Galadari, Abdulla. "Conclusion." *Qur#anic Hermeneutics: Between Science, History, and the Bible*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016. 147–152. *Bloomsbury Collections*. Web. 26 Apr. 2023. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781350070059.ch-009>>.

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Conclusion

When there are many patterns that emerge that seem meaningful, then it seems less likely to have been coincidental. Randomness is the distinction between the discourse of a schizophrenic and a creative genius, who is able to build meaningful patterns, instead. Indeed, when looking into the natural world, there are many patterns that can emerge, seemingly coincidental through the chaos of things. However, identifying patterns in human speech or writing seems less likely to be coincidental. As such, if the Qur'anic text is showing some kind of pattern, which is not very different than an intelligent person with psychosis-like symptoms, which do fit the symptoms of Muḥammad, then these Qur'anic examples seem to support the suggestion of the neuropsychological basis in its construct. If there was only a single example, or two, or three, then we may be skeptical of any kind of pattern emerging. However, when many more examples of this hermeneutical method provide meaningful insight, then there is a possibility that it is not random.

There have been many attempts to interpret the Qur'an throughout history. However, as modern scholars are questioning the accuracy of the interpretation by classical commentators (*mufasssīrīn*), there is a need to find interpretations that are not solely dependent on classical exegesis. Muslim early and medieval post-Qur'anic literature seems to have been trying to fill in the gaps without fully understanding the Biblical context or subtext that the passages are trying to engage with. This book looks into Muḥammad's state of mind and tries to unlock these creative associations in the Qur'an that an intelligent Muḥammad would have been able to construct. If that were not the case, then perhaps it looks into the literary creative intertextuality the Qur'an has within itself and with the Bible, regardless of the reason.

As stated, I find the most compelling reason with the least assumptions is that Muḥammad seems to have delved into a psychosis-like state, but due to his high intelligence, it protected him from diving into mental illness and allowed him to be highly creative, making ingenious associations and wordplay between terms within the Qur'an and Biblical literature. It does not at all assume that Muḥammad borrowed excerpts from Judeo-Christian literature, but made more intelligent engagement with the Biblical literature, in perhaps his attempt to interpret the Bible. As Wasserstrom puts it, "The model of 'influence and borrowing,' by means of its over-emphasis on genetic origination, may in fact obscure insight into a mature interreligious sharing."¹ Zayd ibn Thābit, who traditionally is considered one of the Prophet's scribes and who wrote down the Qur'an, studied, according to one tradition cited by Ibn Sa'd, Hebrew

and/or Syriac, as well the Jewish texts,² thereby making this kind of interwoven textual allusion to Jewish and Christian literature in the Qur'an a possibility.³

The method of intertextual polysemy, as shown, is simple, in which terms are brought back to their roots and an understanding of their various semantic definitions. They are then intertextualized with various places in the Qur'an and the Bible where these terms occur to find possible connections between them. As a piece of literature, the Qur'an must be seen through the eyes of pre-Qur'anic literature. The sources of the Qur'an cannot have been based on post-Qur'anic literature and what their authors assume the Qur'an means. Academically, the source of the Qur'an can best be seen in the lens of pre-Qur'anic literature. As such, introducing intertextuality between the Qur'an and the Bible may seem to be a more probable approach academically, without necessarily going through post-Qur'anic authors who have attempted to distinguish the Qur'an from the Bible.

There is a possibility that Muḥammad had a very positive view of Biblical literature. However, when his community grew after his death, they wanted to be independent from their rivals, such as the Jews and the Christians. The community that became independent wanted to show that they had something better than the Jews and the Christians, and as such suppressed anything that suggested otherwise.

