



A Critical Analysis of the Status of Humans within Philosophical Historicism and Its Bearing upon a Historically Approach to the Qur'ān

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ABSTRACT

'Historicism,' which is temporally coeval with hermeneutics, constitutes a worldview that, in its fully developed form, posits the historical perspective as being both constitutive of and influential in human life and all its domains—encompassing understanding, reason, cognition, beliefs, religion, and culture. According to philosophical historicism, history is inextricably intertwined with human existence and identity, forming an inseparable bond. Consequently, human nature is characterized by historicity, and, by extension, human understanding is likewise fundamentally historical. From the perspective of existentialist philosophers, humans do not possess a fixed, pre-given essence or nature. Instead, the 'whatness' of humanity resides in its 'becoming'; this absence of a fixed essence is attributed to their interpretation and understanding of 'existence.' Proponents of the historicity of the Qur'ān, influenced by philosophical historicism, regard the actions, utterances, and personal states of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as historically situated. They therefore deduce the historicity of his understanding and, by extension, the historicity of the Qur'ān itself. This research employs a descriptive-analytical-critical methodology to both elucidate and critique the philosophical underpinnings of Qur'ānic historicity theory – rooted primarily in Western thought – while rigorously challenging the theoretical framework itself.

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Introduction

The historicist approach to the Qur'ān¹ is a perspective recently introduced into the Islamic world. Originating primarily in the West, this theory is rooted in hermeneutical discourses - particularly philosophical hermeneutics. Its core proposition asserts that historicity constitutes an intrinsic attribute of all phenomena - including humanity, understanding, religion, sacred texts, and consequently, religion and its sources become historically contingent. The extension of this historical reading to the Qur'ān, due to the absence of fixed criteria, transforms all religious concepts and Qur'ānic objectives. This implies the variability of all elements of religion and Islamic concepts - encompassing worship, social laws, and worldview - ultimately entailing the negation of Islam and the Qur'ān (Abū Zayd, 1998, p. 31ff). Consequently, some proponents apply this theory to both the *content/meaning* and *understanding* of the Qur'ān, concluding its historicity. They argue that the Prophet (PBUH) existed within specific historical and cultural conditions, which were intrinsic to his being. Thus: The Prophet's (PBUH) *personality* becomes historical; From the inception of revelation, divine revelation itself is historicized due to the Prophet's historical understanding, transforming it into a *human affair*; Post-revelation, historicity extends to the *text* of the Qur'ān. Therefore, introducing the theory of historicity into the sacred realm of the Qur'ān leads to the historicity of its *understanding* and the historicity of its *textual meaning*. The theoretical foundations of the Qur'ān's historicity thus stem from Western hermeneutics and philosophical historicism. Muslim intellectuals, adopting these frameworks from Western philosophers, have applied them to Islam and its sacred texts. Hence, the theory of historicity presents a fundamental challenge to religious thought—despite its staggering epistemological consequences—gaining traction among some Muslim intellectuals. Inspired by this theory, they first evaluated *religious knowledge* within its framework, then further reduced divine revelation to the mutable garment of human experience, attempting to apply it to the sacred text itself—the Qur'ān—which is fundamentally divine and supra-human knowledge (Sa'idi Ruwshan, 2006, p. 7). Proponents of this theory, however, employ not only theoretical foundations but also a range of *evidential causes* to substantiate their view—the critique of which is the present study's focus. Significant debate exists regarding these evidences, with numerous examples cited (Ḥanafī, 1990, pp. 132–155). Here, we address three key instances: The temporality of the Qur'ān (*ḥudūth al-Qur'ān*), The impact of modern scientific issues on claims of the Qur'ān's fallibility, Specific Qur'ānic injunctions and teachings (e.g., slavery, jinn and demons, ratificatory injunctions [*aḥkām imḍā'iyya*]).

Research Background

In nearly all studies adopting a critical approach to the historicity of the Qur'ān and religion, both entities have been emphasized as transhistorical phenomena.

Muḥammad 'Arab Ṣāliḥī, in his book *Historicity and Religion*, examines the permeation of historicism into religious discourses through three dimensions:

The genesis of religion

1. This refers precisely to the historical approach to the Qur'ān, whose inevitable outcome is the 'historicity of the Qur'ān'.

The reception and communication of revelation.

The continuity and perpetuation of religion.

He explicates the implications of this approach and subjects the historicity of the Qur'ān to structural critique from perspectives including revelatory theology, the temporal origination theory of divine speech, and related matters.

