

God-Man Communication in the Quran: A Semiological Approach

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Received: 24/9/2007

Accepted: 28/1/2007

Abstract

The present article aims to investigate the appropriateness of the concepts introduced by modern sciences of the sign, particularly by structural and poststructural approaches, to studying God-man communication in the Quran. Such a conception of communication can be described in terms of two models, namely, communication as *sending* and communication as *reading*. These two concepts which represent an uncompromising dualism in the modern approaches to the sign, come to a compromise in the religious discourse, leading us not merely to conceiving a powerful God but also to a powerful man.

Keywords: Quran, Structuralist, Poststructuralist, Text, Signifier.

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Introduction

If the way God relates to beings and creatures is considered a semiological question in essence, one can justifiably think of all theology and religious studies, and, at least, a major part of philosophy as simply instances of semiology. Furthermore, if, broadly speaking, the way man relates to beings or things in the world might also be regarded as a semiological concern, one would hardly be able to refer to any discipline that is not concerned with the sign and questions regarding its semiological aspects. Given these facts and assumptions, one can claim that all experts, particularly in human sciences are, in fact, concerned with semiology, in a way or other. While the generality with which one might approach human disciplines as sign systems seems to be true and a given science may well possess a significant part dealing with signs, we should not, however, fail to remember that the sign had always been a central concern to the religious discourse, and more particularly to scriptures.

Scriptures become original texts of semiology by describing the phenomenal world as language and as sign. This is an old religious theme without which religion is not thinkable. As Derrida puts it, "Sign and deity have the same place and time of birth. The epoch of the sign is essentially theological. Perhaps it will never end".(1974: 14) In the same way, the scripture (here the Quran) as the sign from God,

performs simultaneously two fundamental functions: it introduces itself as sign from God, then by virtue of a significant generalization, describes being as Book and beings as its words. This is clearly seen in verses which warn people against ignoring and forgetting the signs of their Lord which are with us in every moment of our life. We live in the Book of the Lord. (30:56)

The general claim I will try to bring forth is that modern language studies can lend us interesting insights on the sign and communication that might contribute very well to better understanding of God-man communication through the Book. Modern concerns with the sign, in particular the poststructuralist tradition, have developed a certain concept of the sign and the process of meaning-making in which the authorial intention in interpreting a text comes under criticism. The text or the written sign, by going beyond the authorial bond over itself and by keeping a distance from the author or the original source that have produced it, achieves its freedom and reveals its hidden capabilities for endless signification. Such a view is dominant in Derrida who argues that "Writing is orphaned, and separated at birth from the assistance of its father"(Harland: 128). Thus, the reader remains alone with the text, with no author on the other side. In fact, the text acts like a wall between reader and writer.

Although, speaking of the liberation of the text from the domination of the author or any totalizing center does not necessarily lead to questioning communication and mutual understanding, it, nonetheless, differs from the monotheist conception of *text* or *sign* in important ways. The Quran describes God as the sender of signs "whom no thing resembles"(42:11). The picture given is seemingly a dual one linking God and man through the Book. This so-called duality does not, however, consist of two opposing terms, nor does it favor one at the price of other. God has the absolute authority over the Book, yet this authority is not in a conflict with the readers' freedom. Thus, what appears unthinkable in ordinary communication, namely, the compromise between the author's authority and the readers' act of reading may become conceivable in the religious discourse.

Some Theoretical Concepts

One of the main features with which we identify western thought in the twentieth century is the linguistic turn, which is best instantiated by the various schools of continental thought. To the great majority of continental thinkers whom Harland (1987) refers to as *superstructuralists*, "we cannot live as human beings below the level of language categories and social meanings because it is language categories and social meanings that

make us human in the first place. This turns our usual picture of the universe quite upside down. For language categories and social meanings are now the ultimate reality, coming before objective things and subjective realities"(68). To this, one can add Gadamer's statement that "language is not just one of man's possessions in the world, but on it depends the fact that man has a world at all"(Madison, 1994: 311) and the "being that can be understood is language"(Weinsheimer, 1991: 16).