This may further be illustrated by Abraham's sacrificial son and why al-Ṭabarī, one of the earliest commentators, suggests that it is Isaac,⁴ while later commentators, such as al-Rāzī and Ibn Kathīr, narrate that there were differences of opinion among Muslims on whether it was Isaac or Ishmael, and later conclude that it was Ishmael.⁵ Reuven Firestone shows how there were two groups of Muslims, those who supported the notion that the sacrificial son is Isaac, and those who supported the notion that it was Ishmael, and while the former group were from the earliest accounts, later generations adopted the latter group's opinion. Firestone states:

It becomes clear from our reading of the sources that Isaac was originally understood to have been the intended victim, but that this view was eclipsed by a new perspective, which held Ishmael to have been intended. Ṭabarī was the first to record the various arguments supporting each son. While he tried to demonstrate that Isaac was the proper reading, the arguments supporting Ishmael were already quite imposing by his generation. After Ṭabarī, the exegetes citing arguments and giving their own opinions were unanimous in considering Ishmael to be the intended victim, though most cited arguments supporting both views. Even the Shī'ite Ṭabarsī, who quoted Shī'ite versions considering Isaac to have been the intended sacrifice, held that it was Ishmael. And Tha'labī, who often followed Ṭabarī, seemed to consider Ishmael the intended Sacrifice [*sic*] as well. Like the other exegetes after Ṭabarī, Ibn Kathīr believed that the intended sacrifice was Ishmael and did not hesitate to give his own views of the matter. His major argument was based on the weakness of those sources claiming that it was Isaac.⁶

Perhaps the lack of evidence from Muslim literature that the Qur'an is engaging with the Bible is due to Muslims wanting to distinguish their religion from Judaism and Christianity. Some Muslim scholars were trying as much as possible to make

conclusions that differentiated and alienated them from the Jews and Christians and for that reason attempted to suppress any knowledge that would show similarities, when Muḥammad was more accepting of the notions in the Bible, but perhaps had his own interpretation thereof, in which the Qur'an perhaps hints at when stating, "Verily, this Quran recounts unto the Children of Israel most of that wherein they differ."⁷

There needs to be further research on the method of intertextuality as it may provide us with creative connections and insights to possible inner meanings of the Qur'an, and especially to understand the apparent contradictions that may exist between the Qur'an and the Bible. It is argued that Muḥammad is an intelligent person and, therefore, he is unlikely to have these apparent contradictions, even if we apply rhetoric. Muḥammad is capable of making symbolic and allegorical meanings from the image he is trying to create constructed by the use of precise words and terminologies in the Qur'an.

Words of a language are symbols and signs of what they represent. They are not themselves reality. Determining the meaning of words through the study of semantics and semiotics is a process whereby we try to define those symbols and understand what they represent in reality. Hence, we can only understand words symbolically. Therefore, I find the literal understanding of words to be somewhat of an oxymoron. Only a real apple is a precise apple, whereas the word "apple" is only a symbol representing it. As such, we must understand what the symbol of the word "apple" represents, and that is done symbolically. Since all language is symbolic in its representation of reality, then deciphering the meaning of those symbols becomes a difficult task.

The use of intertextual polysemy, as demonstrated through examples in this book, provides us with a different perspective of how scriptures, both the Bible and the Qur'an, may be interpreted. It does not necessarily provide a single authoritative interpretation of scriptures, but it looks at them with a completely different understanding, and perhaps one that is deeply spiritual in its nature. This is something that Muḥammad would have been able to do creatively, given his psychological state. He tried to represent what he perceived as spiritual truths into reality and he used words as symbols to fulfill his representation.

There are various types of maps of the earth with different projections. Only the real earth is earth, while our mapping of the earth is nothing but a representation of what the earth looks like. Because the earth is three-dimensional, while our maps are usually two-dimensional, when projecting the earth onto these maps, it loses several of its attributes. As such, there are many different types of projections that are used for different purposes. Some projections provide us with correct scale of distance, while distorting shape and area. Others provide us with correct shapes, while distorting distances and area. Still others provide us with correct areas, while distorting shapes and distances. We should not ask ourselves which, if any, specific projection is more correct than the others. However, we can ask ourselves which projection more correctly suits our purpose. Scriptural interpretations and their various methods could be considered as something very similar to projections.

