

CHAPTER III

**THE DOUBLE MOVEMENT IN FAZLUR RAHMAN’S THOUGHT FOR
INTERPRETATION OF THE QURAN**

A. Fazlur Rahman’s Hermeneutic Theory

Fazlur Rahman actually pioneered his formulation of methodology since he lived in Pakistan, but the formulation of his methodology was only completed systematically and comprehensively when he settled in Chicago. The methodology he offers is what he calls the double movement (multiple motion interpretation). This methodology is a combination of induction and deduction reasoning patterns; first, from the special (particular) to the special (general), and second, from the general to the special. This method is believed to be able to provide a systematic and contextual understanding, so as to produce a non-atomistic, literalistic and textual interpretation, but an interpretation that is able to answer current problems.¹

According to Rahman, the only method of interpretation that is acceptable and able to accommodate intellectual demands and moral integrity is a method that refers first to historical criticism in the broadest possible terms. Only in this way can genuine appreciation of the aims of the Quran and Hadith be achieved. For this reason, he introduced the double movement method.

¹ Kurdi, eds. *Hermeneutika Al-Quran dan Hadis* (Yogyakarta: eLSQ Press, 2010), 70.

The presence of the double movement method was triggered by Rahman's disappointment at the scholars of classical modernism who were more likely to exploit the historical Islamic heritage in dealing with the issue of renewal and were also motivated by the reality that classical and medieval commentators had treated the Quran verse by verse according to the chronology in the Manuscripts, although sometimes they make cross references when interpreting a verse. Unfortunately this is not done systematically, so that their commentary works do not produce a cohesive and significant worldview (*weltanschauung*) for life as a whole. Efforts to interpret the verses of the Quran with other verses (*al-Qur'an yufassir ba'dhuhu ba'dha*) have indeed been realized in their work, but what has not been seen is an effort to integrate the meaning of the Quran systematically in order to realize it in a unified worldview.² That is why it then seeks to formulate the method of interpretation known as the double movement method.

The double movement method is the process of interpreting the Quran which leads to a double movement; from the contemporary situation to the era of the Quran being revealed, then returning to the present. The first movement, from the contemporary situation to the era of the Quran was revealed, needs to be done to understand the meaning of a statement by examining the historical situation or problem in which the Quranic statement is present as the answer. Then, these specific responses are generalized and expressed as statements which have general social moral objectives which can

² Fazlur Rahman, *Interpreting the Quran* (Inquiry May, 1986) 45.

be "filtered" and specific verses relating to (containing) socio-historical background and legis ratio which are often expressed. During this process, attention must be paid to the direction of the teachings of the Quran as a totality so that every meaning understood, every law stated, and every goal formulated will be coherent with the others.

Furthermore, the second movement, from the time of the Quran was revealed (after finding general principles) back to the present, needs to be done to connect the teachings (principles) that are general in a concrete socio-historical context at the time now. For this reason, a careful assessment of the current situation is needed by analyzing its elements so that the situation can be assessed and changed to the extent needed and set new priorities for applying the values of the Quran in a new way. This second movement serves as a correction for the results of understanding and interpretation carried out in the first movement. Because if the results of understanding fail in the application of the present situation, it means that there has been a failure in assessing the current situation correctly or failure in understanding the Quran. Because, it is absurd that something that was previously able and truly has been realized in a specific order (community) in the past cannot be realized in the present context.³

Furthermore, Rahman assured that if the double movement method was successfully realized, it was hoped that the commands of the Quran would be

³ Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity : Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), 6-7.

alive and effective. Therefore, the smoothness of the first task is very dependent on the work of historians, while the second task, although very much requires the instruments of sociologists and anthropologists to determine "effective orientation" and "ethical engineering", still rests on the work of moral advocates (scholars).⁴

Both of the above tasks, added Rahman, implied intellectual jihad. Specifically the second task, in addition to the nuances of intellectual jihad also excludes moral jihad. Rahman and intellectual efforts in this double movement were later popularized by Rahman as *ijtihad*. For him, *ijtihad* is "trying to understand the meaning of a text (precedent) in the past that contains a rule to change the rule through efforts to expand, limit or modify it so that it can be matched with new situations in order to get new solutions. Through this definition Rahman actually wants to say that a text or precedent can be generalized as a principle which can then be formulated as a new rule.

Although the double movement method presented by Rahman was allegedly more directed towards the interpretation of the verses of the Quran which contained laws and social teachings (ethical moral), the mechanism of its application contained indications that led to the reformulation of a teachings of Islam that was comprehensive, coherent and oriented to the present. This is because the fundamental importance of the methodology is to

⁴ Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity : Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*,7.

understand the Quran and the Prophet's activities in his socio-historical setting.⁵

The double movement method offered by Rahman, in its application requires initial steps in the form of efforts to formulate the world view of the Quran, which includes discourse about God, God's relationship with humans and nature and His role in human history and society. Clarifying the understanding of the essential importance of God for human existence will enable a systematic analysis of the moral and legal teachings in the Quran. Moral teachings need to be systematized based on general principles that are stated explicitly in the Quran and which are explained in legal statements in the Quran.

