Journal of Philosophical Theological Research
Print: 1735-9791
Online: 2538-2500

Narrating and Judging: Meta-Qur'anic Speech in Sūrat Ash-Shuʿarāʾ and the Limits of AI

Abdelmadjid Ben Habib

Department of Psychology, Educational Sciences & Speech-Language Pathology, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Abou Bekr Belkaid Tlemcen, Tlemcen, Algeria,
abdelmadjid.benhabib@univ-tlemcen.dz

Abstract

Original Research

This article examines the gap between human speech as phenomenologically intentional and language as processed by AI through statistical computation. Phenomenologically, speech originates in an intentional movement of consciousness toward meaning, interpreted within a horizon of expectation rather than simply extracted. Algorithmic processing, by contrast, proceeds through lexical frequency and co-occurrence, without an intentional subject. The article asks whether this separation is absolute, or whether a productive connection between the two is epistemologically legitimate. To sharpen the inquiry, it turns to a limit case from the Qur'an, *Sūrat Ash-Shuʿarāʾ* (Q. 26:10–68), staging intradiegetic exchanges – Moses and his Lord, Pharaoh, and the magicians – beneath a recurring extradiegetic voice, addressed to the audience rather than any character: Meta-Qur'anic Speech, comprising a narratorial register advancing the narrative and a verdictive register suspending it to render judgment. This verdictive register, in the refrain at Q. 26:67–68, renders two verdicts – condemnation for Pharaoh's people, glorification for Moses and his companions – while addressing a third, extradiegetic party: the audience. This case serves not as an exegetical end in itself, but as a philosophical instrument for testing what algorithmic processing cannot reconstruct: an act of intentional, dialogically situated judgment irreducible to lexical frequency or co-occurrence.

Keywords:

phenomenology; intentionality; algorithmic processing; dialogism; Qur'anic discourse; human agency; verdictive register; epistemology

Received: 2026/02/27; **Received in revised form:** 2026/05/03; **Accepted:** 2026/06/01; **Published online:** 2026/06/05

Ben Habib, A. (2026). Narrating and Judging: Meta-Qur'anic Speech in Sūrat Ash-Shuʿarāʾ and the Limits of AI. *Journal of Philosophical Theological Research*, (Special Issue on AI, Consciousness, and Human Agency), 28(3), 177-204. https://doi.org/10.22091/jptr.2026.17421.3685

Copyright © The Author

Introduction

What does it mean for speech to understand its meanings and to problematize its answers and echo, rather than merely process the quantity of its lexical content or recurrences? In this article, we highlight a problematic at the border of the philosophical and the theological, situated within the broader inquiry this special issue invites into questioning what is philosophically and theologically at stake in AI and human existence, in its broader sense related to identity.

The argument proceeds from an existential premise: human speech is a conscious and unconscious lived experience, structured by an intentionality at stake with each act of speech, and influenced by a historical horizon of expectation that shifts. Both the current psychosocial context and the historical context influence the construction, deconstruction, and ongoing revision of meaning. Meaning, on this view, is not simply present in an utterance awaiting extraction; it is interpreted, reconstructed, and at times acknowledged as resistant to full understanding.

Artificial intelligence approaches speech from a different epistemic register altogether: linguistic competence is achieved through the calibration of vast quantities of textual input against probabilistic and statistical models, such that output is determined by the structure of input, without problematizing the issue of why speech occurs or what its genealogy and goal are. This contrast raises three interrelated questions that structure the present inquiry.

First, is the separation between these two modes of engaging speech a genuine and irreducible one, or can a connection between them be drawn in ways that are epistemologically productive? Second, if such a connection is legitimate, under what conditions can it be established without dissolving the specificity of human linguistic experience into a numerical calculation? Third, what does this contrast reveal about the structural limits of artificial intelligence in grasping the activity of speaking as a total human subjective phenomenon, one that cannot be explained by the statistical dimension alone? To address these questions, the article turns, in its central section, to a particular revealing case: the discursive architecture of *Sūrat Ash-Shuʿarāʾ* (Q. 26:10–68), the twenty-sixth chapter of the [1]Qur'an.