Along with the turn toward language, one might also speak of the re-birth of the sign, a concept as old as western philosophy, reformulated as part of a scientific theory of language in the Saussurian structural linguistics. Since a familiarity with the Saussurian and the poststructural formulations of the sign is necessary to proceed any further, a very brief introduction will be given below. We should, meanwhile, confess that we have been very brief and selective in our account of the poststructural position for which deconstruction stands out as the best representative, and, of course, more significant to a study like this.

The linguistic sign, according to Saussure, consists of two faces, neither of which pre-exists the other nor has any meaning outside their relation. These are the sound image or signifier, and the concept, or signified. Thus the sign "tree" consists of a signifier the sounds "t-r-i:" and a signified, the conception of a tree,

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both of which, are psychological (Saussure, 1959: 67). What is revolutionary in Saussurian linguistics, according to Hawkes (1977: 19), is his replacement of the substantial view of language with a relational one in which, every element is defined not according to what it is but negatively as what other elements are not. What constitutes the system of language (or langue) is a relation of *difference*. "In language there are only differences without positive terms. Whether we take the signified or the signifier, language has neither ideas nor sounds that existed before the linguistic system, but only conceptual and phonic differences that have issued from the system." (Saussure: 120)

It should be noted that, in this article, we use the term *semiology* in a broad sense, referring not merely to structural but also to poststructural approaches which are rather critical of the Saussurian sign. The reason for this inclusive use of the term, is the fact that the sign appears as a key issue in almost all of these approaches. So, even deconstruction which severely criticizes Saussurian semiology and the metaphysical conception of the sign, is referred to as a discourse on the sign and as a semiology in the broad sense of the word. For, although Derrida aims at destructing the signified-signifier duality, his so-called material sign or the signifier is a sign after all, and the deconstruction of the dual sign does not keep it from functioning. (Derrida, 2002: 20)

Deconstruction can be considered as a significant contribution to the study of the sign, and as we will notice, to the study of religion, in its presenting everything or the world in general as language, or as a text. Outside that text which works by the un-namable, non-determinable textual force referred to as "differance" there is nothing. "Nothing exists outside a text." Although, Saussure's duality of signified-signifier is itself subject to sharp criticism in Derrida's writings, he remains a structuralist in method by adopting the key notion of *relational structure*. Saussure's *difference as a concept* appears inspiring to Derrida, particularly in respect to *differance*, which is presented as a difference-creating concept. In fact, *difference* is itself a by-product of a *differance*, or the systematic production of differences, which sets every element simultaneously in a relation of difference and deference with other forms in the structure. This specially invented term makes manifest the two meanings of the French verb 'differer'. As Derrida describes it, "On the one hand, it indicates difference as distinction, inequality, or discernibility; on the other, it expresses the interposition of delay, the interval of a spacing and temporalizing that puts off until 'later' what is presently denied" (quoted in Harland: 138). By appealing to 'differance', Derrida presents language as a text infinitely unstable and, of course, proliferating.

Then, it, probably, comes as no surprise that deconstruction; even in its most negative face is theologically significant. For instance, as a theologian, Mark C. Taylor maintains that "deconstruction is the hermeneutics of the death of God and the death of God is the (a)theology of deconstruction" (Hart: 65) The link between deconstruction and religion has been a matter of great controversy which the reader can find in Hart (1987) and Caputo(1997a) in some detail.

However, despite the great number of writings aiming to explore the possible link between deconstruction and religion, the linguistic aspect of the books and revelation has not often been seriously taken in Derrida. As he puts it "I have no stable position on the texts...the prophets and the Bible. For me this is an open field"(Caputo, 1977b: 21). Meanwhile, one should not ignore the fact that new ways of reading the Bible (structural and poststructural) have found their way into divinity schools and departments of religion (Aichele: 1995). The question in those studies is how the scripture can affect culture and contemporary readers?

Given that a significant aim of the Quran as a sign from Allah is to communicate to readers, why should one attempt to bring it close to studies associated with *the death of the author* or studies that put the weight all on the text with nothing beyond? Is it not possible to gloss upon religion as semiology without reference to

poststructural approaches? Taking into consideration the nature of the two; one presenting language as a communicative tool linking man to God; and the other critical of the authorial intention, why should one open up the Quran to the critical tool of poststructural theories? Answering these closely-related questions demands a much more detailed study. Nevertheless, if semiology has made its way into almost any semiotic system, there is basically no reason why it should stop at the door of religion. Moreover, being critical of ordinary communication, is not necessarily bad news for religion as the author here is not an ordinary soul. Thus, reading revelations is not communication in any ordinary sense of the word, be it speech or writing. As we will see in the following, religion represents a semiology basically distinct from semiology in the structural and postructural senses. Yet, by stressing the nature of revelations as sign, it is a semiology. A research like this one makes sense as it may address a certain gap in modern studies by bringing them close to a new field for semiological studies. On the other hand, the Quran opens up to a new system of concepts in whose light it can re-examine its view of God-man communication.