Zahrā Muṭahharī, in her article '*Critique of Dr. 'Abd al-Karīm Surūsh's Perspective on Qur'ānic Historicity from Allamah Tabatabai's Viewpoint (RA)*', concludes – based on Allamah's arguments concerning the Qur'ān's transtemporal-transspatial nature – that the Qur'ān is not a historically confined text bound to specific temporal constraints, but rather possesses teachings with perpetual validity across all epochs.

'Alī Naṣīrī, in '*Critique of Mr. Surūsh's Theory on Qur'ānic Historicity*', demonstrates that due to the absence of definitive evidence in certain cases and the verses' indication of meanings transcending the material world, the theory of Qur'ānic historicity and the possibility of fallibility in its teachings are scientifically untenable.

In this article, however, I adopt a root-tracing approach to critically deconstruct the theory of historicity – not only through theological critique but also by examining its philosophical foundations (both Islamic and Western) and rational implications.

Humanity and Philosophical Historicism

In this section, historicism is first divided into classical and philosophical strands. Subsequently, the position of humans within philosophical historicism and their transformation into the 'historical human' are elucidated.

Classical and Philosophical Historicism

The term *Historicism* refers to a perspective and worldview that, in its comprehensive form, regards history as the encompassing milieu and determinant influencing all human affairs. This includes understanding, reason, cognition, beliefs, religion, culture, and so forth. Consequently, it posits history as the force determining the trajectory of human life. Thus, thoughts, traditions, and arts are viewed as products of their specific temporal and spatial circumstances. Accordingly, no thought possesses an intrinsic nature, objective truth, or inherent authenticity (Copleston, 2008, Vol. 7, p. 435; Popper, 1971, pp. 20–61). According to this view, human thought and action are products of historical circumstances, confined within the horizons imposed by their epoch. This perspective denies the existence of transhistorical truths and precludes human freedom from historical limitations. Temporally coeval with hermeneutics, historicism—owing to their intrinsic connection—divides into *Classical Historicism* and *Philosophical Historicism*.¹ While historicism emerged as a discourse with Schleiermacher's hermeneutics (Wā'izī, 2007, pp. 26–29), key figures in both branches include Dilthey, Ernst Troeltsch, Friedrich Meinecke, Karl Mannheim, Heidegger, and Gadamer ('Arab-Ṣāliḥī, 2010, pp. 59–80).

1. Carl Page asserts that he himself originated the term 'philosophical historicism,' and that this terminological innovation was consciously modeled on Gadamer's designation of his hermeneutics as 'philosophical hermeneutics.

Classical Historicism, extending classical hermeneutics, treats history as a domain of human knowledge. Thus, all knowledge is contextually bound to its historical milieu, yet history is not constitutive of human identity. Conversely, Philosophical Historicism—developed through Heidegger and Gadamer—holds that history is inextricably interwoven with human existence and identity. Time and history cannot be divorced from humanity; human essence is intrinsically historical and by extension, human understanding is historically conditioned. Heidegger posits that humans *being in-the-world* (*In-der-Welt-sein*), with each individual inhabiting a unique lifeworld. Cultural-historical traditions are inseparable from their being (Heidegger, 1962, pp. 433–434). Gadamer—influenced by Heidegger’s ontology of understanding—argues that understanding is perpetually indebted to the interpreter’s prejudices (*Vorurteile*). The interpreter’s *horizon of meaning* is the existential condition for comprehension. Prejudices are not obstacles but enabling conditions for understanding, which arises through the *fusion of horizons* (*Horizontverschmelzung*) between the interpreter and the text (Gadamer, 1975); Thus, both classical and philosophical historicism regard human knowledge as historically contingent and spatiotemporally bounded. Crucially, however; In Philosophical Historicism (especially Gadamer), historicity is an *ontological attribute* of human existence and understanding—an immanent wellspring of historicity (Page, 1995, pp. 49–51). In Classical Historicism, historicity remains *epiphenomenal* to human essence.

