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Rethinking Tafsīr in the Light of Redefining its Basic Terms

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ABSTRACT

Tafsīr literature has a long and rich history among all fields of Islamic sciences. In spite of this, it has not been able to form an independent scientific discipline along with all its dimensions. We believe that to turn Tafsīr into science, it is necessary to take some measures, including redefining the basic terms. This paper aims to provide some possible answers to the problem of defining, namely, what the most important terms in the Tafsīr field are, and how to come up with comprehensive definitions for its terms. Building on terminological evidence, this descriptive-analytical research discusses the formation of the four terms "Tafsīr" (interpretation), "Mabnā" (basis), "Aṣl" (principle) and "Qā'ida" (rule), as the key concepts in the Tafsīr field. We argued that these terms must be redefined through terminological methods. We believe that the very concept of Tafsīr means expressing the meanings and practical contents (Mūfād Istiʿmālī) of the Qur'ānic verses and discovering their Purposes (Maqāsid) and Referents (Madālīl). The Mabānī al-Tafsīr are the basic concepts and macro scientific presumptions for the Qur'ānic text. Finally, the term "Uṣūl al-Tafsīr" are radical components with a Qur'ānic nature which are the mediator between "Mabnā" and "Qā'ida".

1. Introduction

The question of boundaries, both internal and external, is at the heart of the self-conception and analytical framework underlying any scholarly discipline, and the science of Tafsīr is no exception. Determining the boundaries of scientific field can be done in different ways. How can it be structured in a meaningful way, and what criteria do we need to apply in order to develop the required analytical categories? Addressing these questions is all the more important for a field like Tafsīr studies, which is still in its infancy (Pink et al., 2014). Although Tafsīr has a long history dating back to the revelation of the Qurʾān itself, it is used as an auxiliary tool to understand the Qurʾānic text properly. After centuries, it is still not considered an independent science (Pink et al., 2014). As a result, commentaries have always been consulted to gain a clearer understanding of the meaning of the Qurʾānic text. Although so many books in Arabic and Persian have been written about all Tafsīr issues, especially concerning the innermost boundaries of Tafsīr (i.e., its important terms), it seems that there is no method to redefine them. This is one of the main reasons why Tafsīr has not yet turned into a scientistic field. However, there are many opportunities and ways to reach Tafsīr's scientification. One approach is to use exact and accurate terminology to establish distinctive methods and foundations, which can be scientifically criticized.

Although terminology itself is a science, it is one of the most common infrastructural branches in all sciences. Accordingly, scholars try to provide a correct definition of specialized terms before addressing the detailed issues of science. Therefore, before conducting some scientific necessities of Tafsīr, such as examining various commentaries along with considering different schools and methods of interpretation, it is more important to know its specific terms. It helps to prevent overlapping topics and assists scholars in doing their research more clearly. Our main research questions are:

- What are the key terms in Tafsīr studies?

- How can these terms be defined to offer reliable results to researchers?

The answer to the first question is the core of this research, in which the key terms and concepts of Tafsīr studies, namely, "Tafsīr" (interpretation), "Mabnā" (basis), "Aṣl" (principle) and "Qāʿida" (rule) are redefined. Based on this redefinition, the research will show that these terms have undergone semantic changes. The answer to the second question depends on the methods, especially well-known methods in modern terminology. In the following sections, these methods are briefly elaborated.

It should be emphasized that the research background about each term is presented in the following relevant sections. As to this background, it can be said that in the Tafsīr field, Islamic scholars have paid much attention to these terms from the early Islamic centuries to the present time and naming all these is out of the discussion of this paper. However, the main difference between this article and similar studies is in the application of the methods of terminology. In part, the study has adopted an etymological approach, which is the study of the origin of the words and the ways through which their meanings have changed through the course of their historical development. Moreover, the method which is adopted in this paper is the study of semantic changes. However, before addressing the research method, it is necessary to elaborate on some important words that are repeatedly mentioned in the article. Therefore, in this article: the lexical (or literal) meaning is the meaning which is obtained from the root of the word that is available in the dictionaries. The idiomatic meaning is the meaning that has been acquired throughout the history of its use from the

very beginning until now. Interpretation, as a key concept in Tafsīr studies, is the Tafsīr of the Qur'ān.

And "interpretative" is an adjective, that can be applied to everything that is done in the interpretation. Thus, the interpretative rules are the rules which should be used by the commentator, and interpretative methods are the manners, that are used in the interpretation process by the commentator. Finally, the commentator is someone who interprets verses based on the sources available to them, such as the Qur'ān, tradition and rational interpretation.

