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The Paradigm of Neil Robinson's Thought on Islamic Philosophy among Orientalists

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Abstract

Abstract: Al-Quran is God's revelation that has a position as a source of knowledge. It contains all matters of knowledge and supports the description of the existence of God and his majesty and the universe. Islam has a view of the concept of knowledge, which is closely related to God's involvement, the source of knowledge is believed to be God. This paper will examine several paradigms of Neal Robinson's thought in Islamic Philosophy among Orientalists, especially on the knowledge in the Qur'an. This is qualitative research with a library approach. The results of this study are that Neal Robinson's book consists of three main chapters, namely: Phenomenology; Text Chronology and Morphology; and Structure and Coherence. A text that has various roles and functions in the lives of its believers. Some of Robinson's studies are: how Muslims listen to the Qur'an, listening to the Qur'an; how do Muslims memorize the Qur'an, having the Qur'an by heart; and how the Qur'an is present in the daily life of Muslims, and the Qur'an in everyday life.

Keyword: Neal Robinson, Islamic Philosophy, Muslims, Qur'an

1. Introduction

Islamic philosophy is part of Islamic thought and inseparable part Islamic thought. An important aspect of Islamic philosophy is the relationship between each other. The process of careful scrutiny and understanding of various issues, and how to respond to it someone can take appropriate action in order to respond it. The advancement of the treasures of thought, the assumptions related to Islam and philosophy itself are growing and taking various forms.

The interpretation of the origin of Islamic philosophy, cannot be said to be arbitrary in its study. Islamic philosophy is not a philosophy from Greek. Even with evidence and data support related of translations of Greek works into Arabic, this statement is true, but it is not the right reason in making the origin of Islamic philosophy. The difference between Islamic philosophy and Greek philosophy is about the figures in it who act as philosophers.¹ Due to a different understanding of God and the universe, between people who have faith in the Quran and people who do not faith it. As in Oliver Leaman in “An Introduction to Medieval Islamic Philosophy” translated by Amin Abdullah, there is a view that it is a great mistake to ascribe Islamic philosophy to the translation of some Greek texts.²

According to the opinion of Fakhry (History of Islamic Philosophy), there was a connection between logic and the translation of theological texts which were worthy of study and investigation regarding the meaning, as a necessity in the process of investigating related theological concepts in a Christological debate, and in a dialectical process.³ In his opinion, there were some translators who did not complete their translating activities up to *Analytica Priora*, *Hermeneutica*, *Categories*, due to the assumption that it would be risky and dangerous to study arguments that were sophistic and demonstrative.⁴

Philosophy, in its development, has a position which is debatable and has gaps that allow it to be viewed from various sides. The existence of Islamic

- ¹ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Qur'ān and Ḥadīth as Source and Inspiration of Islamic Philosophy* (Routledge, 1996).
- ² Waryono et al., “Islam Rimba: Islamic Philosophy and Local Culture Engagement in Sumatera,” *HTS Theologese Studies / Theological Studies* 77, no. 4 (2021).
- ³ Abdullah Much Rizal Maulana et al., “Reconsidering Manifestation and Significances of Islamic Philosophy,” *Aqlania* 12, no. 1 (2021): 25–52, <https://doi.org/10.32678/aqlania.v12i1.3633>.
- ⁴ Matthew Melvin-Koushki, “Is (Islamic) Occult Science Science?,” *Theology and Science* 18, no. 2 (2020): 303–24, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14746700.2020.1755547>.

Philosophy is considered to have minimal evidence related to historiography in sparking various thoughts, where the assumption spreads in the influence of scientific developments in the world that are considered to have no influence, especially with the relationship to the culture that is developing today.⁵

In the midst of current developments, the Western considers science in the West to be much more developed, where as a center of scientific and supported by civilization formed through the thought process of the Western nation with independent efforts. While, Islamic Philosophy is believed to be a bridge between the advancement of science in Greece and progress in the West.⁶

Islamic studies with a focus on analysis can be based on the rationale of diverse definitions of religion, through revelation and religious products.⁷ The phenomenon of choosing a “secular” attitude during the process of scientific development seems to be a challenge in ascertaining whether religion can provide a rationalization of thinking with respect to ongoing and evolving civilization. Religion, philosophy and science have differences with regard to how to approach and find the truth.⁸ As science is obtained through human efforts by paying attention to the structure, reality, and everything that is investigated in the form of nature and objects in it, through the help of research, experimentation and sensing.