Furthermore, the legal provisions in the Quran need to be interpreted in terms of these moral teachings in order to derive the systematic legislation of the Quran. It is also important to pay attention to the socio-historical background to find out how the moral goals and principles are concretely established in the form of law enforcement in the Quran. Then, the contemporary situation must be examined as carefully as possible in order to determine the location of differences and similarities with the situation of Quran legislation when it was revealed. Finally, interpreting Quranic legislation to produce new laws (solutions) for the current situation.⁶

⁵ Fazlur Rahman, *Islamic Studies and the Future of Islam*. In Malcolm H. Kerr *Islamic Studies: A Tradition and Its Problems* (California, 1980), 129. See also Taufik Adnan Amal, *Islam dan Tantangan Modernitas: Studi atas Pemikiran Hukum Fazlur Rahman*, 203-204).

⁶ Fazlur Rahman, *Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 325-326.

It can be understood that Rahman sees the historical search for social situations as important when the Quran was revealed in order to explore and find the moral goals and principles contained therein. In Rahman's interpretation method, the moral goals and principles of the Qurani play an important role in filtering social change in a direction that is conducive to the lives of Muslims. While looking at the moral goals and principles of the Quran, changing current social situations also needs to be considered when establish a law or social ethics, this of course needs to be examined through the approach of social science tools.

Thus it is clear that in the operation of the double movement method, Rahman sets out some initial steps as a prerequisite that needs to be done first, namely formulating the worldview of the Quran, systematizing the ethics of the Quran, and embedding the ethics into the present context .

In his methodology Fazlur Rahman performs several procedural steps which can be summarized into two parts: first, the importance of historical approaches, while paying attention to the sociological aspects which are then referred to as socio-historical approaches in understanding Quranic verses, especially those relating to social problems, second, the importance the distinction between the legal provisions of the species and the objectives or "moral ideal" of the Quran which is then called the double movement theory.⁷ Following this, each of these two sections will be expanded to discuss.

⁷ Sibawaihi, *Hermeneutika al-Quran Fazlur Rahman* (Yogyakarta: Jalasutra, 2007), 52.

1. A Socio-Historical Approach

The necessity to apply the historical approach is an initial concern of Fazlur Rahman. His concern began when he was still in Pakistan. The social reality of the time was that Muslims throughout the world tended to be taklid, not critical. Even though the various Islamic doctrines practiced by them need to be reviewed and criticized again. There is concern that these classical doctrines have been infiltrated by foreign teachings, which are not sourced from the Quran. Although the Quran itself is the basis that is displayed explicitly, it could be that the true message of the Quran is not given the proper place.⁸

The first step that must be done is to look back at the history behind the decline of the verse. The science of nuzul asbabun is very important in this matter. On the basis of and with what motives a verse was revealed will be answered through understanding of history. The Quran is universal. But its universality is often not seen when historical aspects are ignored. Here the Quran is no more just valid and suitable for the community when it is revealed.

The historical approach should be accompanied by a sociological approach, which specifically portrays the social conditions that occurred during the Quran were revealed. Especially in this sociological domain, understanding the Quran will always show the elasticity of its

⁸ Sibawaihi, *Hermeneutika al-Quran Fazlur Rahman*, 52

development without abandoning its historical heritage. The Quran is certainly acceptable anytime and anywhere. That way, the universality and flexibility of the Quran will always be preserved.⁹

However, looking at the history of the Quran was revealed is not a simple job. Often, with certain interests, the early historical data of Islam was manipulated by unscrupulous individuals. Manipulation is what causes a long process of reification in Islamic history. Reification that prevents the formation of a comprehensive Quranic worldview. Therefore in this context Fazlur Rahman is well known as a person who is very critical of historical data transmission. In fact, it is not uncommon for him to be mistakenly labeled as inkar-Sunah because he does not hesitate to reject a Hadith (Sunna) which is considered popular by many. In fact, in fact he was very persistent in denying the Orientalists who did not recognize the authenticity of the Hadith which claimed that it was the creation of later Muslims.¹⁰

Therefore, it can be assumed that with a very high critical attitude towards history, including the Hadith, Fazlur Rahman will surely find it difficult to apply historical methods. This can be justified, so the question arises: how does Fazlur Rahman operate this socio-historical approach in the context of his appreciation of the second source of Islam.

⁹ Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity : Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*, 7.

¹⁰ Sibawaihi, *Hermeneutika al-Quran Fazlur Rahman*, 53.

First of all, Fazlur Rahman provides a clear definition of Sunna and Hadith. In this context, it is not anti-Hadith or Sunna. This must be underlined. He just does not want to adopt any Hadith that is not criticized as practiced by most scholars. After going through a careful examination, he also wanted to adopt certain Hadiths. Here, the benchmark he holds is the conformity of the text content (matan) of the Hadith with the teachings of the Quran and reason.

