

An Ontological Analysis of the Inimitability of the Qur'an with Emphasis on the Foundations of Transcendent Theosophy and *Mullā Ṣadrā's* View on the Luminous Existence of the Qur'an

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Abstract

The question of the *I'jāz* and inimitability is one of the most fundamental theological and philosophical issues in the Islamic tradition, often explained through concepts such as eloquence, rhetoric, and linguistic structure. Despite the importance of these approaches, the question of the Qur'an's *I'jāz* underlying and ontological cause still requires a deeper philosophical explanation. The present study aims to present an ontological analysis of the Qur'an's *I'jāz* by examining *Mullā Ṣadrā's* perspective within Transcendent Theosophy, especially the theory of luminous existence. The research method is descriptive-analytical, based on analyzing the philosophical concepts of Transcendent Theosophy and applying them to the reality of the Holy Qur'an. The findings indicate that, according to the principles of the primacy and gradation of existence, the Qur'an, before being a linguistic and historical text, is an existential and luminous reality that, at its highest level, is present in divine knowledge and, through the process of descent, appears in Arabic words. Any attempt to imitate the Qur'an, even assuming outward verbal similarity, lacks existential grounding and causal relation to divine knowledge and therefore cannot be considered a true instance of the "Like" in the challenge verses.¹ Accordingly, the inimitability of the Qur'an is not merely the result of human inability to produce linguistic imitation but is rooted in the difference between the Qur'an's existential level and the existential realm of human beings. The innovation of this research lies in explaining the Qur'an's *I'jāz* not as a rhetorical or merely guiding phenomenon but as an ontological reality arising from the specific mode of the Qur'an's existence, an explanation that opens new horizons for philosophical rereading of the Qur'anic *I'jāz* in contemporary studies.

Keywords: Qur'anic *I'jāz*, Challenge (*Tahaddī*), Luminous Existence, *Mullā Ṣadrā*, Transcendent Theosophy, Ontology of the Qur'an, Divine Speech.

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1. *Tahaddī*

Introduction

The issue of the *I'jāz* and inimitability of the Holy Qur'an has, from the earliest days of revelation to the present, been the central proof of the prophethood of the Prophet of Islam and the divine origin of this sacred book. The Qur'an presents itself as an eternal *I'jāz* that humanity is unable to match, even by producing a single similar chapter: "If you are in doubt about what We have sent down upon Our servant, then produce a chapter like it and call your witnesses besides God, if you are truthful." (al-Baqarah: 23) Throughout history, Muslim exegetes and theologians have identified various aspects of this *I'jāz*, including unparalleled eloquence and rhetoric, knowledge of the unseen and just legislation (cf. Khu'ī, 1985 AD/1364 SH: 33; Ma'rifat, 2011 AD/1391 SH: 4, 29; Khorramshahi, 2001 AD/1379 SH: 46-49). Although these aspects are strong, they mainly address the outward and consequential dimensions of the Qur'an and are somewhat unable to explain the root ontological cause of this phenomenon. They cannot constitute the final explanation of the *I'jāz*, since verbal imitation of style or structure may be possible, and many opponents throughout history have attempted to produce verbal examples. The main question is: what intrinsic reality within the Qur'an renders it inaccessible and inimitable to other humans, who also possess the power of speech and expression?

1. Background of the Discussion

Within theological and exegetical traditions, various theories about the Qur'an's *I'jāz* have emerged. Many theologians attributed the *I'jāz* to the Qur'an's unmatched eloquence, rhetoric, and style (Hillī, 1994 AD/1415 AH: 357; Lāhijī, 1992 AD/1372 SH: 395). Others, such as *Nazzām* and *Sayyid Murtaḍā*, proposed the theory of *Ṣarfah* (divine prevention) (Khu'ī, 1985 AD/1364 SH: 83; Hillī, 1994 AD/1415 AH: 357). 'Abd al-Qāhir Jurjānī emphasized the Qur'anic "Order" (*Naẓm*), while *Fakhr Rāzī* strengthened the literary *I'jāz* perspective through extensive theological and rhetorical analysis (Ma'rifat, 2011 AD/1391 SH: 4, 42 and 51; Khorramshahi, 2001 AD/1379 SH: 48). However, in these approaches, the Qur'an's existential nature received little attention.

