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UNVEILING THE QURANIC WORLDVIEW: GOD AND HUMAN RELATIONSHIP

INTRODUCTION

The Word Allah: Essential and Relational Meanings

God, translated into „*Allah*” in Arabic, is the highest focal term in the Quranic thought system. In terms of rank and significance, there is no word superior to it. The Quranic system of thought is fundamentally theocentric (centered around Allah). Therefore, the concept of Allah pervades everything from the top down, profoundly influencing the semantic structure of all key terms. No matter how one wishes to approach the study of Quranic thought, one must first understand its semantic structure. This is why, before delving into the complex relationship between *Allah* and humans, I dedicated a separate section to analyzing and examining this concept in depth.

In the Quranic thought system, *Allah* is not an entity akin to the God in Greek philosophy, who exists in majesty and self-sufficiency, distant from humankind and uninvolved in human affairs. On the contrary, Allah is a being highly involved in human matters. Therefore, before examining this relationship in later parts of this essay, the essay explores the historical development of the concept of Allah before the Quran. This investigation will highlight the original aspects of Islamic thought

regarding *Allah* and provide essential preliminary information for the subsequent analysis of the relationship between Allah and humans in Quranic thought.

First, it's important to highlight that *Allah* was a common term in both the pre-Islamic(*Jahiliyyah*) and Islamic periods. When the Quranic revelation began using this term, it did not introduce a new or foreign name but rather one that was already familiar to the Arabs of that time. The first question is: Was the Quranic concept of *Allah* a continuation of the pre-Islamic concept of *Allah*, or was there a complete rupture between the two? Were there fundamental or temporary connections between the two meanings? Or was it merely a shared name referring to different entities? To answer these questions satisfactorily, one must recall an important fact: when the Quran began using this term, the Arabs of Mecca reacted strongly. The Quran's use of the word *Allah* sparked heated debates about its nature between Muslims and nonbelievers, as is evident in the Quran itself¹.

The Semantics of “Allah” in Pre-Islamic and Islamic Contexts

From a semantic perspective, what does this indicate? The widespread recognition of the word *Allah* by both groups – and its use in their debates – suggests a shared element of meaning. There would have been no conflict or debate if no common ground existed. When the Prophet addressed his opponents by invoking the name of *Allah*, he did so clearly and definitively because he knew that the term held significant meaning in their minds. Had this not been the case, his approach would have been ineffective. Generally speaking, a name, for instance, a word, is a symbol of something; it is always the name of something. When a person uses a word differently to address someone, and the addressee responds, we can conclude that this name carries a common cognitive element for both parties. No matter how different the other elements of the name may be, there is a common aspect in its usage. In this particular case, this shared semantic element pertains to a highly significant aspect

¹ See, for example, the Quran, 112: 1-4, 2: 255, 6: 103, and 22: 74.

of the concept of Allah, and it was this shared element that incited such sharp and intense reactions among the Arabs of that time.

This shared element could be explained by showing the methodological difference between the „fundamental” and „attributive” meanings.

The Essential Meaning of Allah

Many European researchers², by examining the form of the word „*Allah*” and comparing it to the Greek term „*ho theos*”, meaning „god”. In its abstract sense, *Allah* was known to all Arab tribes. Before Islam, each tribe had its own local god identified by a distinct name. When the term „*ilah*” was used, it referred to the god of a particular tribe. Eventually, the concept of a god transcended local deities, and an abstract, universal conception of a god (*Allah*) emerged, which was common across tribes. Furthermore, there were Jewish and Christian tribes in the region. The Arabs had opportunities for close cultural contact with them. Naturally, these Jewish and Christian tribes used the word „God” to express their own God. This situation must have helped the pre-Islamic concept of *Allah* among the Arabs reach a level above that of the local deities. This intellectual evolution can be seen not only among the urban populations but also among the Bedouins. As indicated in the Quran³, this broader conception of *Allah* likely began to take shape when Prophet Mohammad started his mission.

Thus, it can be assumed that the „essential/fundamental” meaning of the word *Allah* existed during the pre-Islamic era. When this word became the name of the God revealed by Islamic revelation, it also brought its fundamental meaning into the Islamic system.

² See Loewen, Jacob A. „Translating the Names of God: How European Languages Have Translated Them,” 1985; Krisis & Praxis. „The Semantics of the Word ALLAH,” 2008 and Marbaniang, Domenic. „God and Allah: Same God or Different Gods?” Academia.edu, 2016.

³ See Quran, 5:48.