The Pillars of Historical Humanity in Philosophical Historicism

Heidegger’s central philosophical concern is the question of *Being* (*Sein*) rather than beings (*Seiendes*) (Heidegger, 2004, p. 251; Id., 2002, p. 882). For him, only one being can provide a reliable starting point for interrogating the meaning of Being: *human existence itself*, whose essence (*Wesen*) is grounded in its existence (*Dasein*) (Heidegger, 1962, p. 67). Heidegger maintains that all sciences, in their capacity to explain and comprehend, are fundamentally concerned with the characteristics and attributes of human existence—*Dasein*¹— (Craig, 1998, p. 312; Wall, 2009, pp. 69 & 163). Thus, a core tenet of Heideggerian hermeneutics is the "historicity of humanity" (*Geschichtlichkeit*), anchored in the *historical existence of Dasein*. Consequently, history and temporality constitute the essence of all humans—whether infallible or fallible—and human cognition is inextricably bound to our lived world; transcending history to know humanity is impossible. This framework negates the possibility of a fixed, universal religion. For Heidegger, understanding human existence intrinsically determines the being of *Dasein* (Heidegger, 1962, p. 55). Given that *Dasein* is fundamentally historical and perpetually *in-becoming*, human understanding is likewise historical. Gadamer extends this, arguing that phenomena like humanity, history, and art resist definitive cognition because they are fluid, mutable, and historically contingent. Moreover, all human understanding operates through a tripartite structure of Fore-judgments (*Vorurteile*):

Fore-having. (*Vorhabe*): The conceptual framework we bring to interpretation.

Fore-sight (*Vorsicht*): The anticipatory lens shaping our engagement.

1. “Dasein” is a German term that etymologically consists of two components: Da, meaning 'there' or 'here', and Sein, meaning 'Being'. When compounded, it denotes 'Being-there' (German: Da-sein).

Fore-griff (*Vorgriff*): The provisional assumptions guiding comprehension (Aḥmadī, 1996, pp. 95–96). Human interpretation is impossible without these pre-understandings.

a) Individuality (Singularity) and Development (Progressive Unfolding)

"Individuality and Development" constitute among the most critical attributes of human existence and form foundational pillars of historicism. The former stands in direct opposition to generalization, while the latter counters constancy. Regarding 'individuality': It aligns conceptually with the existentialist notion of 'solitude' denoting the irreducible particularity of human experience. Concerning 'Development': This principle inherently culminates in progressionism (*progressivism*). It posits history as a teleological advance wherein truth resides solely in the fluid nature of phenomena. Stated dialectically: all entities are perceived through the lens of 'becoming' Through this ceaseless process of transformation, institutions—whether political, legal, or ethical—dissolve and are perpetually superseded by emergent forms; Thus, the terms "Development, becoming, change, transformation, process, and their analogues constitute a lexicon fundamentally opposed to belief in essential nature (*fiṭrat*), constancy, objectivity, and related concepts.

b) The Rejection of Essentialism (Dhāt-mandī)

Essentialism posits that humans possess immutable attributes—unchanged by time, space, social conditions, or genetic variations—that constitute their ontological structure (Muṭahharī, n.d., Vol. 3, p. 467). These are termed *shared human essence, nature or quiddity*. Western existentialism—aligning with historicism—rejects fixed essences for humans or any phenomenon (Wahl, 2008, p. 78). Existential philosophers¹ begin from human Existence (*Existenz*) rather than predefined essence (Macquarrie, 1998, p. 7). Humans lack a predetermined nature; their "whatness" (*quidditas*) lies in perpetual becoming (*Werden*). This absence of fixed essence stems from their interpretation of "existence" (*Sein*) (ibid., pp. 7–8). Hence, "*humans have no nature except history*" (Craig, 1998, Vol. 4, p. 444).

The Qur'ān and the Problem of Historicity

The ensuing discussion examines the historically situated character of the Prophet (PBUH) and the historically situated Qur'ān, along with select evidence marshaled to substantiate the historicity of the Qur'ān as a divine text.

The Extension of the Prophet's (PBUH) Historicity to Divine Revelation

This section focuses on the personhood and concrete reality of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Influenced by philosophical historicism, proponents of the Qur'ān's historicity argue that the Prophet's actions, utterances, personal states, and the socio-cultural conditions of his era demonstrate the historicity of his understanding and, by extension, the historicity of the Qur'ān itself. Since historical conditions are intrinsic to humans, humanity becomes a historical phenomenon. Thus, the Prophet's (PBUH) personhood during the reception and

1. The term 'existential philosophers' refers to those thinkers who restrict the concept of *Existence* (German: *Existenz*) specifically to the human mode of being. Characteristically, their philosophical methodology commences from human existence as its foundational premise rather than from the existence of nature.

delivery of revelation is historical, and this historicity extends to revelation (*wahy*). They contend that the Qur'ān transformed from a divine text to a human text at the very moment of its recitation by the Prophet (PBUH) during revelation—because it was comprehended by a human and shifted from descent (*tanzīl*) to interpretation (*ta'wīl*). The Prophet's understanding of the text represents the first stage of human reason engaging with revelation (Abū Zayd, 1997, p. 93). Abū Zayd repeatedly emphasizes the Prophet's human and earthly dimensions to substantiate the historicity of his personhood and understanding (idem, 2001, p. 122). By challenging the Prophet's "supra-human" and "transhistorical" status, he declares revelation and prophethood historical (idem, 2004, pp. 153–154).

