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**Contribution of Philosophical Knowledge for  
Understanding the Qur'an: Calling Earth and Heavens  
to Come Willingly or Unwillingly**

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**Abstract:** *In this article, we will try to examine the importance and the value of philosophical knowledge for the understanding of the Qur'an in the context of the 11th verse of Fussilat. In this verse the terms of (كُرْهَا/طَوْعًا) is being translated as “willingly and unwillingly “in all languages of the world. In the border of tafsir studies we intend to examine all possible comments and offer to benefit from the philosophy of motion to understand this verse properly. The knowledge system of philosophers based on reasoning. Their leading proofs are rational. Although theologians and philosophers have similar characteristics in terms of reasoning, the basic purpose of theologians is to defend the Islamic beliefs and criticize the opponents of Islam. The purpose of the Islamic philosopher is to reach the truth and bring Islamic thoughts closer to the field of philosophy. Reconciliation of philosophy and religion in Islamic philosophy is a reconciliation of philosophical and religious language. The history of Islamic Philosophy involves the most remarkable examples of how the relationship between philosophy and religion is perceived throughout the history of Islamic Thought. Islamic philosophers have the two significant domains. When Islamic thinkers used the method of philosophical thinking, they interpreted religion and philosophy as two separate interpretations of the truth and attempted to compromise them. These attempts and ideas they developed improved*

*reasoning in the theology and philosophy of Islam. The discussions and analyses about the relationship between philosophy and religion include the discussions about revelation-wisdom and faith-wisdom. Someone who knows the source, nature and kinds and subdivisions of motion in the philosophy of physics can explain the above mentioned verse better. While the text of the Qur'an itself refers to from physics to metaphysics what could be wrong with using the science of physics to understand the verses:*

**Keywords:** Qur'anic Interpretation Metaphor, Universe, Islamic Philosophy, Creation Philosophy of Motion , Physics and Metaphysics

## 1. Introduction

It should be emphasized that only historical events or grammatical explanations are not sufficient to understand a religious text. Only literal translation of a text and language may sometimes not reflect the breadth of the world of meaning. "Willing and willingness" are human characteristics. However, how will we interpret these concepts when we see them used in religious texts about the heavens and earth? When we examine the nature of the use of metaphor in philosophy and religion, we see organ names are transferred to nature, words related to nature are transferred to humans.

The Qur'an states that the creator could be felt by turning man's gaze to nature. For this reason, natural elements such as the sun, moon, stars, night, day, mountain, sea, cloud, and wave are constantly drawing attention.

In the Qur'an this verse needs deep analyzing. *"And you see the mountains, thinking them rigid, while they will pass as the passing of clouds. [It is] the work of Allah, who perfected all things. Indeed, He is acquainted with that which you do."* (Sura an-Naml, 27/88)

In this verse, mountains are likened to clouds. Contrary to popular belief, it is stated that the mountains are not rigid. While the mountains are likened to the clouds, in another verse, this time the waves are likened to the mountains.

Some characteristics of human beings are sometimes transferred to nature in the Qur'an.

("And the Dawn as it breathes away the darkness" Surah At-Takwim, 81/18) Breathing, turning back, has the characteristics of humans and living things. But the verse establishes a connection

between the breath and the realization of light from the east. Morning time is likened to a living being. The morning is compared to having breath.<sup>1</sup>

In the article, we discuss this subject in more detail in a specific verse. In the Qur'an, the words "Tav'an and Karhan" / طَوْعًا / كَرْهًا" occur in four places. These concepts are only related to the human will at surah of Tawbah in the Qur'an, while in the other three places they are related to the voluntary and involuntary movements of cosmological beings. (Al-i Imran,3/ 83;Tawbah, 9/53,er Ra'd,13/15,Fussilat,41/11)

While explaining the creation of the heavens and the earth in the 11th verse of the Surah Fussilat, the concepts of "Tav'an and Karhan" are mentioned.

” ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ وَهِيَ دُخَانٌ فَقَالَ لَهَا وَلِلْأَرْضِ ائْتِيَا طَوْعًا أَوْ كَرْهًا قَالَتَا أَتَيْنَا طَائِعِينَ“

“Moreover He comprehended in His design the sky, and it had been (as) smoke: He said to it and to the earth: "Come ye together, willingly or unwillingly." They said: "We do come (together), in willing obedience."

(طَوْعًا / كَرْهًا) is translated as "willingly and unwillingly" in every language translations. In our opinion, it will be more enlightening if we apply to the philosophy of physics in order to understand these expressions. In our research, we will examine the interpretations of classical Tafsirs on these verses and then turn to philosophical interpretations about the nature of the movement.

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<sup>1</sup> Sabbagh, *La Metaphor dans le Coran*, (Edited by Massignon), (Paris: Librairie De Amerique 'et' D'orient ,1943), 18-45.

## **2. Literature Review**

When we look at the Classical Tafsirs, it seems difficult to find a very stimulating explanation on this subject.

Al Tabari (d.923); says that the meaning of coming willingly is not by rebelling against Allah's orders, but by accepting it. "

- Ibn Kathir (d.1373) interprets obedience as a response to the divine order.
- Muqatil (d.767) associates voluntary and reluctance with good deeds and punishments.
- According to Fakhr al-Din al-Razi,(d.1210) these expressions reveal the will of God. It is an expression that emphasizes obedience, not reluctance.

Ibn Sina's (d.1037 ) interpretation of the Surah Ihlas appears as a very original interpretation in terms of method and content. If he had made an interpretation of the verse of Fussilat and we had received it, we would have encountered very interesting explanations. As far as we know, he has no commentary on the Surah Fussilat. However, in the comments of al-Zamakhshari (d.1144) Fakhr al-Din al-Razi (d.1210), al-Baydawi (d.1286) Mahmud an Nasafi (d.1310) and Mulla Sadra (d.1640) It is quite possible to find the effects of Avicenna's spirit. A thorough examination of his works may perhaps bring us together with references. These are debating names that somehow explain her legacy. Contemporary Turkish Mufassir Elmali Hamdi Yazir, (d.1942) wrote his interpretation by assimilating this infrastructure,

notes that it should be understood in terms of submission. It is said to act in harmony and order with each other.<sup>2 3 4 5</sup>

### 3. Research Objective

Willing and unwilling as a concept expresses a will and epistemic processes and above all a vitality especially for human being. In this respect, how do we interpret with our knowledge that celestial bodies were perceived as living things in the history of medieval philosophy? How healthy can we understand this verse without knowing the effective reasons of the philosophy of movement based on anger and love? It would be incomplete to talk about the nature of the movement without knowing the love and anger theories of Empedocles (BC.453 and Ibn Hazm al Andalusi (d.1064)

- With a panbioist approach, we can say that everything that exists is alive. We can develop the notion that everything perceived is real and that everything that is real is perceptible. We may add that this is a metaphorical expression.
- However, how will this resemblance between the reader's familiarity with medieval philosophy and their understanding of the Quran be interpreted? Are we now going to claim that, despite their differences, philosophy and religion share a common goal?

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<sup>2</sup> Al Tabari, 2001. *Camii'l Beyan An Ta 'vili ayi 'l Qur'an*, Cairo CXX,pp.391..

<sup>3</sup> Ibn Kathir (2009. , *Tafsiru'l Qur'ani'lAzim*, Cairo ,C.XII,pp.222.

<sup>4</sup> Mugatil Ibn Sulayman, (2001). *Tafsir al Kabir* Lubnan.XXII, pp.224.

<sup>5</sup> Ibn Sina, (2002. *Tafsirü Sureti 'l İhlas li 'ş Şeyh Ebi Ali el Hüseyin b.Abdillah b.Sina* ,edited by Abdullah Abdurrahman el Hatib,"Mecelletü'ş Şeria ve'd-Dirasati'l İslamiyye"1423/2002,XVTT,pp.51.

