadith can be regarded as authentic or inauthentic; each of these can be used in interpreting the Qur'an, imposing the interpreter to ignore the inner or outer meanings of verses, resulting in these to be regarded as invalid preunderstandings. Therefore, such preunderstandings are not invalidated because of their propositional content, but because of their unproductive and inaccurate use in the process of understanding and interpreting the Qur'an.

### **Non-Imposed Preunderstandings**

In the interpretive discourse of 'Allāmah Ṭabātabā'ī, the meaning of the Qur'an is necessarily obtained at one of the semantic levels of the text that is commensurate with the particular situation and status of the commentator. The semantic levels of the text and the spiritual rank of the interpreter, of course, are both perfunctory, so one can skip the textual levels and gain deeper meanings. The correspondence of the hermeneutic structure of the text with the hermeneutic nature of the interpreter also leads to the conclusion that the situation and status of the interpreter significantly influences his or her understanding of the meaning of the text. It can, therefore, be argued that some of interpreter's prejudices and their anticipations of meaning influence the understanding of the meaning of the divin text and guide the process of interpretation. Considering the results intended in the writings of 'Allāmah Ṭabātabā'ī, it seems that his interpretive discourse is ready to recognize some interpreters' preunderstandings, those which derive from the hermeneutic situation of the interpreter. The interpreter's situation is also primarily a spiritual status, being proportional to his closeness to God; nevertheless, this situation also has its roots in his historical and social circumstances.

'Allāmah's understanding of the concept of situation in the process of understanding and interpretation is rooted in Ṣadrā's conception of the word. In Ṣadrā's opinion, the situation in which man encounters the Qur'an is a spiritual situation or in other words, an existential situation;<sup>1</sup> for he has a different level of meaning for the divin text on the one hand, and on the other, for the human as the commentator and the subject of understanding the Qur'an, he also has different spiritual levels. In Ṣadrā's writings, the semantic structure of the Qur'an is commensurate with the spiritual degree of human beings; for example, in the beginning of the seventh volume of *al-Asfār al-*

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<sup>1</sup> A similar analysis of the function and role of the hermeneutic situation in the process of understanding and interpreting the Qur'an can be studied in Chapter Four of *En Islam Iranien: Aspects spirituels et philosophiques*. According to *Henry Corbin*, the situation for the followers of the scriptures is essentially a hermeneutic situation in which, in addition to the meaning of the scriptures for believers, a true meaning is revealed to them that make their existence a real existence. (See: Corbin, 2013, 247-249)

*Raba'a*'s volumes, Ṣadrā refers to three semantic levels in the divin text, namely upper, middle, and lower speech (Ṣadrā, 1981, vol. 2, 5-6) and in the interpretation of *Āyya- al-Kursī* he also analyzes three interpretative modes, namely, philology, method of thinkers, and the method of firms in knowledge (Ṣadrā, 1987, 34-35). In the fourth *Fatihah* of *Mafatih al-Gheib*'s second chapter, he also studies four attitudes and forms of interpretation: analogy, negation, combining analogy and negation, and denying analogy and negation (Ṣadrā, 1984, 73-75). In all these cases, Ṣadrā attempts to show the situation of understanding and interpreting the revelatory text is essentially an existential situation in which each level of the semantic levels of the divin text corresponds to a degree of human spiritual order.

'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, by acknowledging the significance of *Sadr al-Mutallah*, sees the capacity of individuals to understand and perceive the meanings of the divin text as a hierarchal system within each step is superior to the lower stage in terms of existential degree. Thus, the interpreter's hierarchy begins with the lowest level of understanding, that is, the understanding of the outer meanings of the Qur'an, and continues to the highest level of understanding, namely, its inner meanings (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1997, 87). On this he notes:

Implicit in the ability to comprehend and think of spiritual concepts that are larger than the material world, vary in degree and ranking; there is an understanding that is almost nonexistent and verges on zero; there is another perception understood to be slightly higher, and thus the levels transcend so much so that they reach an understanding that perceives the most complicated spiritual concepts extremely easy. The greater the intelligible ability to understand spirituality, the less its attachment to the material world and its deceptive appearance, and the lesser the attachment, the greater the spiritual understanding (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1974, 33-34).

Nevertheless, in 'Allāmah's writings we can also find indications that, in addition to the spiritual status, he is also interested in the social and historical situation of man as an interpreter and subject of understanding the Qur'an, and that this situation influences the process of understanding and interpretation. These include his remarks on the "relation between the linguistic format of the Qur'anic text and divine knowledge" as well as his remarks on "the generality of divine guidance in spite of the divergence of common sense", as well as his discussion of "the effect of perfection and Social education in the understanding of divine theology" and "the difference in the means of understanding the divine knowledge" can also be cited as indications of 'Allāmah's attention to the historical and social context of the interpreter and its effect on the understanding of the divine text. In what follows, we will have a brief reflection on these to show how 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī's interpretive discourse is ready to accept that some of interpreter's prejudices and anticipations of



meaning are permissible in the process of understanding and interpreting the divin text and their usage in the process is valid.