This chapter stages sustained exchanges of speech between named interlocutors – a horizontal, dialogical structure in the sense elaborated by

1. All Qur'anic citations in this article follow the Saheeh International translation, accessed via Tanzil.net (https://tanzil.net). Arabic text follows the standard *rasm* ʿUthmānī as presented on the same platform.

Bakhtin – and layers over them a distinct, non-diegetic voice that narrates and arbitrates among these exchanges: adding or reporting narrative content in the first case, authorizing, correcting, or rejecting claims in the second – as when the narrated confrontation between Moses and Pharaoh's court is followed by a verdict addressed not to any character within the scene, but directly to the audience of the Qur'an: "Indeed in that is a sign, but most of them were not to be believers" (Q. 26:67).

This verdictive function is one register within a broader non-diegetic voice that recurs throughout the sura – elsewhere (e.g., Q. 26:32–33, 38, 45–46) taking a narratorial, scene-setting form rather than a judging one, a distinction developed further in the section on the discursive architecture of Sūrat Ash-Shuʿarāʾ. This distinction is analytical rather than theological, following Genette's account of narrative levels: the sura's entire reported speech is, doctrinally, divine in origin, but only certain segments break frame to address the audience directly rather than remaining within a narrated scene between characters.

This voice – here termed Meta-Qur'anic Speech – is treated in what follows not as an object of exegesis in its own right, but as a philosophical test case: an instance of language performing, in its narratorial register, an act of framing and orienting the audience's access to the events narrated, and, in its verdictive register, an act of normative, intentional arbitration between competing voices – either function irreducible to what a purely statistical treatment of the text could produce, which could only redescribe both after the fact, not perform them. The case is presented briefly and illustratively, to sharpen a philosophical argument about the limits of algorithmic language processing, not to offer an exhaustive close reading of the sura. The article proceeds as follows.

The first main section, "The Phenomenological Framework: Intentionality, Horizon, and the Hermeneutic Circle," develops the phenomenological framework – intentionality, the horizon of expectation, and hermeneutic openness – that grounds the notion of language as lived experience. The second, "Algorithmic Language Processing: What a Large Language Model Does," examines what algorithmic language processing does in practice, and why its statistical operations remain structurally distinct from understanding.

The third, "The Discursive Architecture of Sūrat Ash-Shuʿarāʾ: Problematizing Meta-Qur'anic Speech," introduces the *Sūrat Ash-Shuʿarāʾ* (Q. 26:10–68) case and problematizes the notion of Meta-Qur'anic Speech as a vertical, non-diegetic instance that both narrates and arbitrates, irreducible to horizontal dialogism or to enunciative address alone. The fourth, "Epistemological Implications: AI, Judgment, and Human Agency," draws out the epistemological implications of this case for the broader question of AI's relation to human language and identity. The Conclusion closes the article.

The Phenomenological Framework: Intentionality, Horizon, and the Hermeneutic Circle