Based on what was mentioned above, the literal meaning is examined first. Then, considering scholars' definitions, this question is addressed through which method of semantic transformation each word has undergone. This is followed by the presentation of our definition based on the functional meaning of each word.

2. Research Method

This descriptive-analytical research aims to apply the theoretical theme of terminology in the field of Tafsīr. Building on terminological evidence, this research discusses the formation of the four terms. This is because the field of terminology describes specialized words and their meanings in a particular field by exploring the rules and criteria for defining words. This field does not allow a concept to be defined by various terms or to define different concepts in the form of a single term (Cabré, 1998). Thus, it seems the most adequate way to recognize and define terms in any scientific field is using common methods of this science.

There are different cognitive schools in the history of terminology and two of them are considerably important: *Modern Terminology School* and *Traditional Terminology School* (Cabré, 1998). According to Cabré (1998), modern terminology was founded in the 1930s, and in its linguistic approach, there are three ways through which every term comes into being:

- Creating new vocabulary (previously non-existent);

- Using the existing words and creating a new term by changing the syntactic or practical category of these words (i.e., turning any common word into a term in a specialized language, and transferring and developing the meaning of it from one science language to another, and transdisciplinary borrowing of words);

- Direct or indirect interlingual borrowing or transferring a term from one language to another (Shiri, 1397 SH).

In addition to these theoretical studies, various empirical research has been conducted on the application of terminology in different fields (Cabré, 1998).

Building on the above-mentioned approaches, we can analyze how the meaning of these terms developed and evolved from literal to idiomatic, and consequently, it is determined through which way each term has evolved. To find out in which path these terms have evolved, the following steps are taken. First, the literal meanings and roots of each word are examined. The relevant literature conceding other definitions is then surveyed in each section. This is followed by the analysis of other scholars' definition concerning the

aforementioned terms in the history of Tafsīr. The analysis of this background helps us better understand through which path each term has evolved. Finally, based on the literal meaning and the path taken to the idiomatic meaning, our definition for each term is presented.

3. Defining Terms of Tafsīr Science

3.1 Tafsīr

The root of Tafsīr is "Fasr" which means expression, unveiling and discovering (Ibn Fāris,1404 AH; Rāghib,1992; Johari,1984). It is said that the "Fasr" is the reverse of root "Safr," and Rāghib believed that "Fasr" and "Safr" are close in terms of spelling and meaning (Rāghib, 1992) because both mean discovering and clarifying, having a difference that the "Fasr" is used to clarify and discover spiritual matters and to understand the correct and logical meaning of words (Rāghib, 1992). However, "Safr" is used to denote material objects to be seen with eyes. Accordingly, when a woman removes the veil from her face, it is not said "Fasarat-ol Mar'at" but "Safarat-ol Mar'atu an wajhihā" (Rāghib, 1992)

In Miṣbāḥ Al-Munīr, the author considers the meaning of the word "Fasr" as expressing and clarifying (Fayūmī,1414 AH). In Tāj al-Arūs, the root "Fasr" means splitting and revealing the hidden matter. Additionally, the word "Tafsīrah" also means the doctor who looks at the test fluid to diagnose the disease (Zubaidi, 1994). It is clear that in this view, there is a kind of discovery and unveiling. Juharī in Al-ṣiḥāḥ (1984), Ibn Manẓūr in Lisān al-A'rab (1414 AH), Turiyḥī in Majm'-Al-baḥrayn (1375 SH) and other lexicographers have given the same meaning to this root. Ibn Fāris considers the common denominator of all the meanings of the "Fasr" to be "the expression and explanation of the thing". It is clear that the word "explanation" in this phrase refers to the clarification of the hidden thing in the meaning of the root "Fasr". And for Ibn Fāris, the word "Tafsirah" is an example confirming the mentioned meaning (Ibn Fāris, 1404 AH).

Considering what was mentioned about the literal meaning of the root "Fasr", the meaning of Tafsīr has relied on the expression and unveiling of the hidden thing. On the other hand, there must be something hidden so that we can discover and reveal the meaning. Because in the absence of it, disclosure has no meaning. Accordingly, one of the semantic requirements of the word "Tafsīr" is to reveal and discover something hidden. This meaning is one of the intrinsic components of the root "Fasr". As one contemporary Qur'ānic scholar said (Shakir, 1382 SH), based on the word of lexicologists, it is understood that the word "Tafsīr" is used in cases where the word has some kind of ambiguity or conciseness. In such a way, the speaker's intention does not appear. That is why it is said that "Tafsīr" is revealing something hidden. This author concluded that according to the literal meaning, the term "Tafsīr" is not used in obvious discourses.