The Relational Meaning of Allah

However, the issue extends beyond this alone. To believe that the sole point of contact between the two concepts of *Allah* is the essential meaning would be a significant oversight. The concept of *Allah* did not transition directly from the realm of pure metaphysical thought into the Islamic framework. It did not integrate into Islam as *ho theos* = *Allah*. Instead, this concept originated from the pre-Islamic thought system. The name had long been an integral and relatively important part of the pre-Islamic system before its incorporation into Islam. Semantically, this implies that, in addition to the essential meaning within the pre-Islamic context, the word had acquired a significant „attributive” meaning specific to pre-Islamic thought. At least during the early days of the Prophet Mohammad’s mission, this „attributive” meaning persisted in the minds of those listening to the recitation of the Quran, as they were still non-believers living within the old traditions of pre-Islamic thought. In other words, it’s possible to assert that when the Islamic revelation began, the polytheistic Arabs of *Mecca* could understand the word „*Allah*” within the semantic elements established in their minds. When the Prophet Mohammad began his prophetic mission, the first significant semantic problem he encountered was this.

Consequently, the question arises: What were the attributive elements associated with *Allah* in the pre-Islamic context, and how did Islam engage with these elements? Did Islam reject all of them as incompatible with its conception of *Allah*? Historical evidence challenges the notion of a complete rupture between the pre-Islamic period and Islam. While these two periods are traditionally viewed as distinct, many assume that Islam entirely severed ties with the pre-Islamic religious system. However, the Quran suggests a more nuanced relationship. Islam challenged several attributive elements associated with *Allah* in pre-Islamic thought, particularly those contradicting its monotheistic principles. One notable element was the belief in *Allah* as a supreme deity alongside other gods, or *shuraka* – a polytheistic view that Islam

unequivocally rejected⁴. Despite this, the Quran also acknowledges that, apart from this polytheistic conception and other less significant errors, the general understanding of Allah among pre-Islamic Arabs closely resembled the Islamic conception. The Quran even expresses astonishment at how a people who seemingly recognized *Allah* could nevertheless reject the truth of Islam⁵.

To understand the development of the concept of *Allah* among pre-Islamic Arabs, it is essential to analyze this issue from two distinct perspectives.

The Arabian Context

The pre-Islamic Arabs understood *Allah* within their own cultural and religious framework. This understanding is illuminated not only through pre-Islamic literature but also through the Quran, which offers insight into the meaning of *Allah* in this context.

JUDAIC AND CHRISTIAN USAGE

The second perspective involves using the term God by Jews and Christians in pre-Islamic times to refer to their God. In this context, „Allah” denoted the God of the Bible, reflecting a specific monotheistic idea. There are fascinating examples of this in the works of well-known

⁴ Quran, 6: 19 states: Say, ‚What thing is greatest in testimony?’ Say, ‚Allah is witness between me and you. And this Quran was revealed to me that I may warn you thereby and whomever it reaches. Do you truly testify that with Allah there are other deities?’ Say, ‚I will not testify [with you].’ Say, ‚Indeed, He is but one God, and indeed, I am free of what you associate [with Him].” See also Quran, 2:163; 4:48 and 5:73.

⁵ This is clear in Surah Al-Mu’minun (23:84-89): „Say, ‚To whom belongs the earth and whoever is in it, if you should know?’ They will say, ‚To Allah.’ Say, ‚Then will you not remember?’ Say, ‚Who is Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Great Throne?’ They will say, ‚[They belong] to Allah.’ Say, ‚Then will you not fear Him?’ Say, ‚In whose hand is the realm of all things – and He protects while none can protect against Him – if you should know?’ They will say, ‚[All belongs] to Allah.’ Say, ‚Then how are you deluded?’”

Christian Arab poets like *Adiy ibn Zayd*⁶, who were associated with the Christian court of al-Ḥirah⁷.

Despite their differences, these contexts converge in the final years of the pre-Islamic era, facilitating the emergence of the Islamic concept of *Allah*. Contrary to the belief that pre-Islamic Arabia was isolated and culturally primitive, Arabia during the sixth and seventh centuries was actively engaged in cultural exchange and inter-civilizational competition.

Furthermore, a third, particularly distinctive context emerged only with the arrival of Islam. This context pertains to the *Hanifs*, a group in pre-Islamic Arabia who adhered to monotheism. The poet *Umayya ibn Abi' Salt*⁸ represents this group's unique situation. Though neither Jewish nor Christian, *Umayya* held a monotheistic view of *Allah* and played a role in introducing Jewish and Christian ideas into Arabia. His understanding of *Allah* is especially notable from an Islamic perspective, marking a significant yet often overlooked facet of pre-Islamic religious development.

In conclusion, those to whom Prophet Mohammad was entrusted with delivering the message of God had a somewhat ambiguous concept of *Allah* from the very beginning. Although their conception of *Allah* was

⁶ Nasser, I. (2024). Christian Motifs in the Poetry of 'Adī Ibn Zayd al-'Ibādī. *Academia.edu*.