Avicenna went further by presenting divine speech as the emanation of intelligible meanings from the Active Intellect to the Prophet's soul. According to him, Qur'anic words are the manifestation of that intellectual reality in expressive form (Avicenna, 1979 AD/1400 AH: 252; idem, 1997 AD/1376 SH: 490; also cf. Mohammadi, 2019 AD/1399 SH: 66). This perspective paved the way for later developments. *Mullā Ṣadrā* expanded on this view, describing the Qur'an as a luminous existential reality with longitudinal levels (luminous, imaginable, and verbal), in which words are the shadow of that transcendent truth. Thus, the issue of the *I'jāz* moved from the level of language to the level of existence (Mullā Ṣadrā, 2010 AD/1389 SH (b): 98; also cf. Javadi Amoli, 2007 AD/1386 SH: 1, 274).

Recent studies have also explored different aspects of the *I'jāz*: some emphasize "The Relationship between *I'jāz* and the Qur'an's Comprehensive According to *Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī*," *Manāqib*, Sayyid Mustafa et al; Quranic Studies and Islamic Culture, 2019 AD/1399 SH, no. 13 emphasizes on the found connection between *I'jāz* and supra-sensory nature of the Quran; others such "Quran Cognitive *I'jāz*," Qaeminiya, Alireza, Zehn Paeiz,

2007 AD/1386 SH, no. 31 examine cognitive aspects through cognitive linguistics; and further research such as "Re-reading of Quranic *I'jāz* Emphasizing on Its Guidance Aspect," Mousavi, Sayyid Mehran et al., Quran Research and Hadith, 2017 AD/1397 SH: no. 22 and "Introduction on Legislative *I'jāz* in the Quran," Abbas Kothari, Quranic Science Studies, 2018 AD/1398 SH, no. 2 highlights spiritual, guiding, and legislative dimensions. These studies show that the Qur'anic *I'jāz* is absolute and multidimensional and cannot be limited to verbal aspects alone.

2. Research Innovation and Its Place in *I'jāz* Studies

The main innovation of this research is shifting the focus of analysis from language and meaning to existence. Unlike rhetorical, guiding, or cognitive approaches that reduce the *I'jāz* to a single function of the text, this article shows that all these aspects are manifestations of the Qur'an's existential reality, not the *I'jāz's* ultimate cause. Specifically, the innovative contributions include:

- 1) Interpreting the challenge verses through the concept of ontological impossibility rather than literary inability or *Ṣarfah*;
- 2) Philosophically explaining the relationship between the levels of the Qur'an's descent and its inimitability;
- 3) Providing an ontological criterion for "Likeness," enabling critical rereading of common *I'jāz* theories.
- 4) Demonstrating that the Qur'an's *I'jāz* is primarily an *I'jāz* of mode of existence rather than expression or content.

These innovations open new philosophical dialogue between Islamic philosophy, Qur'anic studies, and contemporary theories of text and meaning.

The main hypothesis is that the Qur'an, as a luminous existence and manifestation of divine speech, belongs to the realm of command rather than mere creation. Therefore, humanity's inability to imitate it stems not from weakness of expression but from a difference in existential level. Humans exist within the realm of creation at a lower ontological level, whereas the Qur'an is a manifestation of luminous existence and a level of divine command. Ontologically, imitation from a lower level of existence of a higher reality is impossible.

3. Research Method

Using a descriptive-analytical method, this study first explains the philosophical foundations of luminous existence in Transcendent Theosophy and then applies them to the reality of the Qur'an to analyze the ontological cause of its *I'jāz*. After the introduction, the theoretical framework addresses luminous existence and divine speech in Islamic philosophy. The next section explains the Qur'an's luminous existence in Transcendent Theosophy, followed by the ontological analysis of the *I'jāz* based on this foundation. Competing theories are then examined, and the study concludes with findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

4. Theoretical Foundations

- 1) Primacy of existence: Existence is the most real principle, while essences are mental considerations;

- 2) Gradation of existence: Existence has levels of intensity and weakness; all beings lie on a continuum;
- 3) Substantial motion: Reality is in constant flux, and existential levels continuously transform;
- 4) Levels of manifestation: Realities descend through levels from the unseen to the visible.