As to the terminological definition of Tafsīr, there are examples in traditions indicating that this word was used in the sense of "expressing Qur'ānic concepts" in the era of the Companions (Muslim, 1991; Ibn Ḥanbal, 1996). In the second century AH, this term was also used in the words of the Tābi'īn (ṭabaqah al-wusṭā) for the description of the prophet's words (Muslim, 1991; Abū Dāwud, 1999). From the translation movement onwards, the term Tafsīr began to acquire the meaning of translating from Greek or other languages into Arabic (Ibn Nadim, 1346 SH).

In the early Islamic centuries, a group of scholars with a jurisprudential point of view considered Tafsīr as an explanation of meaning based on appearance (Asqalānī, 1379 AH).

Some scholars interpreted Tafsīr as a description based on the analysis of the discourse (Rāghib, 1992). After Zamakhsharī onwards, the word Tafsīr began to acquire different meanings in some works. Mentions could be made, among other meanings, of Taʿwīl, Maʿnī Al-Qurʾān, Āʿm and Khāṣ, Nāsikh and Mansūkh, etc. Some authors did not affirm the similarity of these words with the meaning of "Tafsīr", but the content of their works confirms this similarity (Mousavi Bujnurdi, 1988).

Given this discussion, the evolution and development of the word "Tafsīr" from losing its literal meaning to acquiring an idiomatic meaning is considerable. This shows Tafsīr has taken the second path of terminology, i.e., the development and transmission of meaning from the specialized language of a science into another. Consequently, it can be said that the best definition of Tafsīr was presented by those who made a logical connection between the literal meaning and their idiomatic definition of the term "Tafsīr". Accordingly, among the definitions presented above; this article has preferred Ṭabaṭābī's definition (the author of Al-Mīzān Fī Tafsīr Al-Qurʾān), which is expressing the meanings and practical contents (Mūfād Istiʿmālī) of Qurʾānic verses and discovering their purposes (Maqāsid) and referents (Madālīl) (Ṭabaṭābī, 1390 AH).

In this definition, three levels were considered: [1] expressing the meanings and Mūfād Istiʿmālī of the verses, [2] discovering Maqāsid (whatever the verse intends to say) and [3] discovering Madālīl (whatever the word implies and can derive from the text). The meanings and Mūfād Istiʿmālī are the concepts, that the verses have regardless of other verses and evidence. Given the terms of jurisprudential science (I'lm O'ṣūl Al-Fiqh), this level of meaning corresponds to the practical purposes of verses (Murād Istiʿmālī). The Maqāsid reveals the intention of God based on the appearance of verses, with the caveat that the appearance of the verses does not present the hidden depths and deep meanings of God's word. In this definition, given the juxtaposition of Maqāsid and Madālīl, this can be stated that the main goal of Madālīl is not just unearthing the hidden depths and deep meanings of God's word, but rather it aims at discovering the implications which are within God's intentions and will. Also, given the relation between lexical and idiomatical meanings of Tafsīr, it seems Tafsīr only includes the ambiguous verses. Therefore, Tafsīr does not include those verses which are clear.

3.2 Mabnā

In the early lexical dictionaries, the equivalents given to "Mabnā" are foundation, infrastructure, base, basis, root and pedestal. The "Mabnā" of something simply meant the base of something (Ibn Fāris, 1404 AH). For example, because sentences and texts are created based on the alphabets, it is the base of writing. Or a pedestal is the "Mabnā" of the building, on which the building is being built. Therefore, the word "Mabnā" means the basis on which something is based (Ibn Fāris, 1404 AH).

The examples presented below show that "Mabnā" had turned into a term through a change in its syntactic or lexical categories. Therefore, the outcome is the development of a word meaning taken from the specialized language of one scientific field to another. As a matter of fact, interdisciplinary borrowing happened here. For example, Qurʾānic scholars had given different definitions for the term "Mabānī al-Tafsīr", including:

The subjective principles and the scientific beliefs that it is accepted that the commentator interprets the Qurʾān (Shakir,1382 SH).

Accepted beliefs and principles by the commentators shape their interpretation process, and acceptance or rejection of these principles leads to a particular approach in their interpretation (Modab, 1396 SH).

Theorems whose acceptance or refutation has a fundamental effect on how the Qur'ān is interpreted and those theorems whose acceptance or refutation, although not ineffective in the process of Tafsīr, has no fundamental effect (Safavi, 1391 SH).