The second task he takes is to give a great appreciation to reason. Intellect plays an important role in estimating the extent to which a history can be said to be valid. But reason in the form of reasoning must be placed in a proportional position. As already stated, sense proportionality in this case is placed in the fourth position after the knowledge of Arabic, asbabun nuzul, and Sunna. The positioning of reason in the fourth place is intended as a prevention of the attitude of worship of reason. Because in reality the previous three positions actually cannot be separated from the important role played by reason. People can understand the science of Arabic, asbabun nuzul, and Sunna, through intermediaries of reason.¹¹

With the adoption of valid sources of transmission and supported by the law of reason, Fazlur Rahman applies a socio-historical approach. This approach is seen as the only acceptable way and can be fair to intellectual and moral demands. Through the socio-historical approach Muslims can

¹¹ Sibawaihi, *Hermeneutika al-Quran Fazlur Rahman*, 54.

also consider further the values of developments that occur in history. As written by Fazlur Rahman:

Although the main work up till now in the historical treatment of Islam and Islamic disciplines has been done by Western scholars, since they have developed better methods and tools, it is undoubtedly a task that devolves primarily upon Muslims themselves. For one thing, the thoroughness and comprehensiveness required call for a massive effort, and the West cannot be expected to make such a large-scale investment. Second, it is Muslims who require this historical study so they can further assess the value of these historical developments in order to reconstruct Islamic disciplines for the future.¹²

Here it is necessary to distinguish between historical Islam and normative Islam. This distinction is at once responding to the mistakes of traditional scholars who on the one hand are complacent with a variety of Islamic doctrines that have become history and, on the other hand, have lost their independence to understand Islam. They seemed to stop the rapid pace of history in the development of Islamic sciences. As a result, Islamic sciences did not experience significant development. Also, under such conditions, Islamic studies do not want to accept input from modern Western science.

Normative Islam is the source of norms and values that govern the entire system of life. He is universal. While historical Islam is Islam that has been translated by Muslims since fourteen centuries of its existence on this earth. Although normative Islam is considered an appraiser for historical Islam, the latter is not necessarily thrown away. This is

¹² Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity : Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*, 151.

necessary for the operation of the socio-historical approach. The formulations of historical Islam, especially from the early and subsequent generations, are the historical backgrounds of the Quran and the teachings of the Prophet. By distinguishing between historical Islam and normative Islam, Muslims will have a historical perspective. Muslims will have a historical foundation to talk about their religious teachings.¹³

2. The Distinction between Legal Specific and Moral Ideal Aspects of Islamic Teaching

The second procedural step after emphasizing the socio-historical approach is the importance of distinguishing between Specific legal and moral ideals. This second step becomes a systematic consequence of the first step. This is the theory of multiple movements. The theory which is often attributed by some people as hermeneutics Fazlur Rahman. This theory is indeed a mainstay in building new interpretation methodologies. But this theory is limited only to the legal and social context. This theory is not aimed at metaphysical and theological matters. Therefore, it is an exaggeration to say that Fazlur Rahman's hermeneutics is only a double movement theory. The basic idea of the theory offered in 1982 was formulated in his idea of the need to distinguish between specific legal aspects of the Quran and its moral ideal aspects.¹⁴

¹³ Sibawaihi, *Hermeneutika al-Quran Fazlur Rahman*, 56.

¹⁴ Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity : Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*, 6.

What is meant by the moral ideal of the Quran is the purpose of the moral basis ordered by the Quran. Whereas the specific legal requirements are specifically stipulated. The moral ideal of the Quran is more appropriate than its specific legal provisions. Because, the moral ideal is universal. At this level the Quran is considered valid for every period and place (*ṣahīh li kulli az-zamān wa al-makān*). The Quran is also seen as elastic and flexible. While the specific legal is more particular. Laws that are formulated textually are adjusted to the conditions of the time and place.

Fazlur Rahman hopes that the laws that will be formed can serve the moral ideal. Not on the specific legal. He realized that this was faced with subjectivity. However, this can be reduced to a minimum by using the Quran itself. One thing that is too often ignored by non-Muslims and Muslims alike is that the Quran always gives reasons for its specific legal statements. That is where the basic purpose of the revelation of the revelation of the Quran is to be understood. In this case it is called a moral ideal. Here Fazlur Rahman indicated that the Quran's ideal moral goal which is its vital role was buried in geological deposits as a result of a long reification process. This is compensation from the expansion of Islamic territory that is too fast without being balanced with infrastructure in the form of adequate levels of understanding. Because of that the double

movement is a methodology that is expected to be able to penetrate the historical deposits to the deepest layers.¹⁵

The specific legal distinction from the moral ideal presupposes movement in two mutually converging directions. Namely, "from the current situation to the time of the Quran was revealed, and returned to the present". According to Fazlur Rahman himself:

The first of the two movements mentioned above, then, consists of two Steps. First, one must understand the important meaning of a given statement by studying the historical situation or problem to which it was the answer. Of course, before coming to the study of specific texts in the light of specific situations, a general study of the macrosituation in terms of society, religion, customs, and institutions, indeed, of life as a whole in Arabia on the eve of Islam and particularly in and around Mecca-not excluding the Perso-Byzantine Wars-will have to be made. The first step of the first movement, then, consists of understanding the meaning of the Quran as a whole as well as in terms of the specific tenets that constitute responses to specific situations. The second Step is to generalize those specific answers and enunciate them as statements of general moral-social objectives that can be "distilled" from specific texts in light of the sociohistorical background and the often-stated *rationes legis*. Indeed, the first step the understanding of the meaning of the specific text-itself implies the second step and will lead to it.¹⁶

.....the second is to be from this general view to the specific view that is to be formulated and realized now. That is, the general has to be embodied in the present concrete sociohistorical context. This once again requires the careful study of the present situation and the analysis of its various component elements so we can assess the current situation and change the present to whatever extent necessary, and so we can determine priorities afresh in order to implement the Quranic values afresh.¹⁷

¹⁵ Sibawaihi, *Hermeneutika al-Quran Fazlur Rahman*, 57.