In the following, we will begin by discussing communication in terms of two concepts we borrow from the Quran and the existing literature, namely communication as

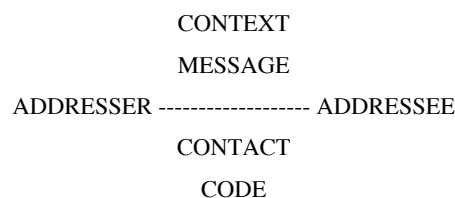
sending and communication as *reading*. It should be noted that what guides our main argument to the end are the descriptions the Quran makes of itself as a sign.

The Book and God as Sender

Although European semiology is concerned more with the structure of the sign than with communication questions, it would make little sense referring to the Quran as the sign from God without investigating facts about linguistic communication. Since, to believers, reading the Quran is to stand in the presence of God. This presence, as we shall see, can make reading a really different experience.

Linguistic communication is ordinarily thought of as a reciprocal process in which two sides are involved: the one who uses a linguistic sign to convey something; and the addressee or the one who listens to the sign. Hence every communication is necessarily dual; speaking is always speaking to someone and listening is likewise listening to some speaker. A relatively good model is provided by Jakobson (1988: 35) in which he defines the main concepts involved in a linguistic communication. An addresser sends a message to the addressee. To be operative the message requires a context referred to, seizable by the addressee, and either verbal or capable of being verbalized; a code fully, or at least partially, common to the addresser and addressee; and, finally, a contact,

a physical channel and psychological connection between the addresser and the addressee, enabling them to enter and stay in communication.



There are other formulations of the term like that of Grice, who, depending on the Cooperative Principle describes linguistic communication as a mutual/bilateral process or as a cooperation in which the interlocutors cooperate with one another to achieve effective communication (Leech 1983 & Levinson 1983). Despite apparent differences, what can link all definitions mentioned above is the implied duality inherent in the process of communication.

It is obvious, the descriptions given above might look rather simplistic when discussing other forms of communication than speech. The reciprocal or cooperative sense of communication may be an appropriate tool not for writing but for speech where the two sides are present in the situation of the talk and can affect one another and the flow of speech in different ways. It is also possible in face-to-face speech to correct an utterance, re-utter it, and avoid misunderstanding by saying "I didn't mean that". The situation in writing, however,

is entirely different, as the reader reads the text only in absence of the author. In fact, what makes writing a necessary means to communicate is this absence. Although the process of reading and interpreting a text can involve various degrees of difficulty and miscomprehension depending on the genre, one can justifiably claim that writing, speaking generally, is more open to multiplicity of interpretations than speech. One can hardly think of any one-to-one correspondence between the author's intention and the reader's interpretation. On this account, writing cannot be considered as a mutual, reciprocal process in which both sides cooperate to construct the piece of discourse.

The brief hint, we made above is good clue to the complexity of the process we term linguistic communication. However, we hope it will also provide us with more insight into what religion intends when speaking of God—man communication through the Book. As we proceed, we recognize that the model provided by religion (here the Quran) is far more complex than it is often shown to be. The complexity is mainly due to the fact that God is not an author in the ordinary sense of the word. Meanwhile, the Quran, as we shall see, is not a writing composed in absence nor is it a product of a cooperation between God and readers. The role of the reader before a text, for which there is no human author, can be controversial.

