

Research Paper

An Examination of the Meaningfulness of Quranic Verses from the Perspective of the Verification Theory

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Extended abstract

1. Introduction

The issue of meaningfulness in religious language has been a persistent concern in the philosophy of religion. With the rise of logical positivism, thinkers such as A.J. Ayer and Rudolf Carnap proposed the verification principle—asserting that a proposition is meaningful only if it is either analytically true or empirically verifiable. Accordingly, statements about God, revelation, and the afterlife were dismissed as meaningless because they lack empirical reference.

This stance created challenges for understanding the Quran, which contains numerous references to transcendental realities. If applied strictly, the positivist framework would render much of the Quranic discourse meaningless. However, such an outcome contradicts its historical influence and moral efficacy.

Hence, this study asks:

Can Quranic propositions be meaningful under the verificationist criterion? If not, what alternative conception of

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meaning can better account for Quranic language?

The research evaluates the scope and limits of empirical verifiability in relation to the Quran and proposes a broader conception of meaningfulness encompassing rational, ethical, and spiritual dimensions.

2. Research method

The study adopts an analytical-critical methodology. First, the theoretical foundations of the verification principle were examined in the works of Ayer, Carnap, and early Wittgenstein. Later critiques by Wittgenstein (later period), R.M. Hare, and Basil Mitchell were reviewed to show their weaknesses.

In the second stage, 15 Quranic verses were classified into three groups: empirical verses appealing to observation and reflection on nature, historical verses describing or forecasting events, and metaphysical verses expressing divine attributes and unseen realities.

Each verse was analyzed for its linguistic structure and epistemic function, using classical and modern commentaries—Al-Mizan, Majma' al-Bayan, and Tafsir al-Namuneh—alongside philosophical discussions of religious language.

3. Results

Findings show that Quranic discourse cannot be confined to empirical verifiability. Its meaning extends beyond sensory experience, integrating empirical, rational, and spiritual dimensions.

The Quran speaks in three interrelated languages:

- a descriptive-empirical language inviting inquiry into creation,

- a rational-ethical language guiding moral understanding, and

- a symbolic-spiritual language evoking faith and transformation.

Thus, the Quran's meaningfulness arises not from empirical testability but from its existential resonance and capacity to transform consciousness.

4. Conclusion

This study concludes that the verificationist theory, while valuable in the empirical sciences, fails to encompass the full scope of meaning in religious language. The Quranic text unites empirical reasoning, metaphysical reflection, and spiritual experience. Meaning in the Quran is performative and transformative: a verse is meaningful not because it can be empirically proven, but because it enlightens reason, refines character, and guides the soul toward truth.

Consequently, the notion of "verification" should be broadened to include rational and spiritual verification—forms of understanding that correspond to human intellect and inner experience. The Quran appeals simultaneously to observation, contemplation, and faith, inviting human beings to discover unity between knowledge and spirituality.

Thus, Quranic meaningfulness is best understood through an integrative model that recognizes empirical inquiry as one aspect of a wider epistemic horizon. In this sense, meaning in the Quran is not a matter of laboratory verification but of illumination and transformation—the awakening of human awareness to the reality of existence and the divine.

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Authors' contribution

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Conflict of interest

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