It is worth noting that according to 'Allāmah Ṭabātabā'ī, the meaning of the Divine Word stated in the Qur'anic verses is sacred knowledge and truths; nevertheless, they will lose their original meaning when they are expressed in phrases and sentences and bound to linguistic features. According to him, although the sentences and phrases in which the divin word is incorporated imply divine truths and knowledg, they are nonetheless Ideal (*Mithālī*) in relation to divine knowledg. Whereas divine truths and knowledg have fallen out of proportion to common sense, that is to say, to a perception that is tangible, so to understand divine knowledg requires that divine meanings be abstracted from features which have no effect on the intent of the word; yet, such an abstraction is never safe from distortion. 'Allāmah tries to explain the Qur'an in terms of its inclusiveness of mohkam and moshabeh verses, while also referring to the allegorical feature of the language, and does not attribute this feature to a particular language or specific text, such as the Qur'an (Ṭabātabā'ī, 1976, vol. 3, 116-120). He also has a human-like understanding of the language and sees no difference between divine and human words in terms of language structure and functions. The notion of language and the idea that linguistic structures are allegorical to the Qur'anic meanings, along with his understanding of the social contexts of language development, also imply that human linguistic preunderstandings ultimately influence his or her understanding of the meaning of divin text.

'Allāmah also permits the attainment of the Qur'anic meaning through the mind and through the mediation of mental information, and believes that mental information is acquired through human life and worldly life (Ṭabātabā'ī, 1976, vol. 3, 114). Thus, the understanding and interpretation of the Qur'an is realized through the conceptual structure of the human mind, while all the mental resources, including pre-existing knowledge and experiences of life, are rooted in the social and historical situation of man, forming the conceptual structure of the mind; hence the commentator's mental reservations and previous knowledge influence how he or she interprets the divin text.

Moreover, it should also be noted that while 'Allāmah considers the guidance as an inclusive concept, he finds guidance of human beings to be the most important purpose of divine text. He believes that divine guidance is not specific to a particular tribe or group of people, rather it is intended for all human beings; therefore, the Qur'anic expressions for the guidance of Must convey meaning through the concepts and mental conventions which are familiar for their audiences (Ṭabātabā'ī, 1976, vol. 3, 114-115). Whereas, according to 'Allāmah, human mental concepts and conventions are also formed in society and are influenced by historical and social conditions (Ṭabātabā'ī, 1976, vol. 3, 110). The belief that divine knowledge is expressed in the form of human's mental concepts and conventions, when considered alongside the notion that mental concepts and conventions are the products of social and historical conditions, results in the concept

that regards human's understanding of God's word is influenced by their social and historical situation.

On the basis of what has been said, it can be concluded that 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī's interpretive thoughts lead to the idea that man, as the interpreter and subject of understanding the Qur'an, necessarily understands or interprets the deving text in a particular situation, which is primarily spiritual. However, one cannot ignore the fact that the historical and social circumstanc of the interpreter is also influential in shaping this situation, since as 'Allāmah claims, on the one hand, the Qur'anic text has multiple semantic levels, and on the other hand, the interpreter deals with the text at a spefecic spiritual staturse, as well as in the concrete social and historical circumstance, reaching the meaning under such situation. While the situation of man is commensurate with his spiritual rank; moreover, his previous knowledge and the semantic expectations that arise from his historical and social situation also influence the formation of this situation and lead the process of understanding and interpreting the divin text. It is worth noting, however, that 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī's interpretive theory does not in any way imply an unambiguous acceptance of the commentator's perspective and it cannot be deduced from their interpretative arguments that all the interpreter's perunderstandings, including their presuppositions, prejudice and their anticipations of meaning are valid and applicable to the process of interpreting and understanding the Qur'an. Rather, the interpreter's presuppositions, prejudices, and anticipations of meaning are valid as far as they are consistent and compatible with the consitutitive preunderstandings, and hence are justified in the process of interpretation.

### **Imposed and Non-Imposed Preunderstandings: Differences**

The consistency and adaptability of non-imposed preunderstandings with the constitutive ones can be transformed into a measure, distinguishing between non-imposed and imposed preunderstandings. By using such a cornerstone it is also possible to account for the invalidity of some philosophical, theological, scientific, mystical, or narrative precepts from the perspective of 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī's interpretive discourse; since the interpretive approach of some theologians, philosophers, mystics, and Sufis, as well as some contemporary commentators familiar with modern sciences have been associated with an neglect of a number of preunderstadings, resulting in the misunderstanding of the meaning of the revelatory text or its arbitrary interpretation.

'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī's view of arbitrary interpretation or exaggeration of the revelatory text has been the result of ignoring the outer meanings of the Qur'an, so it can be said that this approach has ignored these constitutive text-specific preunderstandings:

- The Qur'an has inner and outer meanings.
- The inner and outer meanings do not oppose one another in the Qur'an.