The way the three controversial terms God, the Quran, and man relate to one another had always been a major theme for Muslim theologians. However, were one to choose a single book in the Islamic thought that could most readily be termed a text on semiology, in the theological and religious sense of the word, the book would, no doubt, be the Quran. It can be considered such a book for it gives an extraordinary importance and space to explicating semiological questions regarding beings, God, and men, and more interestingly about the originality of itself as a sign from God. The word *sign* appears hundreds of times in almost every part of the text,

... and He shows you His **signs**, that haply you may have understanding. (2: 73)

... wa yurīkum '**āyātihī** la'allakum ta`qilūna

Alif Lam Ra. Those are the **signs** of the Manifest Book. (12:1)

'alif-lām-rā tilka '**āyātu** al-kitābi al-mubīni

How many a **sign** there is in the heavens and in the earth that they pass by, turning away from it! (12:105)

wa ka'ayyin min '**āyatīn** fī as-samāwāti wa al-'arḏi yamurrūna `alayhā wa hum `anhā mu`ridūna

It is important to notice that the word aya “sign” can refer to both the linguistic signs in

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the Quran and the words in the great book of nature. The expression kalama “word” is also used in the same senses above.

The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was only the Messenger of God, and **His Word** that He committed to Mary, and a Spirit from Him.
'innamā al-masīhū `isá abnu maryama rasūlu allāhi wa kalimatuhu 'alqāhā 'ilá maryama wa rūhūn minhu

Perfect are **the words** of thy Lord in truthfulness and justice; no man can change His words; He is the All-hearing, the All-knowing.
wa tammat **kalimatu** rabbika sidqan wa `adlan lā mubaddila likalimātihi wa huwa as-samī`u al-`alīmu(6:115)

God verifies the truth by His **words**, though sinners be averse.' (10; 82)
wa yuḥiḡqu allāhu al-ḥāqqa bi-**kalimātihi** wa law kariha al-mujrimūna

Say: 'If the sea were ink for **the Words** of my Lord, the sea would be spent before the Words of my Lord are spent, though We brought replenishment the like of it.'
qul law kāna al-baḥru midādāan li-**kalimāti** rabbī lanafida al-Baḥru qabla 'an tanfada kalimātu rabbī wa law ji'nā bimithlihi madadāan(18: 109)

The widely-used term the Quran appeals to in describing the link between God and creatures is *ersal (sending) and tanzeel (sending*

down). God appears everywhere in the Quran as *sender* of revelations and Books,

Now We have **sent down** to you a Book wherein is your Remembrance; will you not understand? (21: 10)

laqad '**anzalnā** 'ilaykum kitāban fīhi dhikrukum 'afalā ta`qilūna

Say: 'Surely God is able to **send down** a sign, but most of them know not.'(6:37)

qul 'inna allāha qādirun `alá 'an **yunazzila** 'āyatan wa lakinna 'akṡarahum lā ya`lamūna

And We **send down**, of the Koran, that which is a healing and a mercy to the believers; and the unbelievers it increases not, except in loss.

wa **nunazzilu** mina al-qur`āni mā huwa shifā`un wa raḥmatun li-almu'uminīna wa lā yazīdu aḡ-ḡālimīna 'illā kḡasārā(17: 82)

The Lord is said to send rain from the heaven to feed the dry earth, punishment for the unbelievers and mercy for the good-doers,

It is He who sent down to you out of heavens water of which you have to drink..., (16: 10)
huwa al-ladhī '**anzala** mina as-samā'i mā'an lakum minhu sharābun wa minhu shajarun fīhi tusīmūna (16:10)

And We sent down out of heaven water, and caused to grow in it of every generous kind. (31:10)

wa '**anzalnā** mina as-samā'i mā'an fa'ḡḡbatnā fīhā min kulli zawjin karīmīn

There are also metaphoric descriptions of God who has "sat Himself upon the throne"(20: 5), presenting in this way a seemingly dual picture of the universe with God and man on the two sides. Heaven is the source of revelations and God's mercy; humans and the needy earth are the receivers. Man is connected to God by the signs revealed everywhere in life and in the soul. Accordingly, everything is a sign, aiming to turn our face to the other side, and to the belief that there is no God but Allah. The signs are everywhere but we often ignore them and due to our indulgence in the material life we look at them not as signs but as things. Hence, the major task revelation can do is to warn us against our forgetfulness and alert us to the fact that everything in the universe is Allah's sign. In such a framework, there is no thing which is not a sign.