⁷ The Christian court of al-Ḥirah was a significant cultural and religious center in the late antique period, located in what is now modern-day Iraq. Al-Ḥirah was the capital of the Lakhmid Kingdom, which thrived between the 3rd and 7th centuries¹. This court was known for its Nestorian Christian population, who played a crucial role in that era's cultural and religious exchanges. With close political and commercial ties to the Sasanian Empire, al-Ḥirah became an essential hub of Christian scholarship, significantly spreading Nestorian Christianity throughout the region and beyond. For further reading, see Julie B., Narmin A. et Barbara C., *From Bāzyān to al-Ḥīra: Introduction to Recent Archaeological and Historical Studies on Christianity in Iraq*.

⁸ Umayya ibn Abi' Salt was a pre-Islamic Arabian poet from the Banu Thaḳīf tribe. He was known for his monotheistic beliefs and rejected the contemporary idol worship of his time. Although he claimed to be a prophet himself, his aspirations were overshadowed by the rise of Prophet Mohammad. Interestingly, his works reflect a deep familiarity with Jewish and Christian scriptures¹. His poetry often touched upon themes of wisdom and beauty, and he is occasionally cited in Quranic exegesis. For further reading, see Rev. Power Edmond's book, *Umayya ibn Abi-s Salt*. Imprimerie Catholique.

quite incorrect in many aspects according to the Islamic concept of *Allah*, there were also acceptable and positive aspects of their understanding of *Allah*.

The subsequent parts will delve into the relationship between *Allah* and humanity through three key categories: the Ontological Relationship, which explores the Creator-Creation dynamic; the Communication Relationship, focusing on both revelation and prayer; and the Moral Relationship, which balances *Allah's* compassion and wrath in guiding human actions

THE ONTOLOGICAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ALLAH AND HUMANKIND

The Concept of Creation

In religious or philosophical thought systems, the issue of existence and human presence is of paramount significance. It perpetually raises the question: Where does humanity originate from? What is the source of human existence in this world? This has been one of the primary questions occupying the human mind. According to the Quran, the correct answer to this question is as follows: The source of existence is *Allah*; existence is a blessing granted to humanity by *Allah*. In other words, within this divine framework presented by the Quran, a relationship exists between God and humanity as Creator and created. Allah assumes the role of the one who grants existence and being to humans. Allah is the creator of humanity, and humanity is His creation. Allah is the creator of the entire world: from the angels in the heavens⁹ to the jinn¹⁰, the heavens and the earth¹¹, the sun, the moon, the day and the night¹², the mountains and the rivers¹³, the trees, fruits, grains, and plants¹⁴,

⁹ Quran, 43:18-19.

¹⁰ Quran, 55:14-15.

¹¹ Quran, 14:22-19.

¹² Quran, 41:37.

¹³ Quran, 13:3.

¹⁴ Quran, 55:10-11

and every kind of animal, such as „some that crawl on their bellies, some that walk on two legs, and some that walk on four”¹⁵ – Allah is the creator of all. Humankind is one of these creations, but the most significant of them. The Quran views humanity as the most honourable of creations¹⁶.

As mentioned earlier in this text, the concept of divine creation was not foreign to pre-Islamic Arabs, and the act of creation was generally attributed to God. However, the attribution of creation to God was not consistently affirmed. The Quran informs us that there were idolaters who also believed idols to be creators: „*Or do they attribute to Allah partners who create as He creates so that the creation seems similar to them? Say: Allah is the Creator of all things; He is the One, the Prevailing*”¹⁷.

While the idea of God’s creation governs the entire intellectual framework of the Quran, it held no such prominent position in the worldview of pre-Islamic Arabs. Even if God was acknowledged as the source of human existence, this notion carried little significance in the minds of pre-Islamic Arabs. For this reason, the Quran repeatedly emphasizes the importance of this concept and strives to make them grasp its significance. The Quran invites Muslims to reflect on their “*createdness*” and contemplate their existence’s origins. A Muslim who forgets their status as a creation cannot truly be considered a Muslim and would fall into grave sin. The Quran describes this state of forgetfulness as „*tughyan*” (transgressing limits with arrogance) and „*istighna*” (considering oneself self-sufficient and independent of God). Thus, awareness of one’s createdness is directly connected to the concept of the Lord-servant relationship, which will be discussed later.

¹⁵ Quran, 24:44-45.

¹⁶ Quran, 17:70 states: “And indeed We have honoured the Children of Adam, and We have carried them on land and sea, and have provided them with At-Taiyibat (lawful good things), and have preferred them above many of those whom We have created with a marked preference”.

¹⁷ Quran 13:16.

The Destiny of Humanity

A significant question arises regarding why the belief in the divine creation of humans, which existed among pre-Islamic Arabs, remained so underdeveloped. It could be said that the belief was weak because pre-Islamic Arabs did not focus on the origin or essence of their existence. Instead, their preoccupation lay with the end of life – death – rather than its beginning.