According to ṢAllāmah, the interpretive approach of some mystics and Sufis has ignored the outer meanings of the verses. He also criticizes this interpretive approach for ignoring the linguistic structure of the revelatory text. On the basis of this analysis, it can be concluded that this destructive interpretive approach has neglected a number of constitutive preunderstandings. Although ṢAllāmah refers only to the mystics and Sufis and considers their interpretations to be arbitrary, such a condition can be generalized and any interpretive approach that ignores the aforementioned preunderstandings can be regarded as a destructive approach, or an interpretive diversion. He notes that such diversive interpretations ultimately leads to an arbitrary interpretation of the revelatory text.

According to ṢAllāmah Ṭabātabā'ī, stasis of intellect and the subsequent distorted misunderstanding have been the result of the ignoring the inner meanings of the Qur'an; hence, it can be said that this approach has ignored such constitutive text-specific preunderstandings:

- The text of the Qur'an includes various layers of meanings.
- The relationship between these layers of meaning is longitudinal and ascendantal.

ṢAllāmah considers the interpretive approach of some narrators of *hadith* and descriptivists of this kind, he also remarks that some narrators of *hadith* and descriptivists simply avoided contemplative interpretation of the inner meanings of the Qur'an, and lacked the advantage of rational thinking by limiting their interpretation to the outer meaning. Thus, the interpretive approach of some narrators of *hadith* and descriptivists has ignored a number of constitutive preunderstandings. This condition can also be generalized and, in addition to interpretive approach of narattors of *hadith* and descriptivists, includes any interpretive approach in which the perunderstandings have been ignored. Such an approach is also considered to be destructive to the process of interpretation and at once an interpretive diversion, since by not thinking about inner meaning, this approach culminates to semantic misunderstandins; for instance, remaining static at the outer meaning of certain verses and creates an anthropomorphic image of God, resulting in a distorted understanding that God has a body and a corpoeal presence.

## **Conclusion**

Engaging with any text, including religious texts, and attempting to understand, interpret, describe, critique, evaluate, is always accompanied by a hermeneutic approach. It, however, doesn't mean that our approach to the text all the time occurs in a hermeneutic theoretical discourse, but rather that our meta-beliefs about the text, about the meaning, and about the understanding and interpretation, determine how we interact with the text. When we try to understand the meaning of the text, it is consciously or unconsciously an epistemological reading of meaning fermented in our mind by which we search for meaning in the text. We have preunderstandings about the text, the author, and the subject of the text that guide our process of understanding and interpreting.

Hermeneutics teaches us how to organize these preunderstandings, how to recognize our own prejudices and to recognize valid from invalid, to recognize non-destructive and destructive and to identify constitutive and non-constitutive, how to direct our approach to the text, and how to interact with the text and what to look for in that interaction. In other word, hermeneutics enhances the unconscious side of the process of understanding and interpretation to the area of conscious reflection.

'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī's interpretive approach to the Qur'an is undoubtedly distinguished from other text, and by his belief in its distinctive hermeneutic privileges. Although he is following a path that had previously been followed by the *Mu'tazala* theologians and could be termed a humanistic way of examining the concept of revelation; nevertheless, he does consider special privileges for the revelatory text. Although 'Allāmah does not see any difference between human language and divine language in terms of structure and linguistic functions, this does not mean that he does not distinguish the divine text from human texts; rather, he believes that the distinction between divine and human word is intended in its distinctively different meaning. 'Allāmah, therefore, despite having a thoroughly humanistic conception of the nature and mechanism of understanding and interpreting the Qur'an, attributes specifications to the meaning of the divin text that distinguishes it from other human texts and added specific norms and principles of the Qur'anic interpretation to the general interpretive norms and principles.

Although the cases studied here as constitutive and non-constitutive preunderstanding, imposing and non-imposing, as well as non-constitutive and non-imposing are all interpretive preunderstandings of 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī's hermeneutic discourse, and all have been obtained by analyzing and examining his writings; nevertheless, the existence of such preunderstandings in this examination, allows for the formation of a new categorization wherein interpretive preunderstandings can be used in other studies, especially in examination of the sacred texts by referring to the following division: constitutive and non-constitutive, and dividing non-constitutive preunderstandings into imposing and non-imposing. Thus, what is considered to be the privileges of the sacred text will be regarded as a constitutive preunderstanding in the process of interpreting. Some of these points are based on the interpreter's presuppositions about what is divin text, deriving from his theological beliefs. These are constitutive text-specific preunderstandings, others are based on the anthropological beliefs of the interpreter, being categorized as constitutive interpreter-specific preunderstandings; while all of the interpreter's assumptions and predictions about particular ways of understanding and interpreting the divin text are considered to be the constitutive interpretation-specific preunderstanding. Non-constitutive preunderstandings, in so far as they are consistent and coherent with the constitutive preunderstandings are considered non-imposing, otherwise the become imposing and destructive to the process of understanding and interpreting the divin text.

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