It is clear that thinking of the universe or nature as God's Book is not without antecedent and, as the following extracts indicate, can be seen in the writings of great western thinkers,

Jaspers: The world is the manuscript of an other, inaccessible to a universal reading, which only existence deciphers. (quoted in Derrida, 1974: 16)

Bonnet: It would seem more philosophical to me to presume that our earth is a book that God has given to intelligences far superior to ours to read, and where they study in depth the infinitely multiplied and varied characters of His adorable wisdom.(ibid:16)

The fact of describing beings as signs and the universe as Book is by itself an important clue to the authority and sovereignty of Allah. As author or writer, God writes in the way he will, and beings are nothing but the words of the divine Book. Up to this point, the description given of God is not very far from the Super-essence of the western metaphysics. However, if we believe in such a dual or metaphysical picture in the semiology we are going to present, what is then the place of man among all beings? Is there any place outside the Book for man to preserve their position as the receiver of the divine message or as interlocutor or addressee? Is man not part of the Book and hence; a sign within the unending flux of signs? There is apparently no such position outside the Book. The great prophets Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Mohammad are all in the Book, not speaking for themselves but only for God. Thus, man is a sign among others since anything that is created is a sign.

Nevertheless, denying man of any firm stand outside the Book does not necessarily rule out the possibility of thinking of a transcendent God as sender. The role of man, when there is no reading position outside, remains a complex question which we will touch below.

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Referring back to the idea of God as sender, we recognize that what constitutes that model is a

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certain relation of power linking God and signs. Although, assigning the term *sending* to ordinary communication is not without problems, it is equally true that the same element of power can also be essential to ordinary communication. What relates speakers in speech to linguistic signs is the authority with which they control the utterances. It should be clear that we are not moving toward any generalization by wrongly collapsing the ordinary communication into the sending model. Yet, one can hardly fail to notice the element of power that makes the two of them subject to similar criticism and attacks by the critical thought of the past several decades, directed not merely upon the theological or religious; any term associated with power and totalization, even modernism with all its important findings, comes under severe criticism by the great writers of this age like Foucault to whom, for contemporary thought there is no centered origin, no unique place of focus, and no present subject as there was once for the modern age (Silverman, 1994: 401). "With Lacan, as later with Derrida", as Silverman puts it, "the self is decentred and the subject is dispersed throughout language. The language of the self is the language of the chain of signifiers. The subject per se remains absent." (401)

The above critique might be better interpreted by referring to author-text dualism.

Closely related to decentring or absence of subject mentioned above, is the death or absence of the author noticed in the major critical writings, particularly in those associated, in a way or other, with the poststructural main themes. Reading Barthes's *The Death of the Author* (1988) is particularly illuminating in this regard,

Writing is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin. Writing is that neutral composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing (1988:168). "the removal of the author...is not merely an historical fact or an act of writing; it merely transforms the modern text(or-which is the same thing- the text is henceforth made and read in such a way that at all its levels the author is absent).(169)

In *What is an Author?* by Foucault, the same death appears in a different way,

The work which once had the duty of providing immortality, now possesses the right to kill, to be its author's murderer, as in the case of Flaubert, Proust, and Kafka... as a result, the mark of the writer is reduced to nothing more than the

singularity of his absence; he must assume the role of the dead man in the game of writing. (1988: 198)

It is evident that what happens to the author is not of a purely textual nature. In fact, such thinkers as Derrida and Foucault, seem to be re-reading western thought in terms of what happens to language, in the light of language, and more significantly in the light of author-text relation. In their writings, they present a man or author who assumes no position than being merely a reader with no power over the signs. The idea of man as a powerless reader can lead us to think of another model, namely, communication as reading. To think of how such a poststructural view of language can help us conceive communication with God, we'd better consider the place of man in the Quran.

As we previously noticed, the fact that man has no firm stand outside the Book leaves little room for the authority of man over the signs which are absolutely of God. In the Quran, we are exposed to a semiology basically different from the dual or the cooperative model we identify with speech, or, generally speaking, with ordinary communication. In the sending model, man is not the other side in a dialogue. Hence, one can hardly talk about duality as far as the link between man and God is concerned. However, that does not, by itself, rule out the possibility of thinking of a different duality in which God and the Book appear as two distinct

concepts each not reducible to the other. God as the author possesses absolute authority over the Book, as He is not imprisoned in what He creates. To put it in poststructural terms, God is not caught in the text or in the endless play of signifiers. Man is a sign in the Book, yet, simultaneously a reader of every sign outside in nature and within himself. Since what man *is* and what he possesses, the heart, ears, eyes, and anything else are also signs. Men as readers, therefore, read not only the signs in the universe but are also readers of themselves as "sign". "Reading", thus, as a term is itself a support for God's unrivalled authority. Everything that happens is by His will.