¹⁶ Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity : Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*, 6.

¹⁷ Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity : Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*, 7.

First, paying attention to the micro and macro context when the Quran is revealed. Micro context is a narrow situation that occurred in the Prophet's environment when the Quran was revealed. Macro context is a situation that occurs on a broader scale, concerning society, religion, and Arabian customs at the time of the arrival of Islam, especially in Mecca and its surroundings. Then generalize the specific response of the Quran to that context while determining the desired general moral-social goals behind that specific response. This kind of search will produce a quranic narrative that is coherent from the general and systematic values and principles underlying various normative commands. Here, the concept of *asbabun nuzul* and *nasikh-mansukh* is very necessary.

According to Fazlur Rahman, the Quran is a divine response, which is revealed through the Prophet's memories and thoughts, to the Arab socio-moral situation at the time of the Prophet.¹⁸ The Quran and Islam appear in the pages of history and deal with socio-historical backgrounds. So the Quran is actually a response to the situation. This can be seen from most of its contents. The Quran consists of moral and social statements that respond to specific problems confronted in a concrete situation at the time of being revealed.

Second, trying to apply these general values and principles to the context of contemporary Quranic readers. This movement is a process that departs from a general view to a specific view that must be formulated and

¹⁸ Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity : Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*, 6.

realized in the present.¹⁹ That is, the general must be applied in the present socio-historical context after conducting a careful study of the current situation, so that it can be assessed and changed to the extent necessary.

To understand the second movement requires precision. But it seems that Fazlur Rahman does not describe the social and intellectual relations of this analysis, nor how the relationship can occur. It appears that here is needed modern social sciences and humanities. Therefore, he supports these sciences, while recommending that people who master the sciences should also equip themselves with good historical knowledge. It is time for Muslims to learn and master modern scientific tools. How can Islamic scholarship develop if the device or device of understanding does not develop. Criticism in this effort is very necessary. In the end, it is Muslims themselves who will determine which Islamic ideas are acceptable. Here Fazlur Rahman advocates a democratic culture, although it does not recommend producing ulama ulama.²⁰

B. Thoughts that Influence the Theory of Double Movement

If examined, the theory of the double movement proposed by Fazlur Rahman is a combination of Muslim traditionalists and contemporary Western hermeneutics. This shows, Fazlur Rahman in building the theory of double movement is inseparable from influence-or at least has the same horizon as the two thoughts of the Thought.

¹⁹ Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity : Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*, 8.

²⁰ Sibawaihi, *Hermeneutika al-Quran Fazlur Rahman*, 60.

The influence or similarity of Muslim traditionalists on the theory of double movement is clearly apparent at the first step in the first movement. In this step he said "in understanding a statement, first pay attention to the micro and macro context when the Quran was revealed". The idea of micro and macro context has actually been initiated by Shah Waliyullah al-Dahlawi in his work "al-Fawz al-Kabir fi Ushul al-Tafsir". In his work, as quoted by Hamid Ilyas, al-Dahlawi mentioned the two contexts with *asbāb an-nuzūl al-khaṣṣah* and *asbāb an-nuzūl al-'ammah*. In addition, the similarity is al-Dahlawi's statement that the Quran comes down to responding to the lives of Arab society by educating the human soul and eradicating false beliefs and other evil deeds.²¹ In line with the statement, he also said that the Quran is a divine response through the memories and thoughts of the Prophet Muhammad, to the moral situation of the Mecca-trading community in terms of trust and social life.²²

Although there are similarities, Fazlur Rahman criticizes al-Dahlawi's thinking, as seen from the renewal group mapping. According to him, al-Dahlawi belonged to the pre-modernist revivalist group, namely the group that developed renewal but its interpretation was still literal-textual. Because of the absence of original data, the authors have difficulty finding ways to prove or refute Fazlur Rahman's statement. However, the author assumes, the categorization of literal-textual al-Dahlawi interpretation is caused by the limitations of the method. This means that al-Dahlawi uses *asbab al-nuzul*

²¹ Kurdi, eds. *Hermeneutika Al-Quran dan Hadis*, 75.

²² Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity : Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*, 6.

'ammah but is only limited to socio-historical study without examining his moral ideal and without any attempt to contextualize it.²³

Long before al-Dahlawi, this theory was also put forward by Syatibi, who was one of the experts of ushul al-Fiqh, who is famous for the theory of "maqasid al-syariah". Related to the problem of context, Syatibi said: to know the Quran it is necessary to understand the situation and conditions in which the Quran was revealed.²⁴ In addition, Syatibi also mentioned "to understand the Arabic text in which the Quran was revealed needed knowledge of a number of circumstances (Muqtadhayat al Ahwal); the state of the language (things nafs al khithab / text), the state of the mukhathib (author) and the state of the mukhathab (audience) "and to understand this it is also necessary to have knowledge of the broader contexts outside (al umur al kharijiyyah).²⁵ According to Fazlur Rahman, to study the Quran, the study of the situation of society, religion, customs, institutions, even the overall life of the Arabs when the Quran was revealed was very important. From this it appears the second similarity, where both consider the social setting-setting study of Arab society very necessary.

If we look at the building of Syatibi's thought, it seems that there are many sides of equality - not to say that you are inspired by that thought. Moreover, the building of al-Syatibi's thought has resembled a hermeneutic building. The

²³ Kurdi, eds. *Hermeneutika Al-Quran dan Hadis*, 76.