- When we say that the perception of celestial bodies as living is an understanding that is unique to medieval philosophy and has no real reality today, can we make the same judgment in the infallible word of God, where similar emphasis is placed?
- Can we return to this thought that we said remained in medieval philosophical thought in the light of our new physics knowledge. What does the concept of vitality mean? Are cognition and movement the ultimate or sufficient reasons for vitality?

We do not intend to immediately answer the questions we put forward here. These may be the subject of separate discussions and surveys. The Questions intends to show the horizon of the subject. Fussilat 11 verse also opens important discussion areas for discussions on the eternity of the universe.

#### **4. Discussion**

Being the primary source of reference for discussing almost all the issues in Islamic philosophy, Aristotle discusses the topic of the prime mover in Book VIII of his Physics. For Aristotle, the prime mover, the first of all beings in essence and in attributes, is immobile. The prime mover, as an object of love, caused the first movement to take place by means of its attraction. Since every motion is a change from potential to action, everything in existence needs a mover. Something that is completely free from matter, identical to reason, the perfect ideal that everything loves and tries to reach causes every kind of movement to happen since it is the lover of everything, God is the reason of ultimate purpose of every movement. Besides the necessary and infinite motion in the universe, for Aristotle the basic concern in the quality attributed to God "unmoved mover" is keeping God away from the change, which is in question where there is movement. Aristotle, who associated motion with necessity starting from the point that

motion is continuous, thinks the Prime Mover must be one for continuity. Some being are pre-eternally and post- eternally immobile. Besides this immobility, which is caused by the need for the primer mover, some beings are in a infinite motion. They also owe this motion to a unmoved mover. For Aristotle, the prime mover is located outside the universe. He states that since motions come from the outer celestial sphere (falak), the prime mover would be exposed to besiege in the case that it is in the center.<sup>6</sup> Proclus (485) and John Philoponus (d.570) developed arguments for and against the eternity of the universe. Under their influence, Ghazali (d.1111) revives the tradition of criticism in Islamic thought, respectively, in the fourteenth and fifteenth issues of his work named *Incoherence of Philosophers* carry these titles:

*“To Show their inability to prove that the Heaven is Living, and obey God through its Rotatry Motion”*

*“Refutation of what they consider to be the purpose which moves the heaven”* In the introduction to the fourteenth issue, he first summarizes the views of the philosophers as follows

“The Heaven is living and has a soul which is related to heavenly body in the same way as our souls are related to our bodie. Just our bodies move by will towards our purposes under the motive influence of our souls so does the Heaven -the purpose of its rotarity motion being the worship of the Lord of Universe” Al Ghazali states that after this determination, direct acceptance or rejection is not possible against these views. Because God has the power to create life in every object. The size and shape of a sphere does not prevent it from being alive. Although

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<sup>6</sup> Aristotle,(1949). *Physics*, ed.: W. D. Ross, in *The Works of Aristotle*, Oxford. 13,21.



animals are in different forms, they are common in life.” al Ghazali states that the philosophers' idea that the sky is moving is a sensory premise. The intelligent premise is the sentence "Every object is moving and there is a mover." Accordingly, if the object moved because it is an object, then every object should move. Al Ghazali develops his grounding further after this statement. The movement of heaven cannot be forced. Because another object that moves by force, and this is based on voluntary movement.<sup>7</sup>

For al Ghazali, motion is divided into four in terms of quality, quantity, space and state. He groups motion into Accidental, qasri and natural in terms of its cause. Movement of water inside a container upon movement of the container is accidental movement; movement of a body upon external cause such as throwing an arrow from a bow is qasri movement; and falling down of a stone, or rising up of Barnes is natural movement.<sup>8</sup>

Al Kindi (d.873) in his epistle named *On the Prostration and Obedience of the Heavens*, he reveals the attitude of a philosopher while understanding the verses of the Qur'an. He tries to evaluate and interpret the emphasis of “And the stars and trees prostrate.” (Qur'an, 55/6) based on rational data.