Based on these principles, the Qur'an is an existential reality that is simple and luminous in its unseen level and appears as words in its worldly level. Verses such as "Indeed it is a noble Qur'an in a hidden book" (al-Wāqī'ah: 77-78) indicate these two levels. Transcendent Theosophy thus provides a distinctive framework for analyzing the *I'jāz*.

5. The Nature of Divine Speech in Theological Schools and Islamic Philosophy

The nature of divine speech is one of the most fundamental issues in Islamic theology, directly connected to divine unity, attributes, prophethood, and ontology. Differences in interpretation produced diverse approaches.

The Ash'arites maintain that divine speech is eternal yet not identical with the essence but an attribute subsisting in it; God speaks, though not like created beings (Shahrestani, 1967 AD/1387 SH: 1, 95). The Mu'tazilites and Imami theologians hold that divine speech is created and contingent; that divine attributes are identical with the essence; and that positing a separate attribute called speech would imply composition in God. If the Qur'an were eternal, another eternal being besides God would exist; therefore, divine speech is created and revealed to the Prophet through Gabriel (Mohseni, 1937 AD/1358 AH: 1, 312; Zunuzi, n.d.: 441; Lāhijī, n.d.: 555). In its true level, however, the Qur'an is luminous and beyond words, appearing verbally at the level of descent.

Philosophers such as *Avicenna* and the Peripatetics define speech as the emanation of meanings from the Active Intellect, distinguishing this process from literal speech, God creates knowledge in the Prophet's soul, and Qur'anic words articulate those meanings (cf. Avicenna, 1997 AD/1376 SH: 480; Farabi, 2018 AD/1398 SH: 67). Suhrawardi, while not offering a detailed theory of verbal revelation, implies that revelation operates as a luminous reality irradiating the Prophet's heart, with words as its sensory form. This distinguishes his view from both literal and intellectualist accounts (cf. Suhrawardi, 1994 AD/1373 SH: 3, 81 and 450).

Mullā Ṣadrā, meanwhile, considers divine speech a level of the manifestation of existence (Mullā Ṣadrā, n.d.: 7, 5; idem, 1984 AD/1363 SH (b): 18; idem, 1981 AD/1360 SH: 54), based on several principles:

- 1) Gradation of existence: The Qur'an is a level of existence;
- 2) Luminous manifestation: Divine speech is light (according to the *Nūr* verse);
- 3) Scriptural existence: The Qur'an has both written and luminous existence;
- 4) Speech as an existential act of God: Neither a purely eternal neither attributes nor merely created.

Thus, the Qur'an's reality in the Preserved Tablet is an intense level of existence that descends into verbal form in the world. In general, theologians often considered divine speech an attribute manifested in words, whereas philosophers understood it as an act (cf. Ṭabāṭabā'ī,

n.d.: 308). Since every divine act arises from divine knowledge, Qur'anic words are manifestations of an existential truth within divine knowledge. This analysis provides a metaphysical foundation for understanding the nature of divine speech.

6. *Mullā Ṣadrā's View on the Luminous Existence of the Qur'an*

6.1. Foundations of Transcendent Theosophy: Primacy and Gradation of Existence

In *Mullā Ṣadrā's* understanding of the Qur'an's luminous existence, a set of philosophical foundations plays a role, the most important being the two central principles of Transcendent Theosophy: "the primacy of existence and the gradation of existence." These two principles form the basis of his ontology and his interpretation of the verses of light, especially the verse "God is the Light of the heavens and the earth..." (Nūr: 35) To understand his view of the Qur'an's luminous existence, these principles must be studied not separately but as two interwoven links.