1. Intentionality and the Eidetic Reduction

Phenomenology, since Husserl, treats consciousness as always "consciousness of something" (Husserl, 1966, p. 35): every act of awareness is directed toward an object, and this directedness – intentionality – is not an incidental feature of mental life but its defining structure. Accessing this intentional structure requires a specific methodological move. The eidetic reduction proceeds through the Epochē (Husserl, 1994; McKenna, 1997): the suspension of naive beliefs, prior knowledge, and unexamined presuppositions about the object of inquiry, in order to transform lived experience into essences – intentional structures constituted in the life of the ego, described as they give themselves to consciousness rather than as the inquirer would wish them to be. Applied to language, this means bracketing what one already assumes an utterance means, so as to describe the intentional act by which meaning is reached toward and constituted, rather than presupposing that meaning in advance. Applied to speech specifically, an utterance is not the transmission of a pre-formed content from one mind to another, but an act of consciousness reaching toward meaning. From a phenomenological perspective, "the first act of consciousness is to want to say something" (Ricœur, 2004, p. 10) – *vouloir dire* – a formulation that locates meaning not in the utterance as an inert object, but in the movement of a speaking subject toward it. To speak, on this view, is to intend: to direct oneself toward an object of meaning, to grasp something of it, and to leave something of it always still to be grasped. The listener or reader, in turn, does not extract a meaning already fully present in the words, but performs their own intentional act, reconstructing and redirecting what the speaker's utterance was reaching toward.

2. The Horizon of Expectation and the Fusion of Horizons

This intentional movement does not occur in a vacuum. Each act of speech is situated within a horizon of expectation: a historically and psychosocially shaped field within which meaning becomes interpretable at all. This horizon enters into what Gadamer calls a fusion of horizons (Gadamer, 2013). The text's own horizon of meaning is transformed in its encounter with the audience's horizon of understanding, and, reciprocally, the audience's horizon is itself reshaped by the text – an interinfluence between inherited meaning and newly constructed meaning, which reveals the collective, intersubjective dimension of the interpretive act. Meaning, on this account, is never simply present in an

utterance awaiting extraction: it is interpreted, reconstructed, deconstructed, and acknowledged as resistant to full understanding.

The horizon of expectation, and its fusion with the horizon of the interpreting subject, is thus not only what makes meaning possible; it is what makes meaning genuinely open, revisable, and contested.

3. The Hermeneutic Circle and the Erklären/Verstehen Distinction

This openness is formalized through the hermeneutic circle: interpretive knowledge of a discourse is achieved through a continuous movement between the general structure of the discourse and its particular constitutive utterances, and back again. Ricœur and Gadamer insist that this circularity is the very shape that understanding takes. Central to this tradition is the distinction, inherited from Dilthey (1947) and developed by Ricœur (1977), between *Erklären* (explanation) and *Verstehen* (interpretation and understanding). Explanation proceeds by tracking the linguistic traces of a discourse – its phonological, syntactic, lexical-semantic, and pragmatic-intentional features – to reconstruct its partial, local meanings. Interpretation and understanding, by contrast, are performed by the reader, who intentionally binds together the meanings that explanation has surfaced, aiming at a global synthesis. Crucially, Ricœur does not treat these as opposed operations: the global construction of meaning is built from the partial constructions that explanation supplies, and the partial constructions of explanation are themselves oriented, from the start, by the anticipation of a global meaning. Explanation and understanding dialectically influence each other; they are not sequential stages one can perform without the other.

4. Performativity: Speech as Act

This dynamic is not only semantic; it also has a performative dimension. Discourse does not only say something – it does something to its audience. It promises, commands, questions, exhorts, consoles, and addresses; the audience, in turn, responds through its own speech acts – prayer, contestation, assertion, interpretation – extending and transforming the field of meaning in a continuing exchange. This is precisely the interaction between saying and doing that speech act theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1985; Searle & Vanderveken, 1985) is designed to capture: an utterance is analyzed for what it does – the illocutionary act it performs, the illocutionary point that act is defined by, and the perlocutionary effect it elicits in its audience.

5. Axiological and Practical Intentionality

Husserlian intentionality is not limited to theoretical aim. In the Fifth Logical Investigation, Husserl distinguishes objectifying acts – representation, judgment, which aim at an object as simply given – from non-objectifying acts (*Gemütsakte*), always founded upon the former: "Each intentional experience is either an objectifying act or has its basis in such an act" (Husserl, 2001, p. 167). Among these non-objectifying acts, two families can be distinguished: acts of valuation (*Wertungsakte*) – joy, sorrow – which require a full affirmation of their object, and conative acts – the wish – which are satisfied by a mere neutral modification. This double distinction establishes, from within the phenomenological apparatus itself, an axiological/evaluative dimension and a practical/conative dimension of intentionality, which the later subsection "The Addressee's Axiological and Practical Capacity" will mobilize to characterize what the reception of a verdictive act requires of its addressee.

