

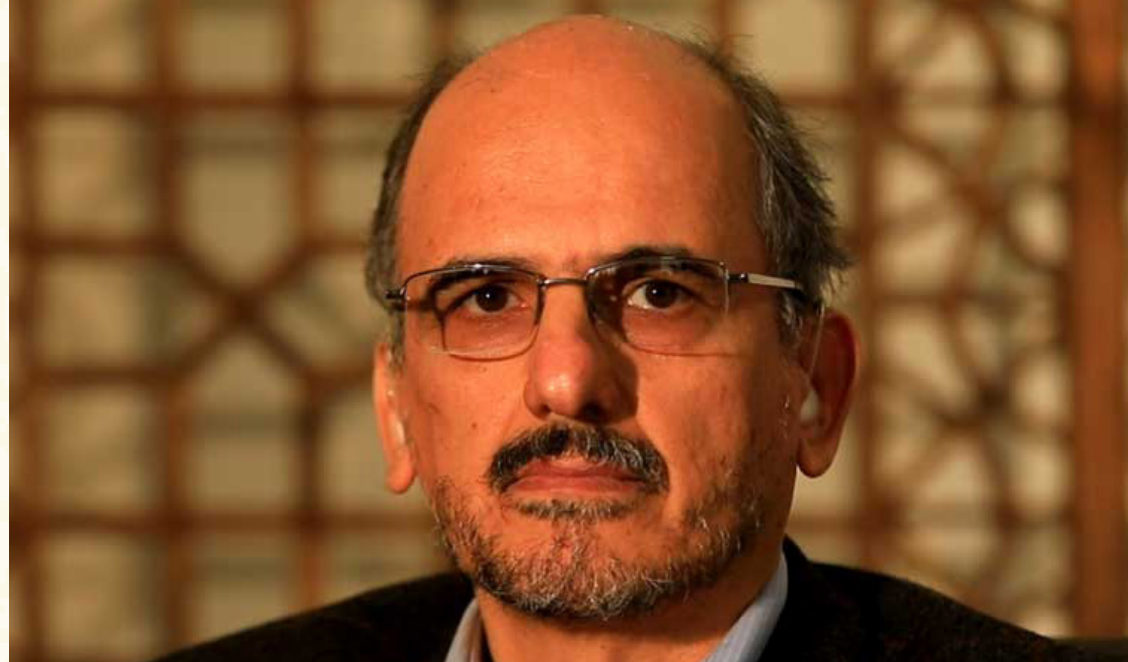
Professor Ali Fanaei

Exploring Divine Speech Acts: A New Approach to the Interpretation of the Qur'an

Speech Act Theory occupies a central role in elucidating the nature, purpose, and function of linguistic communication and, by extension, in interpreting the outcomes of such communication. While the recognition of some types of speech acts can be traced back to antiquity, the formal articulation of this theory emerged in the latter half of the twentieth century and has since undergone significant development and refinement. Though some biblical scholars have engaged with this theory in their exegetical work, its systematic application remains relatively uncommon among scholars of Qur'anic interpretation. This article seeks to explore the methodological implications of integrating Speech Act Theory into Qur'anic exegesis.

Speech Act Theory highlights that linguistic communication is not merely a vehicle for conveying meaning but also serves as an instrument for performing speech acts. Consequently, a comprehensive interpretive methodology must extend beyond the extraction of meaning to include the identification of the speech acts embedded within linguistic expressions. Traditionally, Qur'anic exegetes have predominantly concentrated on uncovering the semantic dimensions of the text, operating on the premise that interpretation is fulfilled once meaning has been discerned. As a result, the methodologies they have employed are primarily designed for the discovery of meaning, without necessarily accounting for the performative dimension of divine discourse.

However, the adoption of Speech Act Theory in Qur'anic interpretation necessitates a paradigm shift—one that moves beyond the mere retrieval of meaning to encompass the identification of divine speech acts and the corresponding human responses they entail. Such an approach demands an interpretive framework that systematically recognises and categorises these speech acts, whether at the level of individual verses, clusters of verses, or the Qur'an as a whole. By doing so, the exegetical process would not only capture the intended meaning of divine discourse but also illuminate its performative dimensions and their implications for our engagement with the text.



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Professor Ali Fanaei is a distinguished Iranian moral philosopher and public intellectual, renowned for his contributions to Islamic studies and Moral philosophy. He dedicated seventeen years to rigorous scholarship at the seminary (*Hawza Ilmiyya*) of Qom, engaging in advanced studies (*dars al-khārij*) under esteemed scholars such as Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Muhaqqiq Damad, Ayatollah Javad Tabrizi, Ayatollah Kazim al-Ha'iri, Ayatollah Vahid Khurasani, Ayatollah Husayn Ali Montazeri, and Ayatollah Ahmad Mianaji.

In addition to his traditional Islamic education, Dr. Fanaei pursued academic studies, earning an MA in Islamic Theology from the University of Qom, where he developed a keen interest in modern theology and the philosophy of religion. He further advanced his academic career in the United Kingdom, completing both an MPhil and a PhD at the University of Sheffield under the supervision of professor Richard Joyce and late professor Robert Stern. His doctoral thesis, titled "The Methods of Moral Inquiry: An Inquiry into the Problem of Justification in Moral Epistemology," reflects his deep engagement with moral philosophy.

Currently, Dr Fanaei holds prominent academic positions at two institutions. He serves as the Head of the Department of Qur'anic Studies at Al-Mahdi Institute. Additionally, he is a Professor of Philosophy and the Head of the Department of Philosophy at Mofid University in Qom, Iran.