When pre-Islamic individuals found moments to reflect on their lives outside of war and plunder, the first thought to enter their minds was death – its causes and the forces leading to it. This preoccupation with death was seen as humanity's destiny. Pre-Islamic thought did not entertain any interest in the notion of life after death. For the majority of pre-Islamic Arabs, nothing existed beyond this worldly life. Death, representing the most critical phase of human life, was their primary concern, while the beginning of life received little attention. This worldview attributed the cause of human existence to Allah. Still, it maintained that once created, humans severed ties with their Creator and came under the control of Time (*Dehr*), whose oppressive rule persisted until death. Consequently, pre-Islamic poetry often centred on the theme of futility – an expression of yearning for something deeply desired yet unattainable. This led to a unique life philosophy characterized by a pessimistic irreligiosity. The Quran records the words of pre-Islamic Arabs regarding this belief: „*They said: ,There is nothing beyond our worldly life. We live and die, and nothing destroys us except Time'*”¹⁸.

In contrast, the Quranic worldview revolutionized the concept of human destiny. It replaced the dark, oppressive notion of Time with a vision of divine justice and eternal life. The Quran illuminated the path from a life of despair to one of everlasting happiness, drawing a sharp distinction between the two perspectives—akin to the difference between night and day.

In the Islamic system, Allah is not merely the Creator who initiates life and then disengages, as in pre-Islamic thought. Instead, Allah's act

¹⁸ Quran 45:24.

of creation marks the beginning of divine governance. Every aspect of human life, down to the finest details, unfolds under Allah's control. The Quran emphasizes that Allah is a God of justice who never wrongs or oppresses anyone. The imaginary power of Time is entirely abolished, and human existence is placed solely under divine authority. Although death remains inevitable in the Islamic perspective, it no longer leads to the despair seen in pre-Islamic thought. In this system, death is not the endpoint of existence but a transitional phase – a gateway between this world's temporal life and the Hereafter's eternal life. Where pre-Islamic thought saw death as the final curtain, the Quran insists on the reality of everlasting life beyond it. *And this worldly life is not but diversion and amusement. And indeed, the home of the Hereafter – that is the [eternal] life if only they knew*¹⁹.

Thus, in the Quranic worldview, both human life and the life of the world have predetermined terms (*agel*). While worldly life ends with the Day of Judgment, the afterlife marks the beginning of eternal bliss for the faithful. As illustrated in the Quranic scheme, both temporal and eternal realms exist under Allah's governance, making human destiny a manifestation of divine justice and mercy²⁰.

¹⁹ Quran, 29:64.

²⁰ „Know that the life of this world is but amusement and diversion and adornment and boasting to one another and competition in increase of wealth and children—like the example of rain whose [resulting] plant growth pleases the tillers; then it dries, and you see it turn yellow; then it becomes [scattered] debris. And in the Hereafter is severe punishment and forgiveness from Allah and approval. And what is the worldly life except the enjoyment of delusion? Quran, 57:20.

COMMUNICATION RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ALLAH AND HUMANKIND

Non-Verbal Communication

The Signs of God

There are two forms of communication between God and humans. One is verbal, where both parties use human language to convey their messages. The second is non-verbal, where God communicates through natural signs (*ayat*), and humans respond using bodily movements and gestures to express their intent. In both forms, God initiates the communication, and humans are expected to respond.

According to the Quran, God sends certain *ayat* when he wishes to communicate with humans. In this context, there is no distinction between verbal and non-verbal signs; both are considered *ayat* of God. Revelation, a prime example of God's communication with humans, represents only one aspect of this interaction. Therefore, the Quran refers to revealed words as *ayat* and does not differentiate them from the non-verbal signs found in nature. However, verbal *ayat*, being a distinct class identified by the term *wahy* (revelation), are of particular significance in terms of their nature and structure. Hence, these *ayat* deserve to be examined independently in a dedicated section.

This current section introduces the subject of revelation, which holds a unique and significant place in this discourse. It aims to highlight the general characteristics of both verbal and non-verbal forms of divine communication. The insights shared here provide a foundational understanding for examining the phenomenon of revelation.

It is important to note that the observations discussed here pertain solely to the downward direction of communication, where God sends signs and humans receive them. In the upward direction, where humans communicate with God, there is a marked difference between verbal and non-verbal communication. So distinct are these two forms that they cannot occur simultaneously.

Let us first focus on the communication that flows from God to humankind.

God continuously reveals *ayat* to those capable of perceiving them. According to the Quran, what we call natural phenomena – such as rain, wind, the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of night and day – should not be regarded as mere natural events. Rather, these are signs of God's governance of human affairs, evidence of His wisdom and care to enable human beings to live comfortably in this world.

Just as road signs guide travellers not to focus on the signs themselves but on the direction they indicate, natural phenomena aim to direct our attention beyond themselves to a greater reality. From this profound perspective, natural events are no longer mere occurrences but signs and symbols. According to the Quran, all natural phenomena, which are considered *ayat*, reveal God's attributes, whether His kindness and mercy or His sovereignty and justice.