A set of theological, methodological, historical, linguistic and scientific beliefs about the text, its description and the fundamental elements involved in the process of Tafsīr, based on which the commentator interprets the Qur'ān (Rad, 1390 SH).

Basic knowledge and beliefs about the Qur'ān and its characteristics which affect how the Qur'ān is interpreted, determining the rules and methods and forming the basis of Tafsīr (Babaei, 2009).

The above definitions have tried to reveal the true meaning of "Mabnā". Nevertheless, it seems that this word in the process of gaining its idiomatic meaning has experienced amalgamations with other words, such as "Qā'ida", which is elaborated in the next section of the paper. Before presenting the final definition of "Mabnā", this should be noted that the "Mabānī (the plural form of Mabnā)" are assumptions which are not science even though they are related to science. In other words, they are not within it and should be explained before entering to that science. For example, some Mabānī Al-Tafsīr are: if the language of the Qur'ān is written or spoken, if there is a possibility of understanding what God implies in verses and how context impacts the understanding of the verses (Ajilian, 1396 SH). Although all these are the Mabānī of Tafsīr, they are not Tafsīr and are beyond the scope of this subject. Indeed, they form the basis of the commentator's analysis before he embarks on the interpretation.

Accordingly, the main features of the term "Mabnā" are: it is the assumption and basis and can impact the process of science and it differs from science in terms of its nature and subject. Since Tafsīr was defined as expressing the meaning and practical content of the verses of the Qur'ān and discovering their purposes (Maqāsid) and referents (Madālīl), it seems that an accurate definition of the term Mabānī al-Tafsīr can be achieved by incorporating these features in the definition. Therefore, according to what was mentioned, we are of the view that the Mabānī al-Tafsīr are basic concepts and macro scientific assumptions for the Qur'ānic text and basic elements involved in the process of its interpretation, affecting how the Qur'ān is interpreted and how its rules and methods are determined. However, they are simply beyond the scope of the subject of Tafsīr science and need to be elaborated in advance. From this perspective, the Mabānī al-Tafsīr can be divided into two categories of general and specific. General Mabānī are those general rules in Tafsīr which are applied to all interpretive methods and cannot be ignored.

3.3 Aṣl

As to the literal meaning of "Aṣl", it has been said that the three alphabet letters of A, Ṣ, L together refer to the root, base and pillar of everything (Rāghib, 1992). Also, when it is said that the tree is "Asīl", this means that the tree has strong roots and will not decay and rot (Farahidi, 1920; Azhari, 2001). The plural form of "Aṣl" is "Uṣūl" and when it is said "Istaʿṣalahū" (in the chapter Istifʿāl of Arabic grammar), this means that the basis of

something was destroyed [Johari,1984]. Therefore, "Aṣl" here is indicative of the bottom of something and the lower part of it or its basis (Farahidi, 1920; Ṭurayḥī, 1375 SH).

Ibn Fāris believed that "Hamza, Ṣād, and Lām" together form three semantically distant roots (Ibn Fāris, 1404 AH). The first root is the basis of what we call "Aṣlush Shay". The second root by some scholars is called "Al-Aṣalah", which has been interpreted as a small snake or a great serpent (Azhari, 2001; Harawi, 1963; Ibn Sayyidah, 2000). The third root goes back to "Aṣīl" which is called the rest of the day from evening to night (Ibn Fāris, 1404 AH). Unlike Ibn Fāris, Muṣṭafawī believed that these three roots refer to a single and real meaning, which is the root of something (Muṣṭafawī, 1385 SH). Therefore, it does not matter if this root is used for inanimate objects, human beings, plants or sciences. This is because in Arabic, we tend to say the root of the tree, the root of man, the root of knowledge, the root of word, etc. Accordingly, the roots of reptiles refer to "Al-Aṣalah", and the evening is the end of the day when the result of the action returns to it and its penalty is determined. Muṣṭafawī maintained that "Aṣl" is relative and is not an independent concept, while "Asās" is an independent concept and does not need another existence (Muṣṭafawī, 1385 SH).

Fayūmī believed that the "Aṣl" is a common name which, at times, is used as imagery meaning (Majāz) and on occasions as the true meaning of it. The "Aṣl" of everything is the Shay on which it can be trusted. For example, the adjective "Aṣīl" is utilized for a person, which suggests knowing him as a wise person whose intellect can be trusted. Fayūmī is of the opinion that the truth of "Aṣl" in everything is anything by which a process starts. Like "Aṣl" of humans which is soil or the "Aṣl" of the wall that is stone (Fayūmī, 1414 AH).