Mullā Ṣadrā first presents existence as the fundamental and only objective reality. What is realized externally is existence, whereas essence is merely a mental consideration. The concept of existence neither requires definition nor can be reduced to a clearer concept, since it is the most self-evident notion. On this basis, individuation and reality derive from existence rather than essence, and contingent beings require causes because their existence is weak (*Mullā Ṣadrā*, 1989 AD/1368 SH: 1, 37). This existence-centered understanding distinguishes *Mullā Ṣadrā's* system from earlier Peripatetic and Illuminative philosophies and leads him toward a new explanation of the divine verse of light.

From the primacy of existence, *Mullā Ṣadrā* develops his second theory: the gradation of existence. Existence is one reality, yet it has different levels of intensity, just as light is one reality but ranges from the faintest illumination to absolute light. God is the most intense and perfect level of existence, while other beings are weaker levels. This graded structure enables interpretation of the Qur'an's luminous existence, since the Qur'an presents divine light as a single reality with levels that illuminate all of being (*Mullā Ṣadrā*, 1989 AD/1368 SH: 1, 69).

In this view, contingent beings are not independent of God but are relational and annihilated in their source. Their being is nothing but existential dependence on the Necessary Being. This perspective allows *Mullā Ṣadrā* to explain the relationship between God and the world in a way compatible with theoretical mysticism while distancing himself from *Ibn 'Arabī's* doctrine of the personal unity of existence. Beings are real, but their reality consists in being manifestations and levels of the single divine existence rather than independent entities (*Mullā Ṣadrā*, 1989 AD/1368 SH: 1, 219; idem, 2010 AD/1389 SH (a): 16-20).

The primacy of existence grounds gradation, since if essence were primary; intensity and weakness would have no meaning. Gradation, in turn, explains the dynamism of reality and makes substantial motion possible, one of *Mullā Ṣadrā's* major innovations. The world is not a collection of fixed essences but a flowing continuum of existential levels moving from weakness to strength and from imperfection to perfection. This substantial motion corresponds to the luminous structure of reality, in which light manifests at different levels and directs the world toward absolute light.

By connecting these foundations with his interpretation of the Qur'an's luminous existence, *Mullā Ṣadrā* presents a coherent vision: "God is absolute light; existence is a single illumination whose levels permeate reality. All beings are rays of that light, differing only in their intensity of participation. This luminous interpretation integrates philosophy, illumination, and mysticism, portraying the world not as scattered entities but as manifestations of a single luminous truth, the core vision of Transcendent Theosophy."

Thus, by introducing the primacy and gradation of existence, *Mullā Ṣadrā* brought a major transformation to Islamic philosophy. What truly exists is existence itself, which appears in graded levels (*Mullā Ṣadrā*, 1989 AD/1368 SH: 1, 38-45; also cf. *ibid*: 68-71). At its highest level, existence is pure being and pure light. On this basis, he explains the luminous existence of realities such as intellect and soul, which possess simple forms of existence (*Mullā Ṣadrā*, 1989 AD/1368 SH: 1, 68; *ibid*: 8, 3 ff.).

6.2. The Qur'an as Luminous Existence

For *Mullā Ṣadrā*, the Qur'an cannot be understood without grasping the luminous structure of reality, because the Qur'an, like the cosmos, is a manifestation of the single reality of existence. Therefore, the verses of light are not metaphorical but ontological descriptions. Based on primacy and gradation of existence, he describes the Qur'an as a luminous reality descending from the source of absolute light and appearing at multiple levels (*Mullā Ṣadrā*: 2010 AD/1389 SH (b): 92-105; also cf. *idem*, 1989 AD/1368 SH: 7, 38-39).

In his commentary on the Light Verse, he states that the term "Light" may refer to the Qur'an insofar as it reveals truth and guides people through divine speech that clarifies reality. God calls the Qur'an "Light" in the verse "...We have sent down to you a clear light" (*al-Nisā'*: 174). Since truth is light, the Qur'an is light too (*Mullā Ṣadrā*, 2010 AD/1389 SH (a): 9).