The concept of *ayat* in the Quran can be better understood when compared with the philosophical thought of Karl Jaspers. Jaspers emphasized the symbolic nature of the world, arguing that we live at different levels of existence. At the superficial level of ordinary reason (*Verstand*), natural entities, including human beings, appear as mere objects. However, when we ascend to the realm of Being (*Existenz*), we find ourselves in the presence of God, the infinite Being who transcends everything. Jaspers refers to this encompassing Being as *das Umgreifende* – the all-encompassing entity communicating with us indirectly through natural objects. These objects are not simple material entities but symbols and signs through which the infinite Being speaks to us. At this level, the world becomes a book of symbols accessible to those who live at the level of *Existenz*²¹. This perspective aligns with the Quranic worldview, which teaches that all creation is, in reality, God's *ayat* and their symbolic nature is understood only by people of intellect and reflection.

²¹ Jaspers, K. (1969). *Philosophy, Volume 2: Existential Elucidation* (E.B. Ashton, Trans.). University of Chicago Press.

As mentioned earlier, the divine *ayat* are of two types: verbal and non-verbal. Verbal *ayat*, or revelation, are inherently more explicit and are the first to come to mind when *ayat* are mentioned. These *ayat* are the verbal expressions of God's will, systematically delivered to convey the divine message clearly and sequentially. Non-verbal *ayat*, on the other hand, convey God's will in a holistic and non-linear manner, making their message inherently ambiguous. However, they have a significant advantage: they are accessible to all humanity without the need for intermediaries. Unlike verbal *ayat*, which require prophets to transmit them, non-verbal *ayat* directly address every individual. As humans live amidst divine symbols, they possess the intellectual capacity to comprehend them.

To better understand the Quranic concept of *ayat*, it is essential to analyze the semantic field surrounding this central term. This involves examining the key terms associated with *ayat* in the Quran. One critical aspect to consider is how humanity responds to these divine signs. According to the Quran, there are two possible responses to *ayat*: acceptance (*tasdiq*) or rejection (*takdhiib*). Accepting the *ayat* leads to faith, while rejecting them is the foundation of disbelief (*kufr*). The Quranic worldview emphasizes the tension between *tasdiq* and *takdhiib* as a central axis of its message. The process begins with God sending *ayat* and concludes with human acceptance or rejection of these signs. This journey forms an interconnected conceptual framework where every element is intricately linked. Within this system, each term carries unique nuances influenced by its relationship with other elements in the framework.

Worship as a Means of Communication

As previously mentioned, both verbal and non-verbal communication is not one-sided but a mutual dialogue. Verbal communication from God to humans is called revelation (*wahy*), while verbal communication from humans to God is referred to as supplication (*du'a*). *Du'a* is the act of the human heart speaking to God, seeking His blessings and assistance. This form of communication, ascending from humans to God, represents

a verbal interaction. Similarly, the non-verbal divine communication—God’s sending of silent signs—finds its human counterpart in acts of worship, specifically the religious movements recognized in Islam as *salat* (prayer).

From this perspective, *salat* or worship can be examined in various dimensions. In the context of this study, *salat* represents a form of non-verbal communication ascending from humans to God. It is the physical expression of the profound reverence and awe a human feels in the presence of God (the almighty). Just as humans passively receive God’s words and signs, they are commanded to express their emotions in a series of collective movements shared with others who share the same feelings. *Salat* also includes verbal elements. Reciting the Quran, affirming faith, and invoking blessings upon the Prophet are essential components of prayer. However, the verbal elements of *salat* are distinctly different from those in supplication (*du’a*). In *salat*, the words are ritualistic and possess a religious significance inherent to worship. In contrast, the words in *du’a* reflect the personal emotions and thoughts of the individual at any given moment. In supplication, a person expresses their inner thoughts, whereas the words of *salat* are not personal but symbolic, forming part of a religious ceremony. Consequently, the verbal elements of *salat* are not ordinary words but integral components of worship. Furthermore, what is significant in *salat* is its structure, which is primarily non-verbal. Worship as a whole serves as a non-verbal means of communication between humans and God, and *salat* is a unique form of worship that allows direct contact between a person and God.

When Islam began to take shape, *salat* or worship quickly became one of its foundational pillars, occupying a central place among religious duties and distinguishing the emerging Muslim community. There is no need to delve further into the details of this institution here. However, it is worth noting that the most critical element of *salat* is the act of prostration (*sujud*), in which a worshipper places their forehead on the ground. As for the essence of *salat*, the verb *salla* is frequently used in pre-Islamic literature as well as in the Quran, meaning “to wish well for someone.