According to science, philosophy is the result of efforts and is supported by reason during the process of understanding and exploring the nature of essential.⁹ Thus science and philosophy have a guideline or foundation for their work, namely rationality. Whereas religion is based on belief and faith which different degrees of believe, during worship and in relation to nature as well as in relation to humans. Religion moves by racing the rules which become a

⁵ Marlian Arif Nasution, “Philosophy of Science in Islamic Thought Perspective,” *Al-Lubb: Journal of Islamic Thought and Muslim Culture (JITMC)* 2, no. 1 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.51900/lubb.v2i1.8585>.

⁶ Sayyed Fakhroddin Tabatabaie, “Dawkins’s Blind Watchmaker from Perspective of Islamic Philosophy,” *Hikmat -E- Islami* 4, no. 3 (2018): 35–59.

⁷ Juhaya S. Praja and Nurrahman, “Sharia Philosophy Correlation and the Islamic Economic Philosophy,” *Economit Journal: Scientific Journal of Accountancy, Management and Finance* 1, no. 1 (2021): 12–20, <https://doi.org/10.33258/economit.v1i1.370>.

⁸ Desy Apriani et al., “The Use of Science Technology In Islamic Practices and Rules In The Past Now and The Future,” *International Journal of Cyber and IT Service Management (IJCITSM)* 1, no. 1 (2021): 82–93.

⁹ Jari Kaukua, “Post-Classical Islamic Philosophy – a Contradiction in Terms?,” *Nazariyat: Journal for the History of Islamic Philosophy and Sciences* 6, no. 2 (2020): 1–21, <https://doi.org/10.12658/Nazariyat.6.2.M0110en>.

decree in the scripture through revelation.¹⁰ The existence of the revelation process or procedure is a point which has been criticized by philosophers as a form of restriction on the potential for free thinking.

In the western, discourse about metaphysics has been detached from the natural sciences, such as science. According to August Comte, metaphysics is a phase that has a second position in human development, where religion occupies the first level. The third level is occupied by the development of science, especially those that are positivistic or easily digested by humans. In relation to this pecking order, modern man thinks that the development of science is far more important to follow. This has resulted in the abandonment of the previous phase, phase in which religion deals with theology and metaphysics. As former Czech President Vaclav Havel, winner of the Philadelphia, Liberty Medal, USA, that there was a need for self-transcendence, which was to determine and seek the limits of science and find it.¹¹ In addition, through Havel's odyssey, the inspiration is a form of connection between science and religion.¹² However, the orientalist view regarding Muslims' negligence of philosophy has closed the door to *ijtihad*, such as the philosophical works *Tahafut Falsafiah*.¹³ This is happened, because of the negative impression of Islamic philosophy, namely the militancy of the scholars, especially Muslim scholars in translating Greek works.¹⁴

Seeing these events, all existing concepts formulate a division of philosophical studies, including the theory of value, metaphysics, theory of knowledge.¹⁵ The efforts to form knowledge are contained in the theory of knowledge, as well as the relationship between knowledge and humans. There

¹⁰ Wiwin Luqna Hunaida and Dhuha Hadiyansyah, "Ibn Sina's Marriage Concept: Integration of Islamic Philosophy and Modern Psychology," *Journal Intellectual Sufism Research (JISR)* 4, no. 2 (2022).

¹¹ Muh. Syamsuddin, "Orientalisme, Oksidentalisme Dan Filsafat Islam Modern Dan Kontemporer (Suatu Agenda Masalah)," *Refleksi: Jurnal Filsafat Dan Pemikiran Keislaman* 18, no. 1 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.14421/ref.2018.%25x>.

¹² Nasr, *The Qur'an and Hadith as Source and Inspiration of Islamic Philosophy*.

¹³ Mohamed Othman Elkhost, "Contemporary Islamic Philosophy Response to Reality and Thinking Outside History," *Journal of Humanities and Applied Social Sciences* 1, no. 1 (2019): 2–24, <https://doi.org/10.1108/JHASS-05-2019-001>.