6. Dialogism as a Structural Correlate of Intentionality

This phenomenological and performative account of meaning has a linguistic correlate in Bakhtin's notion of dialogism (Bakhtin, 1981, 1984b, 1986): no utterance is self-contained. Every utterance stands in relation to utterances that precede it, anticipates the utterances that will respond to it, and is oriented, implicitly or explicitly, toward another voice, whether that voice is present, absent, historical, or imagined. Dialogism is not incidental to intentionality; it is its social and discursive expression. The movement of consciousness toward meaning, the horizon within which that meaning becomes interpretable, and the performative force of an utterance are never the operations of an isolated subject, but are always already oriented toward, and shaped by other speaking subjects and their utterances. In brief, dialogism embodies the echo of meaning.

7. Implications for What Follows

Together, these elements – intentionality accessed through the eidetic reduction, the horizon of expectation and its fusion with the interpreting subject's own horizon, the hermeneutic circle and the *Erklären*/*Verstehen* dialectic, the performative force of speech as act, and dialogism as the social form intentionality takes in discourse – constitute the phenomenological dimension against which the next section examines what algorithmic language processing does, and does not, do. The question that follows is not whether a statistical system can track linguistic traces of some kind – clearly, it can – but whether

tracking traces of this kind can coincide with the intentional, horizon-bound, performative, and dialogically oriented activity of wanting to say something.

Algorithmic Language Processing: What a Large Language Model Does

1. From Intentional Meaning to Statistical Structure

The phenomenological account developed in the preceding section locates meaning in an intentional act – a consciousness reaching toward an object, bracketed and described through the Epochē. Meaning is also taken up in context, situated within a horizon that fuses with the horizon of another; here appears the encounter between the text or discourse and its audience. Against this account, a large language model (LLM) operates on an entirely different epistemic register. An LLM is a program trained by accumulating vast quantities of textual data and calibrating a probabilistic model over that data, such that its output is determined by the statistical structure of its input: patterns of lexical frequency, occurrence, and co-occurrence across enormous corpora (Harris, 1954; Lenci & Sahlgren, 2023). What such a system discovers is what manifests itself in a text at the level of distributional regularity – which words tend to appear near which others, how often, and in what configurations – not what a speaking subject intended by producing that text.

This is not a claim that statistical regularity is unrelated to meaning. Distributional patterns are not arbitrary; they are, in an important sense, the sedimented trace of countless intentional acts of speech performed by human speakers over time – a trace an LLM accesses only in an algorithmic register. In other words, a trace of an intentional act is not itself an intentional act. An LLM's output is the product of a mechanical process of pattern-completion over these traces, not the product of a consciousness bracketing its assumptions, reaching toward an object, and constituting meaning through that reaching.

2. No Epochē, No Bracketing

The eidetic reduction described in "Intentionality and the Eidetic Reduction" requires a subject capable of suspending its own naive assumptions in order to describe an object as it gives itself to consciousness. An LLM has no assumptions to suspend, in the phenomenological sense, because it has no consciousness directed toward an object in the first place: what is sometimes described, loosely, as a model's "bias" is not a naive presupposition available for bracketing, but a

statistical artifact arising from its training distribution – a structural property of the data, not a phenomenological standpoint that a subject occupies and can step back from by applying the Epochē. Where the phenomenologist's Epochē is an act performed by a subject upon its own presuppositions, an LLM's output is shaped by its accumulated training data, with no analogous act of stepping back available, since only consciousness can take this kind of distance from itself.