According to this explanation, the Qur'an is a simple, luminous reality that exists beyond time before appearing as letters and words. Like light, it has graded levels, from the highest immaterial level to the sensory verbal level. *Mullā Ṣadrā* describes these levels in three stages:

1. Intellectual Level (Umm al-Kitāb)

This is the highest and most authentic level of the Qur'an. Here, the Qur'an is identical with divine knowledge, the scientific form of the divine book within the divine breath. There is no verbal, temporal, or conceptual multiplicity; all meanings are present in a unified, timeless simplicity (*Mullā Ṣadrā*, 2010 AD/1389 SH (b): 100; *idem*, 1989 AD/1368 SH: 7, 38-39). This primordial luminous truth is the source from which all other levels descend. Mystics call it the true Qur'an and philosophers call it the divine intellectual form, containing all knowledge that can be divinely bestowed upon human hearts (cf. *Mullā Ṣadrā*, 2010 AD/1389 SH (b): 94).

2. Imaginal Level (Barzakhī)

Below the intellectual realm, meanings leave their initial simplicity and appear as imaginable forms. This is the realm of the imaginable world, where meaning takes form without yet

becoming material language. At this level, the realities of the Qur'an are presented to the Prophet's soul as imaginable representations; the Prophet receives universal meanings in symbolic form (Mullā Ṣadrā, 2010 AD/1389 SH (b): 100). This aligns with *Mullā Ṣadrā's* view of the imaginable world as an intermediate ontological level between intellect and matter. Just as beings descend from intellect to imagination and then to matter, the Qur'an follows the same descent.

3. Material Level (Verbal, Clear Arabic)

The final and lowest level consists of the Arabic words and expressions articulated through the Prophet's speech. This level is closest to material reality and human understanding. *Mullā Ṣadrā* emphasizes that Qur'anic words are not mere sounds but shadows of a luminous truth and therefore differ essentially from ordinary language. They are the shadow or reflection of a higher reality: when intense light appears at a lower level, it manifests as a diluted reflection. The outward verses of the Qur'an have this relation to their metaphysical reality (Mullā Ṣadrā, 2010 AD/1389 SH (b): 98; idem, 1989 AD/1368 SH: 7, 38-39).

From this luminous structure arise features such as interpretability, multiple inner layers, and unlimited semantic depth. Because each word is a lower level of a higher meaning, movement from word to meaning (Ta'wīl) and from meaning to ultimate truth is possible (Haeri Yazdi, 1981 AD/1360 SH: 215). Thus, in *Mullā Ṣadrā's* thought, the Qur'an, like existence is a graded luminous reality, from simple intellectual light to imaginable form and finally material expression. This luminous nature enables the Qur'an to address all levels of human understanding: every person receives from it according to their level of existence.

6.3. Implications of the Luminous View for the *I'jāz*

Within *Mullā Ṣadrā's* framework, the Qur'anic *I'jāz* gains a new meaning that transcends language and literature. The *I'jāz* is not merely the inability of writers to produce similar expressions but the inability of contingent beings to grasp or produce a level of existence in which the Qur'an resides. This leads to several key implications:

1. The Impossibility of Ontological Imitation

In Ṣadrian thought, humans can encounter only the third level, the verbal, because it is the lowest manifestation. Qur'anic words are the shadow of a luminous reality and therefore secondary rather than original. Even if a human attempts to produce something similar, they can imitate only the shadow, not the luminous reality present in the intellectual and imaginable realms.

Thus, even if linguistic imitation were hypothetically possible, ontological imitation is impossible. Qur'anic words are descended from divine knowledge, whereas any human text, no matter how beautiful, lacks existential connection with the luminous source. The Qur'an's challenge (*Taḥaddī*), therefore, concerns this ontological reality: humans cannot produce a light of the same kind as that which descends from the Mother of the Book. Such light issues only from the Necessary Being, not from contingent beings with weak and dependent existence.

From this perspective, humanity's inability to produce the like of the Qur'an stems more from the ontological distance between human knowledge and divine knowledge than from literary capacity. The challenge is not about stylistic beauty but about the impossibility of participation in a level of existence unique to revelation. Consequently, any attempt at imitation, even if verbally close, remains at the level of shadow and form and cannot reach the Qur'an's luminous reality.