The Temporality (Ḥudūth) of the Qur'ān

The debate over the Qur'ān's temporality (*ḥudūth*) or eternity (*qidam*) is among the most contentious theological disputes between the 'Adliyyah (Shi'a ; Mu'tazila) and Ash'arites. Its origin lies in whether God's attribute of "Speech" (*kalam*) is essential or active. Ash'arites deem God's Speech eternal since all essential attributes are pre-eternal, while the 'Adliyyah hold that divine Speech, as an act of God, is temporal (*ḥādith*)—since the Qur'ān, as a divine act, was revealed within specific historical conditions (al-Mu'tazilī, 1996, p. 528). Thus, the Qur'ān's words (both form and meaning) are attributed to God (Ṣubḥānī, n.d., Vol. 2, p. 254). Contemporary figures like Naṣr Ḥāmid Abū Zayd, advancing the theory of the Qur'ān's historicity under the rubric of "*al-ta'rīkhiyya: al-mafhūm al-multabis*" (historicity: the ambiguous concept, Abū Zayd, 1995, p. 67), cite it as evidence for the Qur'ān's temporality and critique its eternity. He argued that proponents of eternity considered belief in the Qur'ān's pre-existence essential to Muslim faith, excommunicating opponents (ibid., pp. 67–68). For Abū Zayd, the Qur'ān is a cultural product shaped over 23 years within a specific milieu. By advocating historicity and critiquing eternity, he claimed to pave the way for the Qur'ān's "scientific study"—since believing in its metaphysical pre-existence precludes empirical analysis (idem, 2001, p. 68). The critique pertaining to this issue asserts that a rigorous delineation must be established between the temporal origination (*ḥudūth*) of the Qur'ān and its historicity. While historicity presupposes temporality, affirming temporality does not necessitate historicity. One may simultaneously affirm the Qur'ān's pre-existence (*sabq dahrī*) and its temporal manifestation—as some Shi'i exegetes do (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 2014, Vol. 18, pp. 130–131), accepting both its initial descent during the Night of Decree (*Laylat al-Qadr*) and its temporal occurrence (Arab-Ṣāliḥī, 2012, p. 237).

New Issues and the Alleged Scientific Fallibility of the Qur'ān

Some proponents of the theory of the Qur'ān's historicity, seeking to substantiate their claim, resort to the progress of scientific knowledge. They argue that since the Qur'ān was revealed in accordance with the culture, intellectual level, and scientific understanding of the early Islamic era and was influenced by the conditions of that period, it follows that with the advancement and subsequent refutation of the scientific knowledge of that age, the Qur'ān – which was revealed based on the knowledge of its time – also becomes fallible and

historically bound.¹ Certain Iranian intellectuals have also endorsed this view. From their perspective, examples of alleged errors in the Qur'ān, which contemporary science is said to confirm, include: the creation of seven heavens (Qur'ān 2:29; 23:86; 71:15); the six-day creation of the heavens and earth (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 2014, vol. 16, p. 248; Qur'ān 7:54; 10:3); the driving away of eavesdropping devils by angels with piercing meteors (Qur'ān 37:10); the belief that humans are created from semen originating between the backbone and ribs (Qur'ān 86:6); the account of Prophet Abraham's (AS) debate with Nimrod (Qur'ān 2:258), which seemingly presupposes the movement of the sun and the immobility of the earth; and the attribution of epilepsy to demonic touch (Qur'ān 2:275), among others.