Verbal Communication

The Word of Allah (Kalamullah)

As the text has reiterated several times, according to the Quran, the communication relationship between God and humans is fundamentally twofold:

1. From God to humans
2. From humans to God.

This two-way communication can either be verbal or non-verbal. In the previous section, I addressed non-verbal communication. Verbal communication – the subject of this part – is, upon analysis, a specific manifestation of the broader concept of communication between God and humans revealed through non-verbal means. Non-verbal communication from God to humans ultimately culminates in verbal interaction. In other words, revelation (*wahy*) is nothing but a very specific form of “sending signs” (*ayat*). However, *wahy* differs so distinctly from other forms of “sending signs” that it must be examined as a separate category. This is also the perspective presented in the Quran. The Quran gives *wahy* a highly significant and distinct place. Revelation is treated as an extraordinary, mysterious phenomenon that lies beyond the grasp of human intellect. For this reason, the presence of an intermediary, referred to as the “prophet,” is necessary. From this perspective, the signs sent in this unique way are entirely different from other signs that pertain to the natural world and can thus be comprehended by any rational individual. According to Islam, revelation is God speaking – conveying His will through language. However, it is not in some mysterious, unintelligible language foreign to humans but in a language that humans can clearly understand. This is a critical point. Without this act of divine communication, as understood by Islam, no religion could exist on earth. Thus, it is not surprising that Islam has been deeply concerned with language from its very inception. Islam emerged as God spoke. The entirety of Islamic culture is rooted in this historical fact: God addressed humanity in the language humans spoke. This is not merely

about God sending a sacred book; it is God Himself speaking. This is the essence of revelation.

Revelation, at its core, is deeply connected to language. Within the Quran, revelation has two aspects. The first pertains to its connection with *kalam* (speech), which differs from *lisan* (language) in the narrower sense. The second concerns the fact that, among the then-existing cultural languages, Arabic was chosen not by coincidence but by divine will as the medium for God's word. Using *Saussurean* terminology, we can distinguish these two aspects as follows: the first pertains to *kalam* (speech), and the second to *lisan* (language). These roughly correspond to Saussure's concepts of *parole* and *langue*²². Both aspects of revelation would later lead to significant cultural developments in Islamic intellectual history.

Here, I will focus on the aspect of *kalam* in revelation. In the discussion of revelation, the Quran describes it as the Word of God (*Kalamullah*). This statement – revelation equals the Word of God – is not an arbitrary assertion but a phrase frequently encountered in the Quran. Two examples from the Quran will suffice to illuminate this point. In *Surah At-Tawbah* (9:6), we find the following verse: "*And if any of the polytheists seeks your protection, then grant him protection so that he may hear the Word of God.*" Here, the context indicates that "the Word of God" refers to the words spoken by God, communicated to the Prophet, and revealed as divine speech. Similarly, in *Surah Al-Baqarah* (2:75), while referring to the situation of the followers of Moses' law, the Quran says: "*Do you then hope that they would believe in you, while a group of them used to hear the Word of God and then distort it after they had understood it, knowingly?*". The transformation of revelation into "the Word of God" makes it evident that this phenomenon is semantically based on two distinct foundations:

1. God
2. *Kalam* (speech).

²² Saussure, F. de. (1983). *Course in General Linguistics* (C. Bally & A. Sechehaye, Eds.; R. Harris, Trans.). Open Court.

In other words, revelation stands on these two fundamental pillars. From the first perspective – that of God – revelation is expressed in words whose communicated speech is unlike any human speech. For instance, terms like *tanzil* (descent) and *wahy* (revelation) convey this distinction. No human-to-human communication could ever be described as *tanzil*. The root meaning of *nazala* implies a downward movement. Similarly, *tanzil* means “to send down”. As for *wahy*, its usage always implies an extraordinary, mysterious, and incomprehensible type of speech. When viewed from this angle, revelation is not a natural act of speech. It is, instead, a theological mystery that defies human analytical thought. From this perspective, revelation is a mysterious phenomenon that cannot be analyzed but must be believed. However, revelation has another equally significant aspect that can be interpreted in standard terms. Semantically, revelation is equivalent to “the Word of God (*Kalamullah*)”. If the focus is shifted slightly from the first to the second perspective, it can be immediately recognized that revelation is, in fact, a form of speech. Otherwise, the Quran would not have employed the term *kalam* (speech) to describe revelation. Thus, while revelation may be mysterious (*esoteric*) because it is the Word of God, it also possesses all the characteristics of human speech precisely because it is speech (*kalam*).

The Quran uses other terms associated with human communication to describe revelation. For example, in *Surah Ash-Shura* (42:24), the Quran uses the word *kalimah* (word): “*Allah obliterates falsehood and establishes the truth by His words.*” Another term used for revelation is *qawl* (utterance), which is a term related to human speech. For instance, the verb *qala* (“he said”) has been used in Arabic from ancient times to describe human communication. It is so widely used that it requires no further explanation. In many instances, God Himself uses the term *qawl* to refer to His revelation. For example, in *Surah Al-Muzzammil* (73:5), God addresses the Prophet Muhammad: “*Indeed, We will cast upon you a heavy word (qawl anthaqilan).*” It is worth noting that, in this verse, God describes His revelation using the term *qawl*, one of the most commonly used words for human speech, though here it is qualified as “heavy” (*thaqil*).