Therefore, "Aṣl" is a common term among all groups, that can include everything, especially the root and foundation. Its main characteristics are stability, survival and strength. It has depth and no destruction, but it cannot be said that it is the "Asās" of something. Contrary to "Asās", "Aṣl" is not independent and must be known by its branches (Far). In other words, although it is the origin of everything and all things will return to it, it depends on its continuation. Similar to "Mabnā" and "Qāʿida", "Aṣl" is a common word which alongside the word "Tafsīr" forms a term. Therefore, to be able to elaborate on the different idiomatic meanings of these three words, it is necessary to describe the definitions concerning these terms presented by the scholars of the Holy Qurʾān and interpretation.

Due to the presence of the words "Aṣīl" and "Āṣāl" in different verses of the Holy Qurʾān (Q.14:24, 25:5, 33:42, 37:64), the early Islamic scholars paid attention to these words. For example, when discussing the meaning of "Aṣl" in detail, which is close to the meanings of the lexical dictionaries, Ṭurayḥī considers Kalām science (dialectical theology) as a "Uṣūl al-Dīn" for other sciences, such as Tafsīr, jurisprudence and hadith.

This should not be ignored the accuracy of these sciences relies on proving the legitimacy of a Prophet's claim to prophethood, and this, in turn, depends on proving the existence of God, His justice and His wisdom. All these are provable in Kalām science (Ṭurayḥī, 1375 SH). Similar to such returns to literal meanings by commentators, it can be seen under the interpretation of some verses of the Qurʾān in which the word "Aṣl" and its derivatives are used (Tabarsi, 2000; Fakhr Razi, 1999; Al-Zamakhsharī, 1980). Consequently, this word has only a literal meaning, and the idiomatic meaning is not seen in the mentioned works.

Our survey of the interpretative works shows that the term "Uṣūl al-Tafsīr" was first seen in the work of Ibn-Taymīyah's (1980) *Muqaddamat Fī Uṣūl al-Tafsīr* (An Introduction to the Principles of Interpretation). Of course, there is no definition for this term and just its

derivatives are mentioned. This trend was followed by commentaries after him and even in the present time (Zarkashi, 1990; Tha'labi, 1997). Finally, researchers in their works, generally entitled "Uṣul al-Tafsīr", tried to present a clear definition for the term with an extended meaning for it. A semantic development here is that Aṣl is synonymous with the other two terms Mabnā and Qā'ida, which is mainly due to the lack of a pluralist view. For instance, for Al-'ak, both "Aṣl" and "Qā'ida" have the same meaning and he believed that the phrase "Uṣūl Al-Tafsīr" is the same as "qawā'id Al-Tafsīr" (Al-'ak, 2007).

As alluded to earlier, in the second path of the construction of the term, a general term is initially used by experts or users of a scientific field. Then, the meaning is expanded and practical and fundamental terms describing the basics of that field come into existence. The same process can be seen concerning such general concepts as "Mabnā", "Aṣl" and "Qā'ida" in the field of religious sciences. As to "Aṣl", it can be said that it is always used in its plural form "Uṣūl", and can create other phrases such as the "Uṣūl Al-Fiqh", "Uṣūl Al-Naḥw", "Uṣūl Al-Lughah", or "Uṣūl al-Tafsīr".

To give an example, "Aṣl" in hadith terms refers to early manuscripts written based on the Kitābat (writing) and Samā' (listening) (Al-Baghdadi, 1978). Basically, the general rules of a science are called "Uṣūl" (the plural form of Aṣl) and scientists use them as ground rules of that science. Indeed, "Uṣūl" is a combination of general rules and proven hypotheses (Behjatpour, 1392 SH). Consequently, "Uṣūl" in the science of hadith are the general and basic laws of that science.

The first general Uṣūl of Tafsīr were mentioned in Ibn-Taymīyah's work *Muqaddamah Fī Uṣūl al-Tafsīr* where prerequisites for interpretation and understanding of the Holy Qur'ān were mentioned (Ibn-Taymīyah,1986). The importance of this book, as the first work in introducing the Uṣūl al-Tafsīr, cannot be ignored as several commentaries (Sharḥ) were written on it (see: Thayyar,1428 AH; Zarzur,1972; Usman,1428 AH; Al-Asimin,1434 AH; Kabisi,1427 AH).

As mentioned above, after Ibn-Taymīyah, many scholars in various fields of Qur'ānic studies and interpretation pointed to the necessity of observing the mentioned Uṣūl in works of Ibn-Taymīyah (1986). However, all these scholars have emphasized the importance of Uṣūl and understanding of the Holy Qur'ān. Broadly speaking, however, scholars' takes on the matter show that the term Uṣūl, which in all scientific fields refers to the basic and general rules, is also used in the field of Tafsīr by some scholars. Thus, these basic rules for understanding the Holy Qur'ān is "what the commentator must know and do."