Regarding the aforementioned viewpoint, it must first be stated that only a *true* theory finds its way into the Qur'ān; if a theory is false, it has absolutely no place within the Qur'ān's sacred precincts. The Lawgiver (Allāh) is not lenient in stating realities, such that He would utter falsehood in His Eternal Book (Qur'ān 41:42; 86:14; 12:111). Verses with scientific implications must be interpreted solely in light of *established certainties* from the empirical sciences. Commentators are not permitted to interpret them according to whatever theory happens to be prevalent in any given era. Moreover, until we have access to definitive scientific theories, we cannot claim to have achieved an interpretation of such verses that corresponds to objective reality (Khusruwpanā, 2003, pp. 66-158). Furthermore, it is merely an assertion that the refuted scientific theories were precisely identical to the matters mentioned in the Qur'ān, and that the Qur'ān was revealed based upon them. This is because the Qur'ān is not engaged in proposing scientific theories whose validity or invalidity can be evaluated. Rather, it merely presents a scientific matter, and it is certain individuals who claim that this scientific matter was based on such-and-such scientific theory, which new theories have now supposedly refuted. Therefore, no one has actually claimed the *falsity of a theory explicitly presented within the Qur'ān itself*. For instance, concerning the objection about the creation of seven heavens (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 2014, vol. 16, p. 274 & vol. 19, p. 327; Ṭabirsī, n.d., vol. 9, p. 311), it can be argued that aligning Qur'ānic verses with the Ptolemaic cosmology and similar frameworks was an error in the *commentators' application*, not an explicit statement of the Qur'ān. Similarly, regarding the driving away of eavesdropping devils by piercing meteors, commentators such as 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī have stated (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 2014, vol. 17, p. 124) that the expression of these concepts is allegorical, presenting unseen realities in the language and cultural idiom comprehensible to the common people of that era (Qur'ān 29:43). Consequently, proponents of the Qur'ān's historicity cannot utilize these instances as evidence to validate and prove their claim.

The Historicity of Certain Qur'ānic Rulings and Teachings

Preliminary considerations must be noted. Firstly, it should not be assumed that anyone who subscribes to "historicity" must therefore adopt a historical perspective on *all* dimensions, becoming an absolute and comprehensive historical relativist. It is possible to hold a historical

1. This very issue gives rise to the fundamental dispute regarding the validity of employing modern scientific frameworks in Qur'ānic exegesis (known as *al-tafsīr al-'ilmī*).

view only concerning specific aspects, such as Qur'ānic teachings, etc. Secondly, proponents of the Qur'ān's historicity are not unaware of this theory's connection to the culture of its time. Indeed, they contend that because the Qur'ān, at its revelation, was influenced by the conditions and culture of its era and corresponded to that period, it consequently acquired a historical character and is now historically bound. They claim the Qur'ān's influence by contemporary culture in several instances, including slavery, matters like magic (Qur'ān 34:43), Satan (Qur'ān 2:275), etc., as well as in ratified rulings (*aḥkām imdā'iyyah*) related to pre-Islamic (Jāhiliyyah) beliefs.

a) The Historicity of Slavery

Some proponents of the historical view of the Qur'ān argue that the relationship between humans and God is not one of "servitude and bondage" (Abū Zayd, 1997, p. 149), but rather one of "humanity and devotion". This is because pre-Islamic society was tribal, slave-owning, and commercial, and the buying and selling of slaves constituted a fundamental part of its economic structure. It was thus natural for this reality to be reflected in the Qur'ānic text. Consequently, the exigencies of that slave-owning society necessitated framing the divine-human relationship in such terms (*ibid.*, p. 142). However, now that the institution of slavery has been abolished, those rulings no longer find application and should be discarded (*ibid.*, p. 212). According to Abū Zayd, the emphasis and insistence on the master-servant relationship between humans and God is incompatible with Islamic thought. Furthermore, it contradicts the content of religious texts themselves and ignores the relationship of love mentioned therein (*ibid.*, p. 142). He posits that Islam, in practice, liberated humans from the domination of illusions and myths, freed their intellect, and emancipated their conscience and beliefs from obstacles to their freedom. However, in theory, religious thought insists on reducing the relationship between humans and God to a single dimension: "servitude", which confines human endeavor to obedience and belief and prohibits questioning and criticism (*ibid.*, p. 55). Regarding the citation of slavery as evidence for the Qur'ān's historicity, it must be stated that proponents of this view appear to commit a fallacy in equating "servitude" with slavery. They claim that Islamic thinkers insist on reducing the divine-human relationship to this meaning (slavery), whereas this is not the case. The primary intended meaning of "*ubūdiyyah*" is submission and humility before God's commands. Islamic thought negates actual slavery and bases the God-human relationship on voluntary obedience and servitude. This meaning is corroborated by lexicons, as "*abd*" meaning "slave" has the plural "*abīd*", while "*abd*" meaning "servant of God" has the plural "*ibād*" (Rāghib Iṣfahānī, 1991, p. 542). The latter signifies being in a state of submission and obedience to divine commands, which God has established as the foundation of the relationship between Himself and humanity.

b) The Historicity of Matters such as Jinn, Satan, Magic, etc.