²⁴ Abu Ishaq al-Syatibi, *al-Muwafaqat fi Ushul al-Syari'ah*, Juz. III (Kairo: Maktabah al-Usrah, n.d), 295.

²⁵ Abu Ishaq al-Syatibi, *al-Muwaffaqat fi Ushul al-Syari'ah*, 294.

other side that equates Syatibi's thought with Fazlur Rahman is Syatibi's statement about understanding the Quran. According to Syatibi general instructions or universal law are definite, while specific instructions are possible and conditional, because general and universal guidance must take precedence.²⁶ Syatibi's statement has similarities with the ideal moral concept according to Fazlur Rahman. For Fazlur Rahman, the moral ideal is universal. The Quran is seen as elastic and flexible.²⁷

The two Muslim thoughts above are many sides of the equation with the double movement theory initiated by Fazlur Rahman. Even so, according to the author, the thought that more dominantly influences the theory of double movement is Syatibi theory.

In addition to these two Muslim leaders, double movement was also influenced by hermeneutics Hans Georg Gadamer, because in the subjectivist theory of Gadamer was pre-understanding (*Wirkungsgeschichte*) that existed in the text reader. This means that when someone reads the text first it is influenced by pre-understanding (*Wirkungsgeschichte*) and this must be on someone in order to be able to dialogue the text, because without Pre-Understanding it will not be able to dialogue the text properly. This shows that the reader has its own horizon, as well as a text having its own horizon. To get text messages objectively, the reader must limit his own horizon and prioritize

²⁶ Kurdi, eds. *Hermeneutika Al-Quran dan Hadis*, 77.

²⁷ Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity : Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*, 6.

the text horizon by studying the history in which the text appears.²⁸ This is where the meeting between subjectivity and objectivity, where the text horizon is more prioritized.

The importance of knowing the historical text is due to the social conditions of the text that are far different from the readers, both economic and social. and community. After the understanding process, it is now included in the application process. According to Gadamer, when someone reads the text (holy book), then in addition to the process of understanding and interpretation is also required for application, which is termed "Anwendung". In applying the interpretation here it should be noted that what is applied is not the meaning of the literal meaning of a text, but meaningful sense or a message that is more meaningful than just a literal meaning.²⁹

In the theory of double movement, pre-understanding is the social environment that surrounds the interpreter, as mentioned in the first step, namely "from the present" or the situations and conditions that surround the interpreter, because of the pre-understanding of the interpreter, then to reveal the text messages so that the objective, the interpreter is required to die pre-understanding by prioritizing the text horizon by exploring the historicity in which the text emerges. Here Fazlur Rahman also views that the text has its own context, so to interpret and understand the text, it is necessary to study the

²⁸ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Ahmad Sahidah (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2004), 372.

²⁹ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Ahmad Sahidah, 373.

social setting in which the text appears. In the application stage he also does not use the literal meaning of the text but the moral ideal of the text.

From the explanation above, it is clear that the influence of Gadamer hermeneutics in the Double Movement theory of Fazlur Rahman, therefore the double movement can be categorized in the hermeneutics of objectivity, although the influence was not recognized by Fazlur Rahman. According to him, Gadamer is an outrageous figure of subjective hermeneutics.³⁰

C. Examples of the application of Fazlur Rahman's method to Verse of the Quran

There are several problems in the Quran which Fazlur Rahman highlighted, one of which is polygamy.³¹ Polygamy is a problem in family law. It was highlighted by him because it became an actual discussion at that time in his country. In other words, Fazlur's spotlight on polygamy was intended to respond to the views of scholars in the early days of the formation of a self-proclaimed state as an Islamic State of Pakistan. Pakistani ulama generally believe that the practice of wives is more than one permissible in Islam.³² This is justified by the Quran, even given tolerance to four wives.

The most important legal provisions and general reforms of the Quran are concerning women's issues and slavery, including the issue of polygamy,³³

³⁰ Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity : Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*, 12.

³¹ Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of The Quran*, (Chicago & Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1980), 68.

³² Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of The Quran*, 69.

³³ Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of The Quran*, 68.

where the Quran limits the number of wives to a maximum of four. The Quran also states that husband and wife are declared as *libās* (clothes) for each other. Women are given the same rights to men as the rights of men to women, with the exception that men who earn a living have a higher level of position than women.³⁴

In the Quran there is only one verse that speaks of polygamy, namely, QS. an-Nisa: 3

وَأِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا تُقْسِطُوا فِي الْيَتَامَىٰ فَانكِحُوا مَا طَابَ لَكُمْ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ مَثْنَىٰ
وَتِلْثًا وَرُبْعًا ۚ فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا فَوَاحِدَةً أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ ۚ ذَلِكَ أَدْنَىٰ
أَلَّا تَعُولُوا

“And if you fear that you will not deal justly with the orphan girls, then marry those that please you of [other] women, two or three or four. But if you fear that you will not be just, then [marry only] one or those your right hand possesses. That is more suitable that you may not incline [to injustice].”

To understand the message of the Quran, socio-historical search should be carried out. This problem actually arises related to orphan girls. In the previous verse QS. an-Nisa: 2 is said:

³⁴ Sibawaihi, *Hermeneutika al-Quran Fazlur Rahman*, 43.