This kind of view on interpretive works did not result in generating principles which can pave the way for interpretation or its science. This is because there were various interpretations of the literal definition of the word Aṣl. Consequently, contrary to what happened in jurisprudence to explain the "principles of Fiqh", Uṣūl of Tafsīr failed to improve and develop what now is needed in the field of Tafsīr. Also, instead of focusing on the elaboration of the basic rules, contemporary works, generally entitled Uṣūl al-Tafsīr, have led to disagreement on these rules among scholars of Tafsīr.

Therefore, it may be claimed that no two books on Uṣūl al-Tafsīr are unanimous in their understanding of the rules of Tafsīr. Accordingly, there is no consensus concerning instances or components of Uṣūl al-Tafsīr. After Ibn-Taymīyah, works written about Uṣūl al-Tafsīr drew on introductions of interpretations, borrowed by commentators from previous works such as the book of *Sīyūṭī Al-Itqān* (Thayyar, 1428 AH). Common definitions for Uṣūl al-

Tafsīr were mentioned above, but in some of them, the principles of interpretation are considered the same as general rules in any science. However, when the components of Uṣūl of Tafsīr are expressed, in addition to Mabānī and Qawā'id, other items, such as the collection of the Qur'ān, its writing (Kitābat) and Meccan and Medinan suras are also introduced as interpretive principles (Al-Asimin, 1434 AH). In some works, items, such as the authority of appearances of the Qur'ān (Ḥujiīyat al-Ẓawāhir) are considered important principles of Tafsīr. This means some verses interpret other verses, and their brevity (I'jāz) or ambiguity (Ibhām) or conciseness (Ijmāl) can be removed if they are examined against each other (Al-Kabisi, 1427 AH).

The division of Uṣūl of Tafsīr into lexical principles and rational principles attempts to discuss all issues relevant to the appearance of the Qur'ān within the lexical principles, while some other issues can be approached from the perspective of rational principles (Abdul Hamid, 1984). This kind of separation can be seen in Al-'ak's *Uṣūl and Mabānī Al-Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān* in which principles of Tafsīr are divided into rational-traditional and descriptive (Al'ak, 2007). In some works, Uṣūl were divided into four categories of traditional, lexical, rational and Qur'ānic principles which are similar to the mentioned works in the expression of components (Al-Kabisi, 1427 AH). It seems that due to the lack of an accurate definition for Aṣl, its unimportance in the Tafsīr of the Qur'ān and no specific position for it there, this term has been considered synonymous with the two terms of Mabnā and Qā'ida. Each term has an independent identity and is important in an interpretive method. Mabnā is the beginning of an interpretive path, Aṣl is the rules of that path, and Qā'ida is the end of it; therefore, none of them can be ignored. Up until these terms do not find their position, Tafsīr cannot be expected to turn into a true scientific form.

Overall, this can be said that the word Aṣl like Mabnā has followed the second approach of constructing terms, which is using general words and transferring and distributing its meaning between specialized languages of different sciences. This of course demands redefinition. To do this, building on important features of Aṣl and previously-presented definitions for Tafsīr, the term Uṣūl al-Tafsīr can be redefined. Therefore, since Tafsīr was defined as "discovering the Maqāsid and Madālīl", this can be said that:

"Uṣūl al-Tafsīr" are fundamental rules and concepts with a Qur'ānic nature, that act as a mediator between Mabnā and Qā'ida. They help the commentator in discovering Maqāsid and Madālīl of verses using Qawā'id Al-Tafsīr. These rules are entirely practical and facilitate the presentation of the Mabānī, that are theoretical aspects of Tafsīr.

According to this definition, this can be said that the concept of Aṣl has been taken from Mabnā (basis), which is explanation and explanation of Mabnā in the context of rules. Therefore, Aṣl is similar to Mabnā. For this reason, the commentator must always consider these basic principles during the process of Tafsīr. However, Mabānī is the commentator's knowledge and understanding, which is prior to interpretation. Uṣūl must be applied during the Tafsīr process. Thus, Mabnā is completely theoretical, Qā'ida is operational, and Aṣl lies between these two. Given that Aṣl has been derived from Mabnā, it appears that Qā'ida has also been derived from Mabnā; Aṣl is the same as Qā'ida. Therefore, Mabānī is the constitution, Uṣūl is the subject laws and their annexes, and Qawā'id is the executive regulations in the science of Tafsīr. Thus, the understanding of Maqāsid and Madālīl of verses is the result of the science of Tafsīr, which is achieved by applying Qawā'id (i.e., executive regulations in this field).