¹⁴ Malik Mohammad Tariq, Shagufta Begum, and Mahreen Siddique, "The Reconstruction of Islamic Philosophy of Iqbal: An Appraisal by Dr. Fazlur Rahman," *Bi-Annual Research Journal "BALOCHISTAN VIEW"* XXXV, no. 2 (2016).

¹⁵ David M. DiPasquale, "Alfarabi's Book of Dialectic (Kitāb Al-Jadal): On the Starting Point of Islamic Philosophy," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 32, no. 1 (2021): 118–21, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jis/etaa033>.

are some fundamental questions regarding the sources of knowledge, the epistemology which can be sought by using the sources of knowledge including experience and cryzymus, schools of philosophy, and the nature of knowledge.¹⁶

This paper focuses on how to trace science and philosophy with regard to Islamic perspectives, without ignoring the concepts used as a branch of philosophy. This needs to be done so that the integration between Islamic science and science has a clear framework. The existing agenda has several reasons, because of the dichotomy of thought regarding the scientific domain, and universal values that are taken into consideration regarding the basic scientific framework.

This was also attempted in order to find a basis for integration. Quran is a revelation of God, it has a position as a source of knowledge. This is because the Quran contains all knowledge and supports the description of the existence of God and his majesty, in the universe. Questioning the philosophy of science and its assumptions and views in an Islamic perspective, it is inseparable from the theory of science or epistemology.¹⁷ Science has a relationship with respect to its concepts, namely with Western and Islamic perspectives of science. The similarities and differences are both fundamental, as well as more focused on a particular view, such as the spirit of tawhid in Islam.

In the Quran, the Surah is al-A'laq (A Clot of Blood), has mean that knowledge should serve to bring creatures closer to the creator, achieve a momentary and eternal happiness in the hereafter, and generate enthusiasm in knowledge that is significant and clear in its direction. According to the axiological view, science has the ultimate goal of leading humanity to the status of caliph on earth, as well as servants of God who have roles and responsibilities related to actions when faced with God.

That way, Islam has a view of the concept of knowledge that is closely related to God's involvement in it, because the source of knowledge is believed to be from God. God's knowledge which is absolute, the knowledge contained therein is knowledge that can be seen or not. As the origin of knowledge is believed to come from God, that is why Islam opposes the idea that the purpose

¹⁶ Syamsuddin, "Orientalisme, Oksidentalisme Dan Filsafat Islam Modern Dan Kontemporer (Suatu Agenda Masalah)"

¹⁷ Zahra Mazaheri and Mohammadkazem Alavi, "Islamic Philosophy from Impossibility to Necessity, Analyzing the Opinions of Proponents and Opponents of Islamic Philosophy in the Contemporary Period of Iran," *Hekmat-e Mo'aser* 11, no. 1 (2020): 209–32, <https://doi.org/10.30465/CW.2020.5340>.

of science is only for knowledge alone, which is also essential if it involves the pleasure of God, as the Islamic perspective. The concept of science in Islam is related to the view that is in the scope of the world. Therefore, in this research, this article will analyze several paradigms of Neal Robinson's Thought in the Study of Islamic Philosophy among Orientalists.

2. Methods

In this study, researchers used qualitative methods, and for data collection used by researchers was carried out by means of literature studies,¹⁸ which is a study in the form of research related to the process of collecting, identifying, sorting, reading and also recording all existing research materials.¹⁹ There are four characteristics that use literature studies, namely: First, individuals who act as researchers must be able to deal with texts. Second, the data sources used do not require researchers to go to the field. Third, in general, researchers will get sources of information for research materials from second parties or it can also be called inauthentic data from field subjects. And fourth, when retrieving information about library data, there is no limit to the time.²⁰ Primary data sources come from Neal Robinson's "Discovering the Qur'an: A Contemporary Approach to a Veiled Text". The data is supported by other data sourced from journals from national and international journals, which can be trusted to be true or factual.

3. Results and Discussion

A. Neal Robinson: Islamic Philosophers among Orientalists

Neal Robinson is known as a Western scholar of Islam. Little information is available about his life history, Robinson was born in 1948, his scholarship in Islamic Studies. Several academic positions as a lecturer, Islamic researcher have been achieved and has been a professor of Islamic Studies at Sogang University, South Korea.²¹

¹⁸ Muly J. Moleong, *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif* (Bandung: PT. Remaja Rosdakarya, 2000).