From this brief explanation, it can be concluded that while revelation, in its essence, is a phenomenon beyond all comparison and fundamentally unexplainable, it also has an aspect that can be approached and analyzed to understand its basic structure. What makes revelation such a unique and extraordinary form of speech is that the speaker is God, and the listener is human. In other words, this is a communication between a transcendent being and an ordinary being, with no ontological parity between the speaker and the listener. In ordinary human communication, the speaker and the listener share the same ontological status – equals. For instance, humans speak to other humans and are understood by them. Humans and animals, on the other hand, cannot engage in accurate linguistic communication. Though a highly intelligent animal may comprehend some cues, there is no ontological equality between them and humans; thus, actual linguistic exchange is impossible. Instead, only non-verbal or symbolic communication may occur.

In Quranic revelation, the first obstacle—the absence of a shared linguistic system – was eliminated, as God chose Arabic as the standard understanding system between Himself and humans. Similarly, the second obstacle – the ontological disparity – was overcome by the presence of an intermediary, the prophet, chosen by God as a unique human being through whom He would speak. Through the intermediation of the prophet, humans were granted a way to hear God speaking in human words. For this reason, revelation is an extraordinary, mysterious, and exceptional phenomenon in the history of communication between God and humans. In short, revelation is a form of divine communication that is utterly unique and deeply rooted in human experience.

THE MORAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GOD AND MAN

The Merciful God

One of the most distinctive features of Islamic thought is that the concept of God fundamentally carries a moral nature. Consequently, in this thought, God is moral. The relationship between God and man must also be moral. In other words, God acts toward humans in a moral

manner due to His justice and goodness. In turn, humans must morally respond to God. Thus, morality is a complementary part of Islam. All religion is within morality and depends on human's moral actions. From this perspective, the Quran presents two seemingly contrasting aspects of God. For the devout believer, these two aspects represent different dimensions of the same God. However, to a purely logical mind, these aspects may appear contradictory. Indeed, many thinkers have struggled to reconcile these dimensions.

On one side, God is portrayed as infinitely generous, merciful, gracious, forgiving, and compassionate. This aspect of God is emphasized in the Quran through key terms such as *ni'mah* (blessing), *fadl* (grace), *rahmah* (mercy), and *maghfirah* (forgiveness). Scholars who have extensively studied the Quran and Islam have explored this issue so thoroughly that I have nothing to add to their work. However, one point directly related to this article must be noted here: God bestows such abundant blessings and favours upon humans, often in the form of divine signs (*ayat*), that there is only one appropriate response from humans – gratitude. This gratitude, or *shukr*, is rooted in a deep understanding and appreciation of God's signs. Gratitude becomes possible only when humans comprehend and value these signs. The conceptual framework surrounding gratitude is thus pivotal. In this way, gratitude emerges as a religious concept for the first time in Arab thought. The significance of this new concept lies in the fact that gratitude is humanity's response to divine benevolence. It establishes an inseparable connection between gratitude and the most characteristic attributes of God. Gratitude is so closely linked to faith that gratitude often serves as a synonym for faith in the Quran.

The opposite of gratitude (*shukr*) is ingratitude (*kufir*), which initially meant “to be ungrateful.” Before Islam, this concept had no religious connotation. However, in the Quranic worldview, *kufir* acquires profound religious significance, denoting not only ingratitude but also disbelief. The Quran transforms this concept, elevating it to the spiritual realm, where it represents humanity's failure to acknowledge God's blessings. Even in ordinary worldly relationships among people, gratitude and its opposite, ingratitude, were understood in a moral sense governing

human interactions. For instance, when someone performs a favour or bestows a gift, the recipient is expected to respond with gratitude. This moral expectation was recognized as a fundamental principle of human conduct, though human nature often inclines toward ingratitude. The Quran reflects this reality, stating: “*Indeed, man is ungrateful to his Lord*”²³ And “*Indeed, man is ungrateful*”²⁴. These verses illustrate that ingratitude, whether directed toward God or humans, represents a failure to respond appropriately to kindness. In the Quran, this moral principle is elevated to a divine level: God’s blessings demand gratitude, and failure to offer it amounts to moral and spiritual failure.

The Wrathful God

Those who choose ingratitude over gratitude, who reject submission to God and spend their lives in heedlessness and frivolity, are confronted by God’s other face. Here, God is depicted as the stern arbiter of justice who delivers unrelenting punishment on the Day of Judgment. God’s wrath is described as devastating for those upon whom it falls. The pivot of this issue is the concept of the Day of Judgment. The Quran repeatedly emphasizes the concept of the Day of Judgment, where all will stand in submission before God. This belief in the ultimate reckoning motivates believers to lead purposeful lives free from heedlessness and negligence. This idea forms the core of Islamic asceticism.