Proponents of the theory of cultural influence believe that if the Qur'ān refers to jinn and Satan as real entities, it is not because they objectively exist, but because pre-Islamic Arab culture believed in such things. The Qur'ān, having taken shape within that historical horizon, consequently speaks of jinn, Satan, magic, etc. (Abū Zayd, 1997, p. 144). Since these

phenomena cannot be proven by contemporary science, they lack objective existence, rendering the Qur'ān historically bound. From their perspective, the cultural reality of the revelation period believed in matters like magic, jinn, etc. Given the premise that religious texts are human cultural-linguistic constructs and the Prophet, as the recipient of revelation, belonged to and was dependent on his contemporary culture, it is natural for this content to enter the religious texts. The inclusion of such elements in the Qur'ān and religious texts serves merely as evidence for their existence in the culture of the revelation era (ibid., pp. 205-207). Consequently, they must be reinterpreted, and the texts containing such terms must be hermeneutically reinterpreted (*ta'wīl*). Concerning the historicity of the aforementioned matters, it must be argued that the existence of jinn, Satan, magic, etc., is not illusory or unreal. Belief in jinn and magic is not specific to Arabs; it has existed since the creation of Adam (AS). The gathering of magicians during the time of Moses (AS), the teaching of magic by Hārūt and Mārūt mentioned in the Qur'ān (Qur'ān 2:102), corroborative traditions (*aḥādīth*) (Ṣāliḥ, 1994, p. 546), and statements by exegetes (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 2014, vol. 10, p. 85) can be regarded as evidence affirming the reality of these matters. If contemporary science has not discovered such things, it does not prove their unreality. Such science, predominantly empirical in approach, judges sensory phenomena and that which is experimentally testable. However, the issue of jinn and the effect of magic pertains to the metaphysical and non-sensory realm; science lacks the capacity to pronounce judgment on such matters. The inclusion of such elements in the Qur'ān signifies not influence, but an affirmation of their truth and reality.

c) The Historicity of Ratified Rulings (*Aḥkām Imḍā'īyyah*)

Ratified rulings (*aḥkām imḍā'īyyah*) constitute another cause of historicity cited by proponents of historical contextualism. These rulings, observed in matters such as pilgrimage (*ḥajj*), inheritance, blood money (*diyāt*), etc., encompass both individual and social injunctions. They pertain to practices prevalent before Islam, during the Jāhiliyyah period, which people of that era adhered to based on custom, convention, and the prevailing culture. The religion of Islam, being rooted in the realities of life, ratified and endorsed those rulings which conformed to its principles or at least were not opposed to them, recognizing them as sound and commendable practices. It invalidated others and established new laws and rulings. Therefore, Islam, influenced by the culture of its time, accepted these rulings. Now that the cultures of the pre-Islamic Arab era have become obsolete, there remains no place for accepting and implementing these rulings. Some contemporary intellectuals have categorized other rulings under ratified rulings, asserting that Islam, influenced by Jāhiliyyah-era culture, acquiesced to these matters (Farāsatkāh, 1997, p. 135). Examples include: the obligation of flogging the wine-drinker and stoning the adulterer; the permissibility of polygyny; the obligation of women's covering (*ḥijāb*); the prohibition of usury (*ribā*); the amputation of the thief's hand¹ and the poll-tax (*jizyah*)² (Abū Zayd, 1997, p. 143). In response to the

1. Some jurists regard this ruling—explicitly stated in the Qur'ān—as another instance of *aḥkām imḍā'īyyah* (i.e., divinely endorsed pre-Islamic norms).

2. Other jurists likewise identify the *jizyah* ordinance – the tax imposed upon *Ahl al-Kitāb* (People of the Book) within Islamic domains – as a further paradigm of these same *aḥkām imḍā'īyyah* (ratificatory rulings).

aforementioned objection, it must be stated that ratified rulings are not inherently temporary or confined to a specific period. Firstly, in every era, these rulings remain functional, resolving individual and societal social problems. Secondly, the content of some ratified rulings (such as social rulings) does not imply their eternal immutability. It signifies that implementing such a ruling is permissible (*mubāḥ*) according to the Lawgiver (*Shāri'*). If, relying on the principle of *ijtihād* (independent juristic reasoning), we arrive at alternative methods that achieve the Lawgiver's objective, those methods can be adopted. For instance, in pre-Islamic culture, it was customary for the tribal chief of the killer's clan to bear the blood money (*diyah*) in cases of unintentional homicide – a practice known in Islamic jurisprudence as "*diyat al- 'āqilah*". Islam endorsed this sound practice. However, today, alternative methods such as insurance can potentially be substituted for it (Ayāzī, 2003, pp. 57-64).

Critique and Analysis

The critiques presented in this section encompass three dimensions: critiques of 'historicity' itself, critiques of the 'historical human,' and critiques of 'the Qur'ān and the historically situated character of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).'