¹⁹ M Askari Zakariah, Vivi Afriani, and K H M Zakariah, *Metodologi Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, Action Research, Research and Development (R and D)*. (Yayasan Pondok Pesantren Al Mawaddah Warrahmah Kolaka, 2020).

²⁰ Askariah, Afriani, and Zakariah.

²¹ Aramdhan Kodrat Permana, "Neal Robinson's Criticism of Nöldeke's Theory of The Chronology of The Qur'an," *ICEHoS (International Conference on Education, Humanities, and Social Science)* 1, no. 1 (2021).

² In addition to several articles, Neal Robinson has also written several books, including: ² *Christ in Islam and Christianity* (1991), *A Concise Introduction to Islam* (1999), *A Simple Guide to Islam* (1997), and his monumental work is *Discovering the Qur'an: A Contemporary Approach to a Veiled Text*. The latter book is Robinson's landmark work on contemporary Western approaches to Qur'anic studies.²²

Qur'anic studies in the West, even though in previous eras some were considered counter-productive, because they brought Jewish and Christian sentiments to the Qur'an, this does not apply to Robinson's works. On the contrary, this work is an important reference for the West on how to understand why the Qur'an occupies the most honorable position in Muslim scholarship. What ⁷ Robinson has written gives double meaning to Western scholarship on the Qur'an. First, how the Qur'an is seen as a final text that has its own characteristics. Second, as a text, the Qur'an occupies the most vital position in the Muslim world.

B. Neal Robinson's Substance on Science and Discovering the Qur'an

Islam has a unity, which connects knowledge, as well as faith (monotheism), and charity. However, it is different from the West which tends to be secular, separating faith and science. So that a lot of understanding and knowledge is born that does not heed religion or make a lack of tolerance about religion, so that it slightly distances most research or scientists away from faith.

The methods, sources and goals of science in Islam are different from the West, which focuses on legitimizing the scientific method and rejecting revelation as a source and means of achieving knowledge and denying God as the origin and source of science. On this basis, Western scholars maintain the idea of "science for science's sake" so that their goal in seeking knowledge is only to achieve worldly prosperity. Islam is different, states that God is the origin and source of all knowledge.²³

²² Ferhat Koca, "Neal Robinson 'Kur'an'i Keşfetmek: Örtülü Bir Metne Çağdaş Bir Yaklaşım,'" *Journal of* ¹ *Divinity Faculty of Hitit University* 17, no. 33 (2018): 336–45.

²³ Junita Br. Surbakti, D.I. Ansusa Putra, and Indah Defkasari, "Etika Komunikasi Digital: Cara Pandang Filsafat Islam Terhadap Realitas Masyarakat Muslim Kontemporer," *Sultan Thaha Journal of Social and Political Studies* 1, no. 1 (2021).

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The Qur'an and the authentic Hadith of the Prophet emphasize the use of various sources and means to achieve knowledge, such as observation or experimentation, revelation, ratio, and intuition. The ultimate goal during the search for knowledge is to deep-knowledge (*ma'rifah*) besides that as a way to serve Allah to seek His pleasure and get closer (*taqarrub*) to Him so that humans can achieve happiness in this world and the hereafter. Epistemology has been the main focus of Muslim scholars during the past. Scientists and philosophers are often very careful to draw boundaries during the process of studying knowledge along with explaining the sources, explaining the methods, interrelationships and usefulness.²⁴

The continuous efforts in presenting the exposition of knowledge is an understanding of the strong belief in the most fundamental doctrine of Islamic teachings, namely *tawhid* (monotheism). Epistemological awareness is lacking in some contemporary Muslim intelligentsia. Meanwhile, epistemology is a prerequisite for progress and the foundation of civilization. The lack of prioritization results in less effective solutions to essential issues, which in some cases are deliberately designed by people or groups who dislike Islam. So that sufficient intellectual energy to develop and build epistemology is lacking, especially for Muslims who have an insight into *tawhid*.²⁵

As a consequence, contemporary Muslims are less able to make significant, original, distinctive and knowledgeable contributions. It tends to be sensitive and has been criticized by the environment. This malaise was exacerbated by the rapid secularization that swept the Islamic world. This leads to confusion, stagnation of thought, and regression in all aspects of social, political, and economic life. Muslims are also powerless to transform themselves and cannot offer solutions to the problems faced by humanity and at the same time the civilization of Muslims is fading.