وَأَتُوا الْيَتَامَىٰ أَمْوَالَهُمْ ۖ وَلَا تَتَبَدَّلُوا الْخَيْرَ بِالْضَلِيلِ ۖ وَلَا تَأْكُلُوا أَمْوَالَهُمْ إِلَىٰ
أَمْوَالِكُمْ ۚ إِنَّهُ كَانَ حُوبًا كَبِيرًا

“And give to the orphans their properties and do not substitute the defective [of your own] for the good [of theirs]. And do not consume their properties into your own. Indeed, that is ever a great sin.”

Quran strictly forbade the trustees to eat the property of orphans. Such themes have been conveyed by the Quran since in Mecca (Surah al-An'am: 152, Surah al-Isra ': 34) and are reaffirmed when in Medina (Surah al-Baqarah: 220), (Surat an-Nisa verses 2, 6, 10, and 127). After the emphasis was not justified on the property of the orphans, the Quran then allowed the guardians to marry them to four people. But according to Fazlur, there is one principle that is often ignored by Ulama in this matter. Namely QS. an-Nisa: 129

وَلَنْ تَسْتَطِيعُوا أَنْ تَعْدِلُوا بَيْنَ النِّسَاءِ وَلَوْ حَرَصْتُمْ ۚ فَلَا تَمِيلُوا كُلَّ
الْمِيلِ فَتَذَرُوهَا كَالْمُعَلَّقَةِ ۚ وَإِنْ تُصْلِحُوا وَتَتَّقُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ غَفُورًا
رَّحِيمًا

“And you will never be able to be equal [in feeling] between wives, even if you should strive [to do so]. So do not incline completely [toward one] and leave another hanging. And if you amend [your affairs] and fear Allah - then indeed, Allah is ever Forgiving and Merciful.”

Therefore, *“if you fear that you will not be just, then [marry only] one”*
 (Surat an-Nisa: 3)

From these verses, it implies a meaning that a fair attitude is impossible for a man (husband) to run against each of his wives. In this case, "the clause about being fair must get attention and undoubtedly have more fundamental interests than the specific clause that allows polygamy. The demand for fairness and fairness is one of the basic demands of the entire Quranic teaching ". Based on this, Fazlur Rahman then concluded:

The truth seems to be that polygamy is permitted at the legal level, while the sanctions given by its members are essentially moral ideals in which the community is expected to move towards it, because it is impossible to abolish polygamy legally at once.³⁵

So, the deepest message of the Quran does not advocate polygamy, He actually commands the opposite, monogamy, that is the moral ideal that the Quran intends to address.

D. Responses to Fazlur Rahman's Methodology

The explanation above is expected to be able to describe the mechanism for applying the methodology of interpretation of Fazlur Rahman. However, it must also be emphasized that the operation of the methodology in order to build a vision that is intact and grounded, applicable and purposive with contemporary reality is actually not final. Fazlur Rahman is arguably a success in arranging a formulation of the Quranic worldview, as demonstrated in his

³⁵ Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of The Quran*, 70.

Major Themes of the Quran, however, insofar as the Quranic ethics formulated by Fazlur Rahman is clearly just a basic basis, especially through reflection and analysis on terms of faith, Islam, and piety. While the extraction of the principles and objectives of the socio-economic teachings of the Quran and their systematic arrangement as a part of the ethics of the Quran, according to Amal's analysis, have not been thoroughly worked on. Likewise, the affixing of the Quranic ethics into contemporary situations through the formulation of the law or institutions of Islam was not touched by him.³⁶

Although Fazlur Rahman did not have time to work on both of the above, indications and illustrations in that direction have been shown in various writings. After all, for Fazlur Rahman, these efforts are the collective work of Muslims as a whole. Fazlur Rahman, thrifty the author, deserves appreciation, because he does not only open wide avenues for his successors, but also provides clear signs in walking the path, especially in laying the theoretical foundation of the hermeneutic method. According to Tamara Sonn, Fazlur Rahman has offered a methodology that is comprehensive and systematic in understanding the message of the Quran. he believes that Islamic principles are specifically and uniquely designed to create a just and stable society order.

Fazlur Rahman even believes that a correct understanding of what is needed by society and Islamic principles will lead to the recognition that they

³⁶ Taufik Adnan Amal, *Islam dan Tantangan Modernitas: Studi atas Pemikiran Hukum Fazlur Rahman* (Bandung: Mizan, 1989), 219-220.

are not mutually contradictory.³⁷ Fazlur Rahman, according to Sonn, does not want to rebuild (tradition) Islam as it once existed in several historical contexts, but, wants to plan a way to uncover a set of superior Islamic principles in any society. This is clearly seen in the view of Fazlur Rahman who considers that revelation must be examined critically and refers to history, where the Quran in total must be a source of inspiration for Islamic reform.

The legacy of Islamic traditions and institutions needs to be reviewed in relation to this inspiration. With this, it is expected that the contemporary Islamic community is able to break away from the confines of Middle Ages logocentrism and can undermine the "shackles of prison" traditionality in order to create a new and correct Islamic society.³⁸

Meanwhile, Alparslan Acikgenc considers that the method of synthesis interpretation proposed by Fazlur Rahman expresses a process of model interpretation that is different from the classical interpretation, in which he offers a double movement in interpreting each verse. The first movement can help commentators evaluate the verses studied in the context of their historical background. Thus, the purpose and purpose of the verse can be authentically understood. While the second movement is actually an attempt to interpret the verse which is faced with a contemporary socio-cultural situation. Therefore,

³⁷ Ahmad Syukri, *Metodologi Tafsir Al.Quran Kontemporer Dalam Pemikiran Fazlur Rahman*, Journal of Religious Social Research, Vol. 20 No.1, 2005, 69.