Different methods of scriptural hermeneutics are different projections of scriptures. It does not mean that any specific method of interpretation is more correct than

another, but that each may suit different purposes. Scriptures may not only be three-dimensional, but multidimensional. This makes interpretation of scriptures even more challenging than our mapping of the earth. Different methods provide us with different perspectives.

Several controversial Sufis, such as Ibn 'Arabī and al-ḥallāj, might have been misunderstood because they projected a multidimensional object from a different perspective to that which most people were used to. A popular projection called the Mercator projection shows the island of Greenland larger than South America. If people do not know the reality of the earth, in that South America is immensely much more enormous than Greenland, then someone representing the map with a different projection that shows a more accurate size may be considered a heretic. The earth remains the earth in its reality, and our projections of it are the only things that change. If we know how to use those projections and how to make them fit reality, then we will better understand reality. Since none of the projections is without distortion, then we must also accept that any interpretation of scriptures is not perfect.

The reason I have emphasized a linguistic approach through intertextual polysemy is to understand the meanings of scriptures instead of using the traditional approaches. The Qur'an never identified a specific methodology for its interpretation, except for (i) clinging unto God to teach the Qur'an, and (ii) the supremacy of its language. Muḥammad seems to have been using selective Arabic words that are polysemous, having plentiful meanings. As such, the Qur'an may be providing us with a master key to unlock itself. Lexical semantics, intertextual polysemy, and etymology are fundamental aspects of trying to understand the meanings of the Qur'an by trying to go deep into Muḥammad's psyche to understand his intentions. This seems to be the only tangible method for interpretation that the Qur'an expects its audience to use. As such, I find projecting scriptures using this method, though still not without distortions, is a projection the Qur'an itself seems to require people to use to understand it better. The traditional methods of interpretation, which heavily rely on the interpretation by precedent (*tafsīr bil-ma'thūr*) or circumstances of revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*), do not use a method of projection sanctioned by the text of the Qur'an itself. Although I do not essentially consider them incorrect methods, they are projections that may not necessarily have been expected by Muḥammad. Muḥammad seems to have focused himself on a linguistic approach that is capable of providing inner-Qur'anic allusions.

If the story of Muḥammad meditating in a cave is inaccurate, then this means that the psychological diagnosis, as presented here, is equally inaccurate. If Muḥammad was a passive receiver of revelation, then perhaps the findings in here do not demonstrate the intentions of Muḥammad, but at least what the Qur'an expects from its audience in creating inner-Qur'anic allusions and Qur'anic-Biblical allusions. Perhaps when the Qur'an describes itself as a veiled book (*kitābin maktūn*) (i.e., Qur'an 56:78) or when it describes that some people have veils (*akinnah*) placed in their hearts so that they would not understand it (e.g., Qur'an 6:25, 17:45–46, 18:57, 41:5), it might be suggestive that what we today call "latent inhibition" is this veil. Perhaps the Sufi concept of "*kashf*" (unveiling) is reached when the mind reaches levels of decreased latent inhibition coupled with high intelligence,⁸ and thus, previous stimuli that were associated with certain meaning, get different meanings during the state of "*kashf*."

If, however, Muḥammad's state of mind is inaccurate due to our having an inaccurate historical account and if Muḥammad did not receive revelation passively, this brings us to yet a different conclusion. It might suggest that the Qur'an is a literary style that combines inner-Qur'anic allusions, while also actively engaging with Biblical literature. As such, understanding these Qur'anic and Biblical allusions are very important in an attempt to interpret the Qur'an. How this came to be very creatively would suggest that the scribes and redactors of the Qur'an were very proficient linguistically in their Biblical knowledge. However, since this knowledge was not inherited by later Muslim scholars it might suggest a lacuna. The reason behind this lacuna may vary with different assumptions. That the knowledge of the scribes and redactors of these types of allusions disappeared from later Muslim literature may be possible. Nonetheless, how they disappeared will cause us to make many assumptions. It is more likely, however, that Muḥammad was in an altered state of consciousness, as these allusions and intertextualities would appear natural to him and he would simply be frustrated when his audience do not see what he sees. Otherwise, if he received revelation passively, then perhaps Muḥammad was even somewhat removed from these intertextualities, which caused such knowledge to have never been inherited down to later Muslims. Although the latter is a possibility, we will need to make many theological and philosophical assumptions to arrive at it. As such, from among the range of possibilities, the one with the least assumptions is that Muḥammad was in an altered state of consciousness.