In the Islamic view, epistemology, ontology and axiology are understood integrally using the frame of *tawhid*. Concretely, the concepts of science, human beings, and the universe are always closely linked to God, who is believed to be the origin of everything.²⁶ All efforts to understand and build the concept

²⁴ Brian Wright, "Muhammad Ali Aziz. Religion and Mysticism in Early Islam: Theology and Sufism in 11men," *Islamic Studies* 60, no. 1 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.52541/isiri.v60i1.1775>.

²⁵ Stephen F. Brown and Juan Carlos Flores, *Historical Dictionary of Medieval Philosophy and Theology*, 2nd ed. (Rowman & Littlefield, 2018).

²⁶ Khairunnisa Hap, "Sumber- Sumber Filsafat Islam Urgensi Filsafat Islam Serta Tokoh-Tokoh Filsafat Islam," *Journal of Social Research* 1, no. 4 (2022).

of everything, including science, must refer to and relate to the context used. This builds the idea that, no concept will be perfect and meaningful without reference to God. If science is separated from God and the universe is considered as an independent reality as is the case in contemporary science, it will only produce false science that eliminates moral and spiritual values, thus having an impact on harmony, as well as the relationship between individuals and God, as well as humans with each other, as well as humans with the universe.

It is different when knowledge is knitted and reintegrated using the frame of tawhid, then social transformation towards a more valuable, useful and dignified life. Clearly, the development of science in the frame of *tawhid* is a sine qua non to transform Muslims as an authoritative and respected *ummah*. Thus, science based on Islamic views really needs to make original and distinctive contributions to the existing body of knowledge, and be able to offer various solutions to problems and crises that occur for the creation of a more humane life order. Muslims actually have the potential to act as intellectual leadership as well as a solid foundation for the construction of culture and civilization. This is clearly a difficult task, but with epistemological awareness, commitment, dedication, and high intellectual determination, everything is possible to be realized.²⁷

Neal Robinson's book *Discovering the Qur'an* consists of three main chapters: i) Phenomenology; ii) Text Chronology and Morphology; and iii) Structure and Coherence. In the first chapter, on phenomenology, the author deals with the value of the Qur'anic text in Muslim life. A text that has various roles and functions in the lives of its recipients. Some of Robinson's studies are: i] how Muslims listen to the Qur'an, listening to the Qur'an; ii] how Muslims memorize the Qur'an, having the Qur'an by heart; and iii] how the Qur'an is present in the daily lives of Muslims, the Qur'an in everyday life. The first thing that caught Neal Robinson's attention was the wording of the first revelation, Surah al-'Alaq [96]: 1-5. For Robinson, the literary and linguistic structure of the Qur'an is extraordinary. In the literary aspect, for example, Robinson is interested in studying the rhyme and rhythm (rythm) of the first revealed verse, QS. al-Alaq 1-5. According to him, there are two interesting things, as follows:

²⁷ Brown and Flores, *Historical Dictionary of Medieval Philosophy and Theology*.

“First, it is immediately obvious that the original is characterized by rhyme. In fact the Whole of the Quran is in rhymed or assonance prose and rhyme and assonance are the basis for the subdivision of the surahs into ayahs. Second, although these five ayahs are unequal length, there is a marked rhythm. Short of listening to a recitation, the easiest way to appreciate this is by counting the number of isochronic units.”

4 First, it is clear that the original is characterized by rime. The entire Qur'an is in prose and the prose is the basis for the division of the suras into verses. Secondly, although these five verses differ in length they are marked with a rime. A quick listen to the reading makes it easy to make a judgment by counting the number of isochronic units.

From the quote above it is clear that Surah al-'Alaq [96]: 1-5, qualifies to be said to be a poem because it has clear rhyme characteristics at the end of each verse. In fact, according to Robinson, not only the verse, but the entire editorial of the Qur'an is rhythmic or prose that has assonance. For this reason, according to him, rhyme and assonance, both of which are the basis for the division of letters into verses of the Second Qur'an, although the five verses are not the same length, but there are rhythmic markers.