Critiques of Historicism

The most significant criticisms leveled against the historicity of understanding (Historicism) include radical relativism and internal contradiction. On the one hand, by eliminating any transhistorical criterion for evaluating understandings, all interpretations are considered equally valid, which leads to the epistemic devaluation of knowledge. On the other hand, the claim that all understanding is historically contingent inevitably applies to this very assertion itself, plunging it into a self-defeating paradox. This is because the claim itself is the product of a specific historical context, thereby undermining its own purported universality. These two fundamental weaknesses critically challenge the validity of historicism.

a) Relativism

Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutic theory entails a form of relativism in understanding (Hoy, 1992, p. 258). According to this view, the path for any critique or evaluation of understandings within various branches of the humanities and historical sciences is closed off. Gadamer's analysis of understanding is such that *any* understanding becomes justified. Consequently, individuals' definitions of truth and belief in it would not be uniform; rather, they would differ according to diverse viewpoints without a single, definitive, final, precise, complete, and trans-historical criterion for judging the validity or invalidity of these understandings. The value and efficacy of any criterion are relative and dependent on the historical, cultural, and social context that made the interpretations possible. It can therefore be argued that all differing interpretations of truth are equal, since no ultimate, definitive criterion exists. Instead, we ourselves create and apply the criteria and standards. Thus, the validity of all interpretations or hermeneutical constructions is equal (Aḥmadī, 1996, p. 11). This unbridled relativism severely degrades the value of understanding and knowledge.

b) Self-Refutation

The viewpoint that considers humans and their thought inherently historical suffers from an intrinsic paradox. Such a viewpoint is incapable of providing reasoned arguments to substantiate its own claim and ultimately fails to answer objections and criticisms. Gadamer himself admits to this inability (Gadamer, 1975, p. 534). If we accept the universal proposition that "all understanding is relative and fluid," then the understanding of philosophical hermeneuticists themselves, as the "object" of scrutiny, must also be historical—since the historicity of understanding is itself a type of understanding. Therefore, if they acknowledge the historicity of the historicity of understanding, they have effectively admitted the constancy of understanding, thereby contradicting their own position. Furthermore, it can be argued that the claims of historicism proponents lack substantiation by sound rational justification. Their assertions stem from causes (*'illa*) rather than reasoned arguments (*dalīl*), whereas proving the historicity of reason or other human faculties requires the presentation of comprehensible arguments, as Carl Page also points out (Page, 1995, pp. 131-132).

Critique of the "Historical Human"

a) Relativity

One potential flaw associated with the two pillars of "individuality" and "Development" is "relativity". Relativism has various definitions and types, including relativism concerning truth, rationality, cognition, reality, and concepts. However, the focus here is *epistemological relativism*, which refers to the perspective that knowledge is dependent on variables such as time, place, society, culture, historical period, personal belief, etc., consequently rendering cognition a relative affair. Within Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, the reasons for relativism can be manifold: the polysemy of texts, the lack of criteria for distinguishing sound from unsound presuppositions, the confinement of every human's existence—and thus their understanding—within their own existential horizons, etc. Hence, if, based on individuality, each person possesses unique characteristics, thoughts, and attributes, this inevitably leads to relativism. This, in turn, entails numerous undesirable consequences, such as the absence of a criterion or standard for discerning truth from falsehood.

b) Evidence for a Fixed Human Essence

Here, we present several pieces of evidence supporting the existence of a fixed essence for humans:

Throughout life, despite all bodily changes, a human perceives their own reality as a single, constant entity through immediate, presential knowledge (*'ilm ḥudūrī*), observing its presence and absence within themselves (Jawādī Āmulī, 2000, p. 124). Furthermore, induction, sense perception, and experience confirm that these factors also affirm the specific unity (*waḥdat naw'īyyah*) of humankind (ibid., pp. 90-91).

Innate disposition (*fīṭrah*) is an inner, self-evident, intuitive reality. Despite centuries passing since humanity's creation within the course of existence, it has remained constant, never becoming obsolete and never will. Therefore, the claim of historicism proponents, who deny a fixed essence (*dhāt*) and nature (*māhiyyah*) for all beings, is refuted by the example of

fiṭrah. The audience of religious texts is the innate, trans-historical human (Jawādī Āmulī, vol. 1, 1999, p. 33), not a human confined and limited to specific historical, geographical, etc., conditions. This is because Islam itself is based on *fiṭrah*, its message is eternal, and the reason for all humans' inclination towards transcendence, beauty, the quest for truth, etc., must be sought within the inner essence of humans – shared by all and inherent to each human – and thus constant (Şubhānī, 2003, pp. 179-180).