Within the text, "reading" seems to be a key term, which is witnessed in the Quran's definition of itself as *qur'an* "reading" (from the root "qara'a" "to read" or "recite"). Before the Book, the prophet or Gabriel, or anybody else is not but a reader. For the same reason, in the first revelatory experience, the Prophet is commanded to read (*eqra'*),

[Read]: In the name of thy Lord who created, created man of a blood-clot.

[Read]: And thy Lord is the Most Generous, who taught by the pen, taught Man that he knew not. (96: 1-4)

Unlike ordinary speech in which the two sides cooperate to build the text, what is

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revealed is merely of Allah and the prophet knows very well that his part in this sort of communication is played not by saying something rather by listening, taking in heart, and then reciting to people exactly what has been revealed. He must read and pronounce the words of his Lord. To put it more clearly, the Lord speaks through the prophet's voice. In fact, God's act of saying is not realized except by his act of reading.

In addition, "reading" can also be seen as a significant theological term in the Quran, for God's Word realizes only in the prophet's act of reading. God speaks merely (in the case of linguistic revelations) through the prophet's speech (qowl). In the same way, as long as every thing or act is a word or sign within God's Book, Allah's will reveals itself through the signs and acts we perform. In fact, the Lord's acts are realized through our acts. This needs to think of a God who is not outside but very near to beings, so near that his speaking and the prophet's reading become one and the same act.

The God of the Qur'an 'is with you wherever you are'.(57: 4) God gets so near to address believers with very intimate words like "So remember me and I will remember you".(2:152) Allah gets so close to home in the believer's heart, making it his throne from which revelations come down to the tongue.(Shirazi 1982:191&567) The likeness of God and man, as Ibn Arabi describes, is like the

ocean and its waves, the ocean creates its waves and keeps watching them. (Jahangiri:1996: 427)

The presence of God implied above can make man's position with regard to the Quran essentially different from the role assumed for the poststructural reader who is caught (more notably in the case of deconstruction) in the text of conflicting forces with no saving force to hang on. Such a reader, as Derrida puts it, has not but a passive role in the meaning-making process. Thus, "meaning is determined by a system of forces which is not personal. It does not depend on the subjective identity, but on the field of different forces, the conflict of forces, which produces interpretations"(Easthope, 1988: 238).

We are not, however, overemphasizing the role of the reader, or describing the meaning-making as personal; the process can also be thought of as non-personal depending entirely on the text. For, as we noted earlier, the reader is part of the Book with no reading position outside. What separates this reader from the poststructural is the belief in a saving force who can grant man a firm position amidst the play of conflicting forces. The place of man becomes even firmer with Ibn Arabi's description of the Perfect Man (al-insan al-kamil) who, much like the Quran is presented as a sea without shore, or as a microcosm of God, a miniature version "of all-encompassing infinity mirroring the limitless ocean of images which is God...the

secret of the self would be its privileged relationship with God—the clandestine fact that is in reality part of God, hence the saying ‘He who knows his self, knows his Lord’” (Almond, 2004: 73).

Toward a Compromise

The twentieth century or the epoch we are still witnessing was preconceived to be an age of meaninglessness termed by Paul Tillich (Baumer: 650) as the age of anxiety—anxiety over the loss of a spiritual center, or over the loosening of the ties that used to connect man and God. The question regarding the fate of man was-and continues to be- whether he can make his way in the universe depending on science alone. An extract by Ortega Gasset well illustrates the feeling in the early years of the twentieth century,

Lord of all things, [man] is not the lord of himself. He feels lost amid his own abundance, with more means at his disposal, more Knowledge, more technique than ever, it turns out that the world today goes the same way as the worst of worlds that have been; it simply drifts. Hence, the strange combination of a sense of power and a sense of insecurity which has taken up its abode in the soul of modern man.(Ibid: 661)