³⁸ Ahmad Syukri, *Metodologi Tafsir Al.Quran Kontemporer Dalam Pemikiran Fazlur Rahman*, 70.

this second step requires an extra careful study of contemporary situations and analysis of various elements so that we can assess the latest situation and change it as far as is needed.

With that priority can be determined in order to implement the values of the Quran. Obviously, stressed Acikgenc, that this method not only requires knowledge of the history of the Quran, but also the expertise of contemporary social sciences. Because of this, the two movements implicitly contain the suggestion of intellectual jihad which is simultaneous with moral jihad, which is technically called ijihad. Because, for Fazlur Rahman, ijihad is not only limited to the legal dimension as understood by classical Muslim writers, but can also include the dimensions of interpretation. In fact, continued Acikgenc, the purpose behind Fazlur Rahman's interpretation method was to prepare a basic foundation that could make the Quran's legislation come alive in the middle of the lives of contemporary Muslims.³⁹

In line with the above perceptions, Amal commented that Fazlur Rahman, through his interpretation method, explicitly showed how concerned about Islam and its people. Fazlur Rahman seems to have a strong desire that (interpretation) of Islam "is always relevant to its followers so that they can live under the guidance of Islam which is always in accordance with the times". In this case, Fazlur Rahman offers a vision of a whole and down to earth Islam in which the theological dimension is integrated with its legal and

³⁹ Alparslan Acikgenc, *"The Thinker of Islamic Revival and Reform: Fazlur Rahman's Life and Thought (1919-1988)"*, Journal of Islamic Research. Vol. 4 No. 4, 1990, 245-246.

ethical dimensions. And here is also the location of the originality and contribution of Fazlur Rahman in the map of renewal of Islamic thought.⁴⁰

Ebrahim Moosa views that the Quranic hermeneutics presented by Fazlur Rahman through the double movement method is a response to the "atomistic and partial" approach that influences traditional and even contemporary interpretations. Because this approach ignores the unity of the coherent and important message of revelation, and inhibits the growth of the whole Weltanschauung of the Quran in its own terms. Without understanding the world view of the Quran, modern interpreters will not be able to distinguish the social context, customs and past habits written into the interpretation of the original revelation. The application of the "atomistic" approach has implications for the rigidity of law, where legal functions are not conducive to the development of a dynamic legal culture.⁴¹

Apart from flattery and support for the interpretation method of Fazlur Rahman, a number of constructive criticisms are interesting to think about. According to Saiful Muzani, maybe this method can fill the weaknesses faced by modernists, but there are fundamental problems outside the structure of the methodology initiated by Fazlur Rahman which can negatively affect him. The methodology basically rests on "facing problems" (Problem posing).

⁴⁰ Fazlur Rahman, *Metode dan Alternatif Neo-Modernisme Islam* (Editor) Taufik Adnan Amal, (Bandung: Mizan, 1987), 31.

⁴¹ Fazlur Rahman, *Gelombang Perubahan dalam Islam: Studi tentang Fundamentalisme Islam*. (Editor) Ebrahim Moosa. (Trans) Aam Fahmia. (Jakarta: RajaGrafindo Persada, 2000), 23.

However, Muzam, did not see that Fazlur Rahman had formulated a "problem" about this issue.

In the methodology it is commonly questioned how a problem is considered as a problem. This is a meta-methodology. In fact, there are groups of people who think something is a problem, and some are not. What determines the problem as a problem faced by Muslims will be determined by "anthropo-sociological" factors (concerning differences in outlook on life, psychological conditions and structure of society). Because a problem is a formulated product that is influenced by a particular perspective or theory, while that perspective or theory has a basic assumption that is full of value. Therefore, something that is assumed to be a problem for a paradigm is not necessarily considered a problem for other different paradigms.

Every paradigm, Muzani quoted from Thomas Kuhn, is based on the different backgrounds and ideals of civilization, so that each has a problem, a model of solution, and a goal to be achieved. In this case, Fazlur Rahman cannot raise what is considered a problem by modernist groups because the metaphysical foundation inherent in modernization theory may be adopted by Fazlur Rahman, so that the methodology formulated can be assumed as a derivation and other variants of methods in theory modernism.⁴² So far, Muzani has not had enough information to say that Fazlur Rahman is a modernist. However, with the formulation of the neo-modernism

⁴² Ahmad Syukri, *Metodologi Tafsir Al.Quran Kontemporer Dalam Pemikiran Fazlur Rahman*, 71.

methodology, continued Muzani, Fazlur Rahman must develop a theory at the level (social level) of course it is clear. Unfortunately he hasn't done that much yet, and this raises the question of how the paradigm of that socialism's social theory?.⁴³

Farid Esack in his book "Qur'an: Liberation & Pluralism" questioned Fazlur Rahman's ambiguous attitude and inconsistency in formulating his methodology of interpretation. According to Farid Esack, although Fazlur Rahman repeatedly emphasized his commitment to the basic moral elan of the Qur'an with its twin pillars—God-consciousness and social justice—Fazlur Rahman was actually quite ignorant of the various causes of injustice and showed the urgency of realizing justice in a weak way.