One thing that we may be able to distinguish from this study is that the Qur'an does not attempt to contradict itself when it asks Jews and Christians to follow their scriptures, while still seeming to have a theology or Christology that is different from that the later Muslim community evolved to have.

The purpose of this study is to provide a framework for Qur'anic hermeneutics using a method called intertextual polysemy. Perhaps it allows us to understand Muḥammad's intention given his psychological state. I am only providing observations. Ultimately, you will need to decide yourself what to conclude from it. We are in search of the truth. I simply happened to stumble upon observations that may provide us with some insights, but it definitely does not mean that such an insight is exclusive. This was a simple, humble attempt to unravel some meanings to an otherwise mysterious piece of literature that some call scriptures.

Further research

Psychological Qur'anic criticism might be a new field to further explore and not only to include the author's psychology, but also the psychological states of Qur'anic characters in some of their detailed narratives. Insights from such findings may open some doors, especially when comparing the portrayal of Biblical characters in the Qur'an, for example.

Nonetheless, what is more important is to further develop the role of polysemy in the Qur'an and how terminologies are used as wordplay or tools for allusions, whether or not allegorical, and regardless of the psychology of the author. As seen in the

examples of this book, intertextual polysemy appears to exist, whether within the Qur'an or between the Qur'an and the Bible. Whether this is caused by author(s) or by redactors is not as important as the purpose behind this tool. Perhaps once we know the purpose behind it, we could better identify who used it.

In addition, as post-Qur'anic literature appears to be heavily scrutinized for its ability to interpret the Qur'an, especially writings by classical commentators, then further research needs to be made in the exegetical methods of the Qur'an and the role of these commentaries. There is much relationship between the Qur'an and the Bible and many studies already exist on these relationships. However, much literature interprets the Qur'an based on post-Qur'anic literature when comparing it with the Bible, whereas caution is needed when doing so.

Understanding the "*nāsikh*" and "*mansūkh*" (the concept of abrogation) in the Qur'an was a tool that many early Muslims scholars have used to solve inconsistencies within the Qur'an. For example, in some instances the Qur'an shows that Jews, Christians, and Sabians are accepted, while at other times the Qur'an states that the "*dīn*" (understood as religion, but possibly debt from "*dayn*") accepted is "*islām*" (understood as Muḥammad's religion, but might be generally meaning "submission" or "surrendering the debt"). Classically, Muslim scholars resorted to the concept of abrogation in these instances. However, it is possible that Muslim scholars were only attempting to keep their doctrines consistent with the Qur'anic text, and not truly keeping the Qur'an consistent with itself. It is very much possible that the Qur'an is consistent with itself, if these passages are further scrutinized. As such, more research on the concept of abrogation is necessary.

Historically, the concept of "*muḥkam*" and "*mutashābih*" verses were defined as clear commandments and allegorical, respectively. However, as shown in the example of Chapter 8, it might not be so. Perhaps the laws of Shari'ah are not the essence and are only metaphoric, while the spirit of these laws are the "*muḥkam*." As such, further research on the purpose of these laws and their meanings is essential.

Much more research can be done from the observations made. However, I wish to give a word of caution. One should not adhere to a single presupposition or to further work on a single agenda when trying to unravel meanings of any text. One should try as much as possible to be objective. I admit that the presupposition made in this book is that the Qur'an is authored by Muḥammad who had an altered state of consciousness. However, if you remove this presupposition, as in he did not have an altered state, or redactors having written it, or God has authored it, etc., it would not change the insights provided by such method. As such, I must repeat that we are in search of truth, whatever it may be, and not a defense of dogma. Therefore, our further research needs to keep that as our goal—the truth.