3. 4 Qā'ida

The meaning of "Qawā'idul bayt" in Arabic is the pillars of the house based on which the roof is built. The lower part of the sand dunes, on which the other part of the hill is located, is called "Qā'ida" (Rāghib, 1992; Ibn Fāris, 1404 AH; Farahidi, 1920). It means criterion (Z̤ābiṭah) that is equal to the general matter which complies with all details of it (Fayumi,1414 AH). In defining the Qā'ida, a lexicographer said that it is a general principle to which all details are applied. The author, however, does not explain why this is a general principle, and how details are applied to it (Jurjānī, 1411 AH).

This survey of works in the early Islamic centuries shows that no book was written concerning interpretive rules (Qawā'id al-Tafsīr). Even among the interpretive and Qur'ānic works of these centuries, no mention was made of interpretive rules. However, it seems that many interpretive rules derived from conversational laws of thought (Uṣuli Muḥāwirah O'qalāyi) were used in the interpretation of the Qur'ān without the explicit mention and use of "Qawā'id al-Tafsīr."

Also, in some Qur'ānic works as well as in the introductions written for commentaries, the conditions for interpretation are mentioned. They are not explicitly called interpretive rules; however, they are interpretive rules. For example, Sīyūṭī in his book "Al-Itqān" (Marifato Al-Gharībah: Introduction to Strangers), wrote a chapter entitled *Knowledge of This Technique Is Essential For The Interpreter* where he explained the requirements for understanding the meaning of unfamiliar words (Gharīb al-Qur'ān) [Sīyūṭī,1974], which is one of the rules of interpretation. This is a general instruction for interpretation, derived from the method of wise people (Oqalā) for understanding texts.

The content of books written about Uṣūl al-Tafsīr also concerns rules of interpretation. For example, the principle of the necessity of recognizing Arab habits during the Age of Ignorance, has been introduced as an important issue in the principles of interpretation. Muhammad bin Laṭīfī al-Ṣabbāgh's (1988) book *Research in the Principles of Interpretation* is an interpretive rule. This rule emphasizes that the commentator in interpreting the verses should be familiar with the customs and culture of people in pre-Islamic Arabia, and verses should be interpreted according to them. Thus, it is definitely an interpretive rule. In books on Qur'ānic sciences, such as *On the Importance of Rules Which the Commentator Needs to Know*, there are the rules for Tafsīr, which are literary rather than interpretive (Sīyūṭī, 1974). Also, in books with the title *Rules of Interpretation* or in similar books, some of the principles had been considered as rules, which are not really interpretive. For example, in the book *Al-Qawā'id al-Ḥiṣān Muta'liqatu bi-Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān*, 71 rules were mentioned (al-Sa'dī, 1999). A chapter of some similar works, is also dedicated to the rules of interpretation. Regardless of whether these rules are really interpretive or not, they can be enumerated in chronological order:

[1]. *Rules of Interpretation* by Ibn-Taymīyah (as mentioned throughout the text);

[2]. *The Correct Approach in Rules Related to the Holy Qur'ān* by Shamsuddin Ibn Al-Ṣā'igh, Muhammad bin Abdul-Rahmān Al-Hanafī. No information is available about this book (Kâtip Çelebi (Haji Khalifa),1943);

[3]. *Qawā'id al-Tafsīr by Ibn al-Wazīr*. In this book, he talked about methods of interpretation, its levels and types. Therefore, this book cannot be considered a specific work on the rules of interpretation (As-Sabt, 1415 AH);

[4]. *Al-Iksīr Fī Qawā'id al-Tafsīr* written by Najm ad-Din Suliymān bin Abdul-Qawi Ḥanbalī Ṭawfī (Kâtip Çelebi (Haji Khalifa), 1943);

[5]. *Facilitating the Rules of Interpretation* (al-Taysīr Fī Qawā'id al-Tafsīr), authored by Kāfījī (This book was published and is now available);

[6]. *Qawā'id al-Tafsīr* by Uthmān bin Ali;

[7]. *Tawshīh Al-Tafsīr Fī Qawā'id Al-Tafsīr wat-Ta'wīl* by Mīrzā Muhammad bīn-Sulaymān Tunikābunī.