In addition to the rhyme and rhythm of the Qur'an, according to Robinson, there is something interesting about the language aspect of the Qur'an, namely consonant letters. The consonant letters of the Qur'anic language (Arabic) produced sound very hoarse. He took the example of Surah al-'Alaq [96], the sound of the word *khalaq* and *'alaq*. In addition, the case of similar word sounds *qalam* and *ya'lam* which has a similarity which establishes a strong association between them. According to his conclusion, the shift from a dominant voice emanating from the lips is very appropriate for the Qur'an in summarizing the verbal revelations that arise.

According to Robinson, the rhythmic quality of the Qur'anic sentences can be seen and heard in many suras and verses. Therefore, the Qur'an is not merely a sacred religious text for Muslims, but it represents something that is very multi-functional for Muslims. Among them are as noble readings, recitations in prayer rituals, decorating homes and offices. Therefore, the Qur'an has many functions in the daily life of Muslims.

The Quran is an obligatory recitation in prayer, both obligatory and voluntary prayers at various times. Robinson's research also revealed that the recitation of the Qur'an carried out by Muslims outside of prayer activities. An example of this is during the holy month of Ramadan, the Qur'an becomes a massive reading for Muslims, especially after the *tarwaih* prayer. Robinson further said as follows:

“During Ramadhan, muslim flock to the mosque for the night prayers which are followed by extensive Qur'anic recitations. In the course of the month, they hear not just the first revelation but all 114 surah in their canonical order, a thirtieth or more of the Qur'an being recited each night. It is beyond the scope of the present work to give a systematic account of the auditory qualities of the whole corpus”.

The quote above shows that Neal Robinson sees the phenomenon of Muslims during Ramadan. For him, the recitation of the Qur'an during Ramadan is not only the first revelation but all the *surah* which amount to 114 *surah* or 30 parts. According to Robinson, the majority of Muslims read at least 1/30th of a juz or Qur'an every night. This is very interesting because it will systematically impact on improving the quality of listening⁴ to the Qur'an from its entire corpus. The effect created by the phenomenon of reciting the Qur'an during the month of Ramadan, Robinson added, is a tremendous⁴ sense of joy among Muslims after they can finish the Qur'an, especially when the recitation of the Qur'an is carried out on the 27th night of Ramadan, *lailatul qadar*.

In addition, to the recitation of the Qur'an as above, the Qur'an also occupies another strategic position in Islamic educational institutions. The form of the position is memorized by the learners. Educational institutions that specialize in memorizing the Qur'an are increasingly appearing. In Robinson's research in Pakistan, Qur'an memorization madrasas have not only sprung up, but have also initiated fast and effective memorization methods. In more detail Robinson describes the reasons why the Qur'an is memorized. The most basic is the obligation to recite verses of the Qur'an in prayer, so memorizing verses or short chapters of the Qur'an becomes a necessity. Robinson recorded the phenomenon of Muslim children's activities in memorizing the Qur'an as follows:

“However, many muslim endeavour to memorize much more than this. It is a widespread practice for children, some as young as seven year of

age, to attend a Qur'an class after school every day. Only when he has read it from beginning to end and mastered the pronunciation does he attempt to commit passage to memory. At the end of three years some will have learned only a few short surahs, but others will know the whole al Qur'an by heart and will have earned the coveted title of hafiz".

Robinson's description can explain how the stages that Muslims must go through in learning how to read the Qur'an to memorize it. According to him, the stages that must be passed first, learning how to pronounce the letters per consonant letter of the Arabic alphabet as many as 29 alphabets then continued with spelling with vocal letters, secondly learning how to read the whole word, then continued with reading the Qur'an, only after completing reading the Qur'an and good pronunciation is allowed to memorize the Qur'an.