2. The Special Order and Inner Coherence of the Qur'an

The second outcome of the luminous theory is an explanation of the Qur'an's unparalleled coherence. Scholars such as *Allama Ṭabāṭabā'ī* emphasize that the Qur'an is not a human text but possesses an existential unity; for this reason, it displays a distinctive order and interconnectedness that no human writing can fully reproduce (cf. Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1953 AD/1373 SH: 5, 27).

In light of *Mullā Ṣadrā's* luminous perspective, this coherence receives a new explanation:

- 1) Unity in the Intellectual Realm: At the highest level of the Qur'an, all knowledge is present in a simple and unified form. This intellectual unity is the root and source of the Qur'an's order;
- 2) Manifestation of Unity in the Imaginable Realm: At this stage, universal meanings take form while still preserving their existential connection with intellectual unity;
- 3) Appearance of Unity in the Verbal Realm: When the Qur'an descends into Arabic words, that existential unity is reflected in rhetorical structure, the sequence of verses, inter-surah harmony, and thematic organization.

Thus, the relationship between verses and chapters constitutes a deep coherence rather than a conventional one or one resulting from authorial skill. Despite differences in apparent subject matter, the verses are inwardly connected to a single truth, which produces a living, integrated structure. Therefore, the Qur'an's distinctive order does not stem from the literary skill of the Prophet, an idea also rejected within Transcendent Theosophy, but from the manifestation of a single luminous reality within language.

For this reason, human texts, even when highly coherent and precise, lack such rooted unity, because they do not possess existential grounding in the intellectual realm and are merely the product of a writer's mind and memory. *Allama Ṭabāṭabā'ī's* description points precisely to this difference: the Qur'an is a text whose parts grow from within one another because they descend from a single truth.

3. Distinguishing Reality and Manifestation

In Islamic philosophy, this distinction is supported by Qur'anic texts and traditions. Verses such as "Indeed it is in the Mother of the Book with Us, exalted and wise" (al-Zukhruf: 4) and "In a preserved tablet" (al-Burūj: 22) indicate that the Qur'an possesses a transcendent, non-temporal level prior to its verbal manifestation. Commentators such as *Fakhr Rāzī*, *Ṭabarī*, and *Allama Ṭabāṭabā'ī* maintain that before appearing as words, the Qur'an exists as a non-sensory, simple, and cognitive reality at a higher level with God (*Fakhr Rāzī*, 1999 AD/1420 AH: 27, 617; *Ṭabarī*, 1991 AD/1412 AH: 25, 30; Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1952 AD/1372 AH: 18, 87).

Mullā Ṣadrā explains this philosophically in *Asfār*: "The Qur'an first exists in divine knowledge as a unified, luminous existence; then, through a process of existential manifestation, it appears to the Prophet's heart and ultimately becomes Arabic words in the material world." (Mullā Ṣadrā, 1989 AD/1368 SH: 7, 38-39)

From this perspective, the Qur'an's *I'jāz* is not merely rhetorical but arises from the connection between the revealed text and its transcendent reality. *Mullā Ṣadrā* emphasizes that Qur'anic words are the "Descending Form" of a truth that is simple and indivisible at its highest level (Mullā Ṣadrā, 1989 AD/1368 SH (b): 40; idem, 2003 AD/1382 SH: 416); because humans lack access to that level of simplicity, they cannot produce its equivalent. Human inability in the Qur'anic challenge is therefore not merely literary but philosophical: "It is the impossibility of reaching the transcendent cause located in the Mother of the Book, accessible only to the Prophet through prophetic connection."

7. Ontological Analysis of the *I'jāz* and the Challenge Verses

According to Transcendent Theosophy, the inimitability of the Qur'an can be formulated as follows:

- 1) The Qur'an is an existential and luminous reality;
- 2) Luminous existence has graded levels that contingent beings cannot produce;
- 3) The Qur'anic challenge concerns producing an equivalent existential reality, not merely a verbal form;
- 4) Therefore, imitation of the Qur'an is ontologically impossible.