3. No Horizon, No Fusion

The subsection "The Horizon of Expectation and the Fusion of Horizons" described meaning as situated within a horizon of expectation that fuses, dialogically, with the horizon of an interpreting subject. An LLM does not occupy a horizon in this sense. Its "context window" is sometimes described in language that borrows from hermeneutics (the model "attends to" prior context), but this is a technical metaphor, not a phenomenological one: attention, in the technical sense used in these architectures, is a weighted statistical operation over token representations (Vaswani et al., 2017), each token representation itself being a sedimented function of that token's occurrence and co-occurrence across the training corpus – not an intentional orientation of a subject toward an object within a historically shaped field of expectation. There is no fusion, because there is no second horizon on the model's side to fuse with the text's; there is only the text's statistical structure being processed against weights derived from other texts.

4. Explanation Without Understanding

The *Erklären*/*Verstehen* distinction offers perhaps the most precise way to locate what an LLM does and does not do. What such a system performs is, in a strict sense, a radicalized and automated form of *Erklären*: the tracking of linguistic traces at a scale and speed no human explanatory procedure could match – which is why LLMs can be genuinely useful tools for surfacing patterns in a corpus. But *Verstehen*, on Ricœur's account, is not simply more explanation performed faster and at greater scale – it is a distinct operation, performed by an interpreting subject who binds partial meanings into a global qualitative synthesis through an intentional act oriented by anticipation of that very synthesis. An LLM does not anticipate a global meaning it is reaching toward – a meaning that, in the phenomenological sense, is subjectively given and non-quantifiable. This is compatible with, though distinct from, the point made from within computational linguistics itself: that a system trained only on linguistic form has no principled path to meaning, since the mapping from form to

communicative intent is underdetermined by text alone (Bender & Koller, 2020).

An LLM computes the statistically most probable continuation of a sequence, given patterns observed in prior data. The dialectical bond Ricœur insists upon – explanation feeding understanding, understanding orienting explanation – has, on the model's side, only one term: there is accumulation and calibration, but no reciprocal movement toward a global, intended sense that is reflected upon, because there is no speaking subject for whom that sense is being constituted.

5. Simulated Performativity

The subsection "Performativity: Speech as Act" described speech as performative: an utterance does not only say something, it does something. It promises, commands, questions, and elicits a responsive act from its audience. An LLM can produce output with the surface grammatical form of a promise, a command, or a question. What it cannot do is perform the illocutionary act in Searle's sense, because illocutionary force depends on a speaker's intention and on uptake by another subject within a shared framework of convention – conditions an LLM's output can imitate at the level of form without satisfying them at the level of the act itself. The output can be redescribed, after the fact, as resembling a promise or a verdict; it cannot, on this account, constitute one, for want of being intentionally preconceived by a speaking subject, in the particularity of that subject's intention.

6. Simulated Dialogism

The subsection "Dialogism as a Structural Correlate of Intentionality" described dialogism as intentionality's social expression. An LLM's output can be made to exhibit surface features of dialogic orientation – referring back to prior turns, adjusting register in apparent response to a prompt – because such patterns are statistically present in the human-generated text the model was trained on. This is, in essence, Firth's distributional dictum operating at the level of dialogic form: "you shall know a word by the company it keeps!" (Firth, 1957, p. 11) – except here, the "word" is an entire conversational register, and the "company" is the accumulated statistical pattern of countless human dialogues in the training corpus.

What is absent is the underlying intentional orientation of one consciousness toward another that, on the phenomenological account, is what dialogism actually consists in. The system redescribes the surface shape of

dialogism; it does not enact the intentional relation dialogism names – a relation in which, as Bakhtin insists, even a single voice already echoes multiple other voices, unpredictably, from within.