This distrust for science can lead us to think of a decline or weakness of man who is now caught in the monster of technoscience. It seems that the major theme linking the author-text to God-Book or God-man duality is the power relation between the two terms *author* and *text* which have so far been presented as uncompromising in the western thought. So, the critique of philosophical writings and their foundational claims as the sole dispenser of truth, and themes like *the death of the author* can also be understood as an aftermath and a paraphrase of the death of the metaphysical God. As if the death of God as the source of power leads necessarily to the death of man and any other source of power. As far as the question of God is concerned, this can signify the advent of a so-called postmodern theology in which God is no longer the source of power. It is probably for this reason that thinkers of this age like Derrida and Kearney speak of a powerless God (Kearney 2004) who is not concerned with totalizing the text. However, denying God of any power does not bring life or authority to man. What remains as a source of power is the text whose capability for endless significations, and whose play of signifiers nothing can escape. So, as far as Derrida's work is concerned, "Differance is the subversion of every kingdom"(Derrida, 1982: 22). Not only the author but also the reader and generally any other source has no authority over the text.

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It is clear that the above idea expressed by Derrida and Kearney differs from a purely secular or materialist position where God's authority is presented to be in the way of man's rule over nature. Derrida's conception of the text can become interesting for a monotheist theology in its exclusion of any authority imposed on the text from outside. A significant difference seem to separate the two thoughts. It appears that the Derridian text deconstructs duality by denying both God and man of any authority. And of course, deconstructing a duality is one thing and making a compromise between the two sources is quite another. It is probably for this reason that a deconstructionist takes little or no interest in God-man link conceived as a semiology. Yet speaking of the link as semiology does not entail to a downright adoption of the Saussurian semiology or other models of communication. As we noticed earlier, neither of the two concepts *sending* and *reading*, taken alone, can explain God-man link through the Book. What we need here is thinking of a compromise between the rival models of communication; between those appropriate for speech communication and those critical of the authorial rule over a text. In this way, one can think of a "sending of the signs" or a communication within the Book, and of a reading which occurs not in absence, but in presence.

As we already noticed the fact of describing God as Sender/Author entails the absolute unchallenged authority of Allah over every

sign. It is a question now if this authority can bring about life or death to man. Closely related to this question is whether the death of man in the sense we understand it today has anything to do with the death of God. Is the death of man really an aftermath of the death of God in the sense of a transcendent, powerful or metaphysical God? Are these two sources of power and authority really related to one another, in such a way that the absence of one would necessarily lead to the absence of the other? The history of western thought teaches us that there has never been a compromise between the two sources of authority, nor between other dualities like speech and writing, or between presence and absence. However, in this work, as is also true of postmodern discourses, we are not concerned with anything outside, or with forces competing from outside to control the signs and the Book. What remains now is the Sign in which and through which God and man communicate.

At this point, we can argue for a certain communication model or semiology which brings authority not only to God, but also, and for the same reason to man. Thus, unlike the God and man of western thought who have gone with a shared death, the Quran speaks of a man who attains authority only for God's will. The Will has subordinated all nature to man's authority. Hence, believing in a powerful God leads here to a powerful man who can be the lord of nature.

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ارتباط خدا و انسان در قرآن: رویکردی نشانه شناختی

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تاریخ دریافت: ۱۳۸۶/۷/۲

تاریخ پذیرش: ۱۳۸۶/۱۱/۸

مقاله حاضر بر آن است تا در پرتو رویکردهای نوین نشانه شناختی به ویژه نظریه‌های ساختگرا و پساساختگرا مسئله ارتباط خدا و انسان در قرآن را مورد بررسی قرار دهد. این مفهوم از ارتباط را می‌توان بر اساس دو مدل نشانه شناختی، یعنی ارتباط به منزله خواندن و ارتباط به منزله ارسال توضیح داد. این دو مفهوم که همواره بیانگر یک دوگانگی آشتی ناپذیر در تفکر غرب بوده‌اند، در گفتمان قرآنی به یکدیگر پیوند می‌خورند، به گونه‌ای که می‌توان هم از خدایی مقتدر سخن گفت و هم از انسانی نیرومند.

واژگان کلیدی: قرآن، پساساختگرا، نشانه شناسی، ارسال، خواندن

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