Another interesting phenomenon in the first chapter of Robinson's discussion is the use of the Qur'an as a decoration in the form of beautiful writing, calligraphy, as well as a handrail and even an amulet for some Muslims. In Robinson's observation, many Muslims use some of the texts of the Qur'an as amulets, as well as as practices/wirids to maintain safety and others. These phenomena become strong data for the life of the Qur'an in Muslim society. Academics then observed Robinson as Living Qur'an. To clarify the above description, Robinson's following statement can be used as a foothold, namely:

"Passage from the Qur'an are sometimes copied out and used for superstitious practices, especially by Muslims from the more backward rural areas. For instance Surahs 113 and 114, which are prayers for protection from evil, are worn as amulets.

From the quote above, Robinson sees the phenomenon of different Muslims in functioning the Qur'an outside of its function as a holy book that must be guarded, preserved, read, memorized and practiced its contents. From his observations, Robinson saw how some Muslims sometimes use Qur'anic verses for medicinal practices and rituals. In addition, he also explains how Surah al-Falaq [113] and an-Nas [114] are used as amulets, protective incantations, cures for diseases, and others.

The second section on chronology consists of four sub-sections. Robinson describes the available historical materials related to the sequence of suras and

verses. Robinson cautions readers to be careful with biographical “news” as they often include exaggerations such as miracles. On the other side, the Qur’anic text contains very little information about the time and place of revelation. Robinson does not consider all biographical works about the Prophet Muhammad as meaningless, instead he divides the historical materials into two: first in terms of reliability in historical perspective; and second in terms of unconventionality and hereditary stories which he then ignores.

Robinson strongly emphasizes caution with literature *sirah* and *maghazi*. What the author concludes is that although Islamic literature also contains questionable material, Muslim scholars have sought to understand and interpret the text with historical data that can strengthen the historical dimension of the text itself. The historical dimension of the text led Robinson to sharply criticize the efforts to reconstruct the early history of Islam put forward by Patricia Crone and Michael Cook in *Hagarism*² published in 1977. At the same time, it also criticizes the skeptical approach by questioning the validity of the historical sources of early Islam. For Robinson, their skeptical approach is not academically wise, as scholarship is multi-dimensional. In this context, traditional sources for determining the chronological order of the text, such as the cause of the verse’s revelation, *asbab an-nuzul*, *nasikh mansukh* as well as the traditional list of *surah* Makkiya and Madaniya discussed by Robinson comprehensively.

All these sources have limitations in creating and confirming a logical approximate chronology of the Qur’anic *surah* and verses. Finally, the information about the beginnings of the *surah* of the Egyptian edition of the Qur’an cannot be accepted for determining the chronological order because it is only a compilation of the editors from the traditional materials mentioned above.

Another subject related to determining the chronological order of texts is the efforts made by Western scholars. Especially after the second half of the 19th century, studies that focus on the order of the Qur’anic *surahs*. In this context, the chronological order of Theodore Noldeke, Friedrich Schwally and Richard Bell is briefly introduced along with the pros and cons of these works and compared with the chronology/chronological order of the Egyptian Qur’an version.

As a result of evaluating the chronological studies of the epistles, Robinson concluded that the problem of the chronology of revelation is far from solved.²⁸ What Robinson suggests is that Qur'anic scholars should conduct thematic studies by taking all references to the Qur'an into consideration without being bound by the order or chronological classification of the *surah*. Furthermore, framework of chronological order, Robinson directs attention to thematic studies and then moves on to the final section of the book. The final section of his work is on the structural, thematic and stylistic characteristics of the Qur'an. Again Robinson bases his analysis on Noeldeke's chronology because the Noeldeke-Schwally classification compares favorably with the standard chronology of the Egyptian version of the Qur'an.

In the final section of the book, Robinson begins with an analysis of the formal elements of the Makkiya suras. 48 Makkiya suras according to Noeldeke's chronological categories were analyzed from their textual and formal aspects. In this context, the suras were analyzed based on ten aspects, namely: 1] the opening of the letter; 2] the oath; 3] the eschatological aspect; 4] the narrative aspect; 5] the discourse aspect; 6] the revelation aspect; 7] the polemical aspect; 8] the didactic questions and answers; 9] the message aspect, and 10) special notes. In analyzing the Makkiyah suras, Robinson divides them into various facets involving, among others; polemics, eschatology, God's personal communication with His messenger, signs of God's greatness and mercy, lessons from history, and the status and authenticity of revelation. According to the author, each of the above principles has a register or sign, namely their respective structures, as well as their phonetic and semantic characteristics.