Anyone who reads the Quran will see that the consciousness of the coming Day of Judgment (i.e., the afterlife) was very strong, especially during the Meccan period. In its original meaning, this is called “*taqwā*” (consciousness of God). Initially, *taqwā* referred to a fear of divine punishment in the afterlife. Still, it has undergone a significant transformation over time, eventually acquiring a broader meaning encompassing piety and moral consciousness. In this context, *taqwā* means putting one’s faith and obedience between oneself and divine punishment to protect the soul from torment. This meaning is evident in

²³ Quran, 100:6.

²⁴ Quran, 14:34.

the following verse, “Fear the Day when no soul will suffice for another soul at all”²⁵.

Promise and Warning

As we have seen, God communicates with humanity through two distinct faces: one that promises blessings and a bright future and another that warns of destruction and calamity. This duality is expressed in the Quran through the concepts of *wa’d* (promise) and *wa’iid* (warning). These terms highlight the moral framework governing the relationship between God and man: those who live in gratitude and obedience to God are promised His mercy and blessings, while those who reject Him are warned of His wrath and punishment. This dual approach underscores the balance between hope and fear in Islamic theology, motivating believers to strive for righteousness while remaining conscious of their accountability before God.

CONCLUSION

The Quranic worldview offers a comprehensive and intricate portrayal of the relationship between *Allah* and humans, presenting a dynamic interplay of existence, communication, and ethics. This relationship is not merely a static theological construct but an evolving dialogue, reflecting the Creator’s continuous engagement with His creation.

Ontologically, the Quran underscores *Allah’s* centrality as the ultimate creator of all life, encompassing material, spiritual, and moral dimensions. This foundational perspective emphasizes the createdness of humanity, inspiring a profound awareness of dependence on the Divine as the ultimate source of existence. Such awareness nurtures a sense of humility and a continuous striving for alignment with the Creator’s will.

The Quran also articulates a sophisticated paradigm of divine communication, wherein *Allah’s* guidance is conveyed through

²⁵ Quran, 2:48.

explicit verbal revelation and the subtler, universal language of natural phenomena. The interplay between these forms of guidance ensures that divine messages remain both universally accessible and deeply personal. The Quran fosters an enduring dialogue that transcends time and place by inviting humanity to reflect on scripture and the signs within creation.

The moral dimension of this relationship embodies a balance between *Allah's* mercy and justice. It extends a dual invitation: one to gratitude for *Allah's* boundless generosity and another to ethical accountability for human actions. This equilibrium between grace and responsibility cultivates moral consciousness, urging believers to pursue righteousness while maintaining vigilance over their ultimate accountability before God.

Far from being merely prescriptive, this theological framework shapes a holistic way of life, integrating divine truths into the believer's daily existence. It encourages living with purpose, integrity, and an acute awareness of one's interconnectedness with the Creator, fellow beings, and the cosmos. Ultimately, the Quranic vision of the God-human relationship is a perpetual journey toward spiritual actualization and eternal harmony, inspiring believers to seek closeness to *Allah* while striving for a life of moral excellence and universal benevolence.

Abstract

This article explores the foundational structure of the Quranic worldview, with a particular focus on the relationship between God and humans. It presents this relationship as a dynamic and complex dichotomy, where God is the ultimate and singular reality, with no equal in creation. At the same time, humanity is His creation, endowed with both existence and purpose. The text examines how this divine-human relationship is articulated through three primary categories: ontological, communicative, and moral. These categories highlight the hierarchical yet deeply interconnected nature of this relationship. The ontological relationship emphasizes God as the Creator and humans as His created beings, while the communicative relationship highlights God's revelation to humanity, guiding them toward salvation. Finally, the moral relationship contrasts human virtues like gratitude and piety with their opposites, underscoring the importance of moral alignment with divine will.

Keywords: God, Quran, Human, ontological, communicative, moral, relationship

Streszczenie

Niniejszy artykuł bada fundamentalną strukturę światopoglądu Koranu, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem relacji między Bogiem a ludźmi. Przedstawia tę relację jako dynamiczną i złożoną dychotomię, w której Bóg jest ostateczną i jedyną rzeczywistością, nie mającą sobie równych w stworzeniu. Jednocześnie ludzkość jest Jego stworzeniem, obdarzonym zarówno istnieniem, jak i celem. Tekst analizuje, w jaki sposób ta bosko-ludzka relacja jest wyrażana za pomocą trzech podstawowych kategorii: ontologicznej, komunikacyjnej i moralnej. Kategorie te podkreślają hierarchiczną, ale głęboko powiązaną naturę tej relacji. Relacja ontologiczna podkreśla Boga jako Stwórcę i ludzi jako istoty stworzone przez Niego, podczas gdy relacja komunikacyjna podkreśla Boże objawienie ludzkości, prowadząc ją do zbawienia. Wreszcie, relacja moralna kontrastuje ludzkie cnoty, takie jak wdzięczność i pobożność, z ich przeciwieństwami, podkreślając znaczenie moralnego dostosowania się do boskiej woli.

Słowa kluczowe: Bóg, Koran, człowiek, ontologiczna, komunikatywna, moralna, relacja

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