7. Convergence and Divergence with Recent Philosophical Literature

Three recent studies examine, from a related angle, the question of LLM intentionality and linguistic agency. Gubelmann (2024) draws on the Kantian opposition between the autonomous organism and the heteronomous mechanism to argue that speaking – describing, ordering, lying – presupposes an intention arising from within a self-governing agent; an LLM, a heteronomous mechanism, merely executes a purpose specified from outside by its designer, so that it processes language without ever speaking in the full sense. Attah (2025), for his part, contests that the absence of Gricean communicative intention – the strong requirement that a speaker intend the hearer to recognize that very intention – suffices to disqualify LLMs: once this requirement is relaxed, nothing prevents, on his account, an LLM from producing illocutionary effects. Attah nonetheless explicitly leaves open the question of perlocutionary effects – the real, embodied transformation of an audience's conduct or understanding – which the LLM's disembodied condition cannot produce. Skiba (2026), finally, generalizes the no-assertion argument into a no-speech-act argument altogether: it is not that LLMs lack the norms governing such an act (Grice's Cooperative Principle would in principle apply to any speaker) – it is that they lack the capacity to be genuinely subject to them, for want of being able to care about a sanction, what he terms attention-deduction.

The present article extends this last line of argument, while shifting its ground: rather than examining the LLM's capacity to produce an ordinary speech act, it examines its capacity to occupy either end of a specific verdictive act – the position from which it is produced, and the position to which it is addressed (see the subsections "The Addressee's Axiological and Practical Capacity" and "Why Redescription Is Not Ruling"). It is precisely on this register that the limit noted by Attah becomes decisive: the verdictive of Q. 26:67–68 does not merely solicit illocutionary recognition of its content, but a real, perlocutionary transformation of the audience it addresses – exactly the register in which the LLM's disembodied condition is structurally lacking.

8. What Remains to Be Tested

The claims of this section are, so far, general and structural. To test them concretely, the article turns, in the next section, to a specific textual case in which an act of

intentional arbitration between competing voices – not merely the tracking or redescription of lexical patterns – is performed within the text itself: the discursive architecture of the Qur'anic chapter *Sūrat Ash-Shuʿarāʾ* (Q. 26:10–68).

The Discursive Architecture of Sūrat Ash-Shuʿarāʾ: Problematizing Meta-Qur'anic Speech

1. Corpus and Method

The passage under examination (Q. 26:10–68) stages a dense sequence of speech events, alternating between exchanges internal to the narrated action and a recurring voice addressed to the audience of the Qur'an. Table 1 presents the full sequence as a working inventory; the discussion that follows treats only a small number of these instances closely, in keeping with the illustrative, non-exhaustive scope announced in the introduction.

Table 1. Speech Events in *Q. 26:10–68*

Verses	Interlocutors	Register
10 (frame)	God's speech to the Qur'anic audience	narratorial
10–17 (quoted)	Moses and his Lord	horizontal (asymmetric)
18–24	Moses and Pharaoh	horizontal
25	Pharaoh and his court	horizontal
26	Moses, Pharaoh, and his court	horizontal
27	Pharaoh and his court	horizontal
28	Moses, Pharaoh, and his court	horizontal
29–31	Pharaoh and Moses	horizontal
32–33	God's speech to the Qur'anic audience	narratorial
34–37	Pharaoh and the eminent of his court	horizontal
38	God's speech to the Qur'anic audience	narratorial

Verses	Interlocutors	Register
41–42	The magicians and Pharaoh	horizontal
43–44	Moses and the magicians	horizontal
45–46	God's speech to the Qur'anic audience	narratorial
47–51	The magicians and Pharaoh	horizontal
52 (frame)	God's speech to the Qur'anic audience	narratorial
52 (quoted)	God and Moses	horizontal
53	God's speech to the Qur'anic audience	narratorial
54–56	Pharaoh and his people	horizontal
57–60	God's speech to the Qur'anic audience	narratorial
61 (frame)	God's speech to the Qur'anic audience	narratorial
61–62 (quoted)	Moses's companions and Moses	horizontal
63 (frame)	God's speech to the Qur'anic audience	narratorial