The author emphasizes that structure, sound, and meaning must be considered in the inter-relationship between these three elements. In three Makkiya suras, namely al-Falaq [113], al-Nas [114] and al-Naba [78] Robinson analyzes very successfully the relationship between sentence structure, phonetics and semantics.²⁹ In addition, there are also important examples that show how voice and intertextuality have an effective and functional role. In this framework the author shows how the rime endings of the Makkiya verses

²⁸ Neal Robinson, *Discovering the Qur'an: a Contemporary Approach to a Veiled Text*, London: SCM-Canterbury Press Ltd, 2003, 95.

²⁹ Neal Robinson, *Discovering the Qur'an: a Contemporary Approach to a Veiled Text*, London: SCM-Canterbury Press Ltd, 2003, 96.

have a unifying effect as in *Surah al-Nazi'at*. Similarly, the author makes some etymological analysis of many vocabularies in relation to their usage in some suras as well as a comparison of their readings with Biblical references. This will help the reader to find the textual coherence of the verses.

For Madaniyah suras, Robinson tries to analyze them by selecting the longest sura, *al-Baqarah*, by dividing it into five aspects. These five are: i] the prologue [verses 1-39]; ii] the criticism of the Children of Israel [verses 40-121]; iii] the legacy of Abraham [verses 153-242]; iv] the struggle to free the Kaaba [verses 243-283]; and the conclusion [verses 284-286]. What the author argues is the coherence of *Surah al-Baqarah* as the final result of his analysis. This coherence is a turning point from the majority of Western Islamist analyses that claim that the Qur'an has no structural coherence and Robinson's analysis marks an important chapter in Western scholarship related to the coherence of Qur'anic verses and suras. Another thing that stands out from Robinson's contribution to the analysis of the six aspects of *Surah al-Baqarah* is the oral dimension. What is meant by the oral dimension according to him is the dialogic side of the six aspects. The reader seems to be brought to a dynamic atmosphere in the narration of the verses on the six aspects.

In this discussion, the author makes a detailed analysis of who is the goal of the verse in *Surah al-Baqarah*. Simultaneously, pronoun changes from first singular to first plural or from singular pronouns to third plural pronouns are analyzed by Robinson from the perspective of their structural role and grammatical function. Regarding the order of suras in the Qur'anic text, Robinson emphasizes that although there is a reduction in the length of verses, there are actually some exceptions. For him, it is difficult to explain the order of the suras based solely on the length-shortness of the verses or the grouping of surahs based on *fawatih al-suear*.

At the end of the third section, Robinson presents the views of Islahi, a Muslim scholar, on the order of the suras. Islahi follows in the footsteps of his teacher Farahi, one of the most widely cited Muslim scholars on the coherence of the Qur'anic text. The strengths and weaknesses of Islahi's approach are clearly reviewed by Robinson. Over the past few decades, Western scholars' engagement with the Qur'anic text has increased significantly. One of their concerns is the study of the composition of surahs and verses of the Qur'an. In this context, some productive scholars such as Angelika Neuwirth, Mintasir Mir,

Michael Sells and Neal Robinson have high-value academic works in approaching the composition of the Qur'anic text from various perspectives. Among them are from the thematic, structural and symmetrical aspects. Robinson's work, *Discovering the Qur'an*, is an important part that is different from the studies of Western scholars in previous eras.

4. Conclusion

The Quran is God's revelation that has a position as a source of knowledge. Because the Quran contains all matters of knowledge and there is support for the description of the existence of God and his majesty, in the universe. Questioning the philosophy of science along with assumptions and views in an Islamic perspective, it is inseparable from the theory of science or epistemology. Science has a relationship with regard to its concept, namely with Western and Islamic perspectives. The similarities and differences that exist are a form that includes both fundamental aspects, as well as forms that are more focused on certain views, such as the spirit of tawhid in the Islamic view. In Islamic source, the Quran emphasizes that science must function to bring creatures closer to the creator, achieve a momentary and eternal happiness in the hereafter, and generate enthusiasm in significant knowledge and clear direction. According to the axiological point of view, science has the ultimate goal of leading humanity to the status of caliph on earth, as well as servants of Allah who have roles and responsibilities related to actions when in front of Allah.

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