Also, in such works as *Muqaddamat Fī Uşūl al-Tafsīr* by Ibn-Taymīyah (1980), *Al-Fawzul Kabīr Fī Uşūl Al-Tafsīr* (The Great Victory in The Principles of Interpretation) by Shah Walī Allah Dihlawī (2006), *Buḥūth Fī Uşūl Al-Tafsīr* by Mohammad Laṭīfī Al-Şabbāgh (1988), *Fuşūl Fī Uşūl Al-Tafsīr* by Musā'id bin Suliymān Ṭayyār (1428 AH), *Dirāsāt Fī Uşūl Al-Tafsīr* by Muhsin Abdul-Hamid (1984)—which are not Qawā'id al-Tafsīr—there is information about the rules of Tafsīr. In view of the above scholars, Qawā'id and Uşūl al-Tafsīr are synonymous and can be used interchangeably.

Qawā'id, in its general use, has many applications in various sciences, including jurisprudential rules, logical rules, literary rules, social rules, etc. When it comes to Tafsīr, Qawā'id is a compound title for which different meanings have been expressed. For example, it is a general principle with which inference is made about the Qur'ān's verses (Faker Meybodi, 2007). The general principle by which the meaning of the Qur'ān can be deduced (As-Sabt, 1415 AH). The general principles are applied to details during the interpreting process (Moadab, 1396 SH). General rules that mediate inference from verses of the Qur'ān and are not limited to any particular verse or chapter (Rizayi Esfahani, 2016).

This should be noted that the relationship between the rules of interpretation and Tafsīr is similar to that of deductive science and thought or the relationship between principles of jurisprudence and its science. It is known that the observance of jurisprudence rules can decrease penalties on part of jurists. Thus, the observance of interpretation rules helps the interpreter avoid mistakes and better understand the meaning behind verses. Therefore, if these rules are not fully elaborated and compiled, the interpreter may neglect the fundamental principles of interpreting the Qur'ān. Accordingly, differences in Qur'ān's Tafsīr have been due to the negligence of these rules, and the role of other factors has been insubstantial. Consequently, the existing interpretations are reliable as far as these rules are elaborated in detail. This, in turn, lead to a valid interpretation of the Qur'ān and decrease errors.

The overall conclusion which can be made here is that the rules of interpretation are general guidelines for interpreting the Qur'ān, which are based on rational-traditional grounds, and of course, have been derived from Uşūl and Mabānī of Tafsīr. They can be applied to minor issues and can be used in different interpretive approaches. Therefore, the rules of interpretation are not limited to one or more specific approaches to interpretation. For example, one of the rules of interpretation is paying attention to the meanings of words in verses concerning revelation. It is clear that these rules are not specific to one or more interpretive approaches and can be used in the process of Tafsīr.

Just as the principles of interpretation can be divided into general and specific, the rules of interpretation can also be divided into general and special. As mentioned earlier, general

rules are those interpretive ones, which are used in all interpretive approaches and should not be ignored in any of the approaches. In contrast, specific rules of interpretation are specific guidelines in the implementation of each interpretive approach. These rules vary in each approach and are derived from the specific principles of that approach.

4. Conclusion

Throughout the course of turning Tafsīr into a science, it is necessary to take careful steps in establishing its dimensions. Redefining the basic terms of interpretation is one of these steps. It seems that the four terms, namely, Tafsīr (interpretation), Mabnā (basis), Aṣl (principle) and Qā'ida (rule) are among the key concepts of this field which can be redefined through using methods in the terminology discipline. In doing so, the study has adopted an etymological approach wherein the authors surveyed the origin of words and examined ways through which their meanings changed over the course of their historical development. Moreover, the method adopted in this paper is the study of semantic changes.

Based on what has been said about terminological methods and the obtained results, it can be concluded that these terms have taken the second method in the course of changing their literal meaning into an idiomatic one. Semantic development is one of the main features of this process, which has made it difficult to find a precise border between these terms in the field of Tafsīr. Therefore, they are used interchangeably. This functional shift has confused the researchers and even commentary authors; thus, the three terms interpretive Mabānī, interpretive Uṣūl and interpretive Qawā'id have been used interchangeably and their boundaries have not been well-defined. In conclusion, our proposed meanings for these terms are: Tafsīr is expressing meaning and practical content (Mūfād Istiʿmālī) of the Qurʾānic verses and discovering their purposes (Maqāsid) and referents (Madālīl). Mabānī al-Tafsīr are the basic concepts and macro scientific assumptions for the Qurʾānic text. Finally, the term Uṣūl al-Tafsīr are radical components with a Qurʾānic nature acting as the mediator between Mabnā and Qāʿida.

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