Denying a shared essence and fixed nature for humans leads to the impossibility of the humanities. For in that case, establishing any fixed scientific rules about the actions of individuals and human societies would be negated and impossible. Yet, there exist general and accepted scientific rules; organizing these has given rise to the field of humanities and social sciences, comprising several independent disciplines (Rashād, 2010, p. 218).

Critique of the Qur'ān's Historicity and the Prophet's (ﷺ) Persona

a) The Prophet's (ﷺ) Human and Trans-Historical Dimension

Although the Prophet (ﷺ) was human and consistently reminded people of his humanity to prevent unreasonable expectations, proponents of historical contextualism ironically seize upon this very human aspect to prove his historicity. However, the Qur'ān also emphasizes his trans-historical dimension, expansive existence, and comprehensive knowledge (*iḥāṭa 'ilmiyyah*) (Qur'ān 53:4-7, 8-9). Therefore, the Prophet (ﷺ) differed from ordinary humans of his time by virtue of his connection to the divine source of revelation (*maşdar waḥyānī*) (Qur'ān 18:110; 41:6), which is a necessary condition of prophethood (*nubuwwah*). Some traditions (*riwāyāt*) also report his knowledge of the unseen (*ikhibār min al-ghayb*) (Kulaynī, vol. 8, 2008, p. 216; Şadūq, 1980, p. 95). Certain Qur'ānic verses (e.g., Qur'ān 9:94, 105; 33:21) and traditions (Kulaynī, vol. 1, 2008, p. 219) also affirm his divine dimension (Majlisī, vol. 79, 1983, p. 243).

b) Textual Evidence for the Qur'ān's Trans-Historical Nature (Perpetuity) and Guiding Function

Referring to Qur'ānic verses (e.g., Qur'ān 21:107; 68:52; 25:1; 6:119; 3:85) and noble traditions (Ḥurr al-Āmilī, 1989, vol. 18, p. 569; Şadūq, 1984, vol. 1, p. 93), we ascertain that the Qur'ān is divine revelation, possessing a trans-historical and supra-temporal existence. It is not the product of the Prophet (ﷺ), nor is it confined or influenced by the cultural conditions of the revelation era. Rather, it is beneficial and guiding for all humanity, in every time, place, and under any cultural or social conditions. The Gadamerian meaning of understanding pertains to ordinary human texts imbued with historicity, not to sacred divine texts. Furthermore, the Qur'ān describes itself as an exposition (*tibyān*) and light (*nūr*), a book of guidance (*kitāb al-hudā*). A necessary condition for a book of guidance is, firstly, that it be eloquent and comprehensible, and secondly, that it can delineate a specific path for human felicity and guidance (*hidāyah*). If, based on this hermeneutic view, everyone interprets the Qur'ān according to their own presuppositions, and all interpretations and exegeses are conjectural and non-definitive, how can such a book be characterized by luminosity, guiding function, and being an exposition of all things?!

Conclusion

The theory of philosophical historicism suffers from numerous logical problems. Applying it to Islam, the Qur'ān, and the Prophet (ﷺ) based on a set of evidence and causes is an extravagant and unsubstantiated claim. Therefore, one cannot import historicity into the realm of the Qur'ān and religion using the foundations of philosophical hermeneutics, stamp them with the seal of historicity and historical expiry, set them aside, and ultimately claim their inefficacy and inability to provide answers. Both rational (*'aqlī*) and textual (*naqlī*) evidence demonstrate that the aforementioned discussions (of historicism) are not appropriate to the socio-cultural context of the Islamic world. Such discussions are applicable primarily to the sacred religious texts of Christianity, which are the original provenance of such ideas. Furthermore, concerning the purported causes and evidence for the Qur'ān's historicity and its teachings, it must be stated that these are matters encountered by proponents of this theory within their societal culture. By basing their view on human historicity and influence by contemporary culture, they have utilized this evidence to support the Qur'ān's historicity. However, reliance on this evidence faces a logical problem: proving a theory requires traversing the path of rational argumentation (*istidlāl*) and demonstration (*burhān*). If proof via this route fails, or the arguments are subjected to critique, the claim will rest merely on some evidence and causes, lacking the logical robustness to withstand scientific debate, leading to the collapse of the theory's foundation. Finally, it must be stated that accepting the historicity of religion and its sources (particularly the Qur'ān) entails consequences and implications, including the humanization and secularization of revelation, relativism which causes the loss of the authority of religion and religious texts like the Qur'ān, and the negation of the Qur'ān's perpetuity and universality (applicability to all times and places). Due to the constraints of space, elaborating on these has been avoided.

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