The Qur'an's challenge verses (e.g., al-Isrā': 88; al-Baqarah: 23; Yūnus: 38; Hūd: 13) ask humans to bring something "Like" it. Understanding "Likeness" is decisive. Common interpretations focus on linguistic or rhetorical similarity, but within Transcendent Theosophy, likeness refers to existential similarity. Every being is defined by its level of existence; the Qur'an, in *Ṣadrian* analysis, is a level of luminous existence descending from divine knowledge. Thus, producing something "Like" the Qur'an means generating a reality of the same existential kind, something beyond contingent beings.

The absolute and timeless wording of the challenge (e.g., al-Isrā': 88) indicates that the barrier is not historical or psychological but essential. The failure is existential: humanity lacks the ontological affinity with the reality from which the Qur'an originates. Accordingly, genuine imitation, requiring reproduction of the causal connection with divine knowledge, is impossible. Historical attempts at opposition have remained at the level of form and shadow, unable to reach reality.

8. Competing Interpretations of the Qur'an in Light of the Luminous Theory

With the luminous-existence theory, several alternative readings arise:

First, the claim that interpreting the Qur'an as luminous leads to anthropomorphism. This results from confusing physical light with existential reality. In *Mullā Ṣadrā*'s thought, light is neither body nor material quality but identical with immaterial existence (cf. Mullā Ṣadrā, 1989 AD/1368 SH: 4, 88-89). Calling the Qur'an luminous avoids embodiment: "Divine speech is not sound or letters but a mode of existential manifestation. The relation between Qur'an and God is manifestation, not incarnation or union."

Second is the linguistic approach, which argues that the Qur'an can be fully explained through language analysis. This confuses analyzability with reducibility. In Transcendent Theosophy, the Arabic language is the mode of descent, not the essence. Linguistic analysis concerns the lower level of the Qur'an, whereas its coherence and *I'jāz* derive from a higher level.

Third is the historical-cultural reading that sees the Qur'an as a product of seventh-century Arabia. In Şadrian ontology, historical manifestation does not negate trans-historical reality. Arabic language and historical context are conditions of revelation, not its existential cause. Reducing the Qur'an to history ignores the distinction between reality and manifestation.

Thus, the luminous theory offers a more coherent explanation of the Qur'an's divine origin, historical appearance, and inimitability. The *I'jāz* becomes an ontological phenomenon rooted in a specific level of existence inaccessible to humans.

Conclusion

Ontological analysis shows that the Qur'an's inimitability derives from its luminous nature and graded existence, not merely from verbal, rhetorical, or semantic features. Comparative study of the challenge verses, the Preserved Tablet, the Hidden Book, and verses of light and spirit provides a strong philosophical basis for this claim.

In *Mullā Şadrā*'s view, the Qur'an is a luminous reality whose graded intensity places it beyond human imitation. Its words are the lower manifestation of that truth, while meaning belongs to a higher level. Without connection to the existential source, verbal imitation cannot reproduce its meanings or philosophical effect. The Qur'an exists simultaneously at multiple levels, words, meanings, and luminous truths united in a single whole, and this unity grounds its inimitability.

Transmission of the Qur'an's reality occurs through immaterial luminous beings, including the Trustworthy Spirit, while humans lack the capacity to generate such a reality independently. Therefore, the Qur'an's *I'jāz* and inimitability are ontological and philosophical phenomena that cannot be reproduced through human knowledge or literary skill. The Qur'an is unique not only linguistically and semantically but also in its mode of being and luminosity; since humans lack existential affinity with its highest level, producing its "Like" is ontologically impossible.

By rereading Islamic philosophers, especially *Mullā Şadrā*, this study shows that, in Islamic philosophy, the Qur'an's *I'jāz* is an *I'jāz* of existence rather than merely expression. This finding opens new interdisciplinary horizons between Islamic philosophy and Qur'anic studies and enables a redefinition of the philosophical foundations of Qur'anic inimitability in the contemporary period.

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