Repeatedly, according to Farid Esack, Fazlur Rahman accused "People who are involved in political struggles by offering an Islamic perspective are considered to be 'using Islam'." In fact, according to Farid Esack,

“The idea that those committed to the removal of injustice are ‘political’ or ‘ideological’ beings and those committed to its preservation are ‘apolitical’ or ‘spiritual’ is long since discredited. The South African engagement with the Qur’an and the visible manner in which religion itself became contested territory testify to the fact that apparently apolitical readings of the Qur’an were as much influenced by the power arrangements as any decidedly ethico-political reading.”⁴⁴

Jalaluddin Rachmat also criticized the hermeneutic model initiated by Fazlur Rahman, where in the matter of *asbab al-nuzul*, it relies entirely on the

⁴³ Ahmad Syukri, *Metodologi Tafsir Al-Quran Kontemporer Dalam Pemikiran Fazlur Rahman*, 72.

⁴⁴ Farid Esack, *Qur'an: Liberation & Pluralism* (Oxford: One World, 1997), 82.

historical approach to find the meaning of the text and on sociological background analysis (where *asbab al-nuzul* is part of it) in order to understand al-goals The Quran. In this case, asserted Rakhmat, information about the past was obtained from literature, which is not rarely written by people who do not have the knowledge of historiography, and sometimes have certain motives that are suspect. As Orientalists do through the knife "sociological analysis" which successfully "proved" the influences (traditions) of Christians and Jews in the Quran.⁴⁵

Even Nurcholish Madjid, one of Fazlur Rahman's students, assessed that, despite the advantages possessed by Fazlur Rahman, he was not familiar with modern social sciences. Among the Islamic leaders who had access to the caliber embryo of Ibn Khaldun's social sciences, it seemed not very impressive to Fazlur Rahman, rather than Ibnu Sina and Ibn Taimiyah whom he was familiar with with sympathy and empathy. Ibn Khaldun he was found as an amazing Muslim "positivist" (along with al-Ghazali and Ibn Taymiyyah in a different field), but did not inspire him enough to foster a more appreciative attitude towards the modern social sciences.

Although this is not very meaningful, it is quite disturbing or less helpful for those who want clarity that is expressed in the relevance of Fazlur Rahman's points of thought to the needs of a person or modern Muslim community. In this case Muhaimin hoped, If Fazlur Rahman explained the

⁴⁵ Taufik Adnan Amal, *Islam dan Tantangan Modernitas: Studi atas Pemikiran Hukum Fazlur Rahman*, 28

ethics which in fact were spread in various books and articles by elaborating on the framework of modern social sciences (which in fact could be referred to as Ibn Khaldun's inheritance), certainly various clarity about Fazlur Rahman's thinking would be easier to obtain.⁴⁶

Meanwhile, there are claims which suggest that the double movement method initiated by Fazlur Rahman was influenced by at least by the scholar, Emilio Betti, who introduced objective hermeneutic theory. There is also a conclusion that Fazlur Rahman has concocted the Betti⁴⁷ hermeneutic theory into two steps, namely (1) by adhering to the general principles contained in the text (Quran) and (2) paying attention to the background or objective situation of the downward period the Quran, where it becomes a response to the objective situation at that time.⁴⁸ Because for Fazlur Rahman, in relation to the latter, "the Quran is not a purely speculative document but a historical one ... it is the answer to concrete developing situations in the Prophetic struggle".⁴⁹

However, based on Mas'adi's analysis, Fazlur Rahman's methodological thinking is actually part of the evolution of classical theories, especially those pioneered by al-Amidi and al-Syathibi concerning 'illat hukm and maqashid al-tasyri' in a unity and totality, become general principles. Therefore, Fazlur

⁴⁶ Ahmad Syukri, *Metodologi Tafsir Al-Quran Kontemporer Dalam Pemikiran Fazlur Rahman*, 72-73.

⁴⁷ Fazlur Rahman, *Gelombang Perubahan dalam Islam: Studi tentang Fundamentalisme Islam*, 25-26.

⁴⁸ Ghufon A Mas'adi, *Pemikiran Fazlur Rahman tentang Metodologi Pembaharuan Hukum Islam* (Jakarta: RajaGrafindo Persada, 1977), 71.

⁴⁹ Fazlur Rahman, *"The Message and Mesenger". Islam: the Religious and Political Life of a World Community*, Marjorie Kelly (ed), (New York: Praeger, 1984), 51.

Rahman's contribution is not at the level of the methodology, but on the methodological conceptualization of Islamic sources.⁵⁰

The method offered by Rahman seems promising, but the various criticisms that emerge show that his ideas are not yet reliable enough to solve the problems of Muslims who, in fact, inhabit various geographical regions of the world and have cultural differences. Solving problems in one place does not guarantee the resolution of similar problems elsewhere. Not to mention, Rahman's foothold in historical authority is quite problematic, given that history is difficult to free itself from the writer's subjectivity. However, as an achievement of intellectual creativity, Rahman's efforts to find an effective interpretation method in overcoming the problems of the people in the contemporary era should be given a thumbs up.

⁵⁰ Ghufroon A Mas'adi, *Pemikiran Fazlur Rahman tentang Metodologi Pembaharuan Hukum Islam*, 169.