Al-Kindi did not want to undermine the meaning of “to kneel, to bow down”, which is a specific act of worship. He stated that every person with a working intellect is able to understand that the act of “to kneel, to bow down” doesn't essentially mean to put one's hands and knees on the ground; he emphasized that stars,

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<sup>7</sup> Al Ghazali (2000). *The Incoherence of the Philosophers / Tahâfut al-falâsifa*, a Parallel English. 143, 145.

<sup>8</sup> Al Ghazali (1936), *Maqâsid al-falâsifa*, M.S. al-Kurdî (ed.), Cairo: al-Matba'a al-Mahmûdiyya al-Tijâriyya. 309.

herbs, and trees bow down in a different manner. Besides the specific meaning of this statement, he mentioned that obedience is crucial. He, in a sense, analyzes this physical act to bow down in terms of metaphysics. According to this viewpoint, there is a movement from deficiency to excellence; there is growth, multiplication, a transition from the state of the intention to action. Obedience also means following the order of the superior. Planets don't have the organs necessary for kneeling; they are in the state of obedience as they are out of the states such as existence, alteration, moving from deficiency to integrity. Based on the idea that celestial bodies are alive intelligent and they have willpower, which was a dominant belief in the Ancient and Middle Age scientific philosophy and astrology, Al-Kindi states that in his epistle *On the Prostration of the Outermost Sphere* celestial bodies obey the will of Allah, follow his commands.<sup>9</sup>

Among Islamic philosophers, Ibn Miskawayh gives the most credit to the proof of motion. Although his intellectual background is influenced by Aristotle, al Farabi and Ikhwan al-Safa, he had more success and improvement in the analysis of this subject. Intense desire (shawq), repulsion (karahah), will (iradah), dominance (qahr) and nature are the terms mainly used by Ibn Miskawayh to identify the source of movement.

Ibn Miskawayh's short analysis about sensory information before concentrating on the proof of motion is very interesting. He further elucidate his approach in subsequent sections of *al-Fawz al-Asghar*:

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<sup>9</sup> Abu Rida, M.‘A.H. (ed.), 1950/1953, Al-Kindi, *Rasa'il al-Kindi al-Falsafiyya*, 2 volumes, Cairo: Dar al-Fikr al-‘Arabi; Atar, Armağan, (2022) *Klasik Islam Felsefesinde Ilahi Basitlik Kavrami: Farabi ve Ibn Sina Ornegi*, Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation Ankara University. 20.

"... Now, I say that every natural object has its specific motion. Thus, there is both the existing one and the generated one of body. Resting of the body (qiwam) becomes his form. Its special form is the consistency (qiwam) provider of its essence. And the form which sustains its essence (consistency provider) has to do with its nature. And its nature is the source of its specific motion. And its specific motion is what moves it toward wholeness. Every moving thing moves toward wholeness and suitability. Therefore, it is said that every moving thing moves toward wholeness with intense desire. What is desired is caused by the desirer. Naturally, causality comes before the caused. Therefore, the proof of motion is the most obvious and most supreme evidence about the supreme and almighty Artisan."

By associating the potential power behind physical movement with intense desire, emphasizing that movement occurs as a result of desire, and listing the types of motion as Generation (kawn), Corruption (fasad), Growth (numuww), Diminution (nuqsan), Qualitative Change (istihalah), Displacement (nuqlah), commonly referred to by Aristotle, al Kindi, al Farabi, (d.950) and the Islamic philosophers following him Ibn Miskawayh (d.1030) suggests that motion is displacement and change. In case of a change in body, such change will be in terms of its place, state and substance. When we think of a change in terms of place, then question would arise whether this spatial change is in total or partial terms. If this movement is total, then the motion will be straight (mustaqimah). In case of partiality of the change, the movement will be circular. Linear movement has two types: one from periphery to center, and the other from center to periphery. The beings that are subject to circular movement, which is uninterrupted and infinite, are self-moving and the linear movement is interrupted since it is finite.

Ibn Miskawayh takes the moving things in terms of their being animate or inanimate, stating that the prime mover that causes everything to move does not itself move. He tries to explain that the mover does not move in his response to somebody asserting that the movement of a living moving thing is not from its essence but from outside. He tries to explain Empedocles' notions of Love and Hatred via his own notions while stating that movement of the animate mainly results from intense desire and repulsion. While Ibn Miskawayh discusses Intense Desire and Repulsion from various points of view in *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq*, he stresses in *al-Fawz al-Asghar* that intense desire causes approach whereas repulsion causes retreat. Ibn Miskawayh tries to explain his own understanding of motion deriving from him. Motion of every moving thing is either natural or not. When the motion is natural, the mover is the nature. When its movement is not natural, the source of its movement is either will or dominance. When the motion is caused by will, what causes the moving thing to move is that which is desired. It is also the desired one which causes that which moves by dominance to move. Its dominance causes it to move. There is an outer mover that causes every moving thing to move. Everybody has a nature and motion in its state. Motion in a sense is a means specific to the nature. Movement by the first mover is not in question. When we accept that it moves this necessitates that it has a mover. That it is a mover itself as well, hinders it from being prime (*awwal*). Since body is mobile, the prime mover is not a body, either.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Ibn Miskawayh, (1974)*el-Fevzu'l-as^gar*, neşr. A.F. Fuad, Bingazi, Salih Uzeyme, Tunusia. 42, 48; Saruhan, M. S., (2008) "God in Ibn Miskawahy's Thought", *Hamdard Islamicus*, Volume:31, Issue: 3, pp. 35-45; Zubairi B. Nasseem (1992) "Motion in Muslim Peripatetic School: Brief Exposition And Echo Of Al-Ghazzālī's Critique" *Islamic Studies* Vol. 31, No. 4. 451-46.

## **5. Conclusion**

We have made a humble introduction in this article that the relevant verses of the Qur'an cannot be understood correctly unless the physics and motion philosophy and astronomy are well known.

Philosophy sometimes reduces knowledge by absorbing it as well as increasing it. It is to regulate order and disorder. Philosophy follows the processes leading to a solution rather than finding solutions. Philosophy shows its functionality as a systematic way of thinking that enables us to find the right and distinguish the wrong. Philosophy has a fascinating, exciting feature as an element that gives pleasure and inspiration to our personal satisfaction as well as our informational curiosity. In the absence of philosophical method and perspective, human; cannot think multilaterally and looks at events from one side. He cannot detail the things that are the subject of his knowledge. He cannot see different possibilities and options. He is deprived of the wide horizon that philosophy provides. It allows to look from horizontal, vertical perspectives. It protects the thought from stereotyping and freezing. There are multi-faceted perspectives that can provide people with a philosophical approach to issues such as good, bad, happiness and virtues.

Islamic philosophers took the basic philosophical concepts from Greek philosophy. But also they have created a new chain of concepts by taking concepts especially mentioned in the Qur'an and put into a philosophical interpretation. Islamic philosophers have seen philosophical knowledge as a means of reference in interpreting the Qur'an putting philosophical sciences at the service of religion, The view and evaluation of a faqih jurist, a theologian

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and a linguist's concept of revelation, and the philosopher's point of view are naturally different. The philosopher uses a different terminology when explaining the concept of revelation. Islamic philosophers have tried to reconcile philosophy and religion, While defining philosophy, Islamic philosophers added religious motifs to it, cared so much about its validity that they almost brought the philosopher closer to prophethood. Revelation is a divine gift in man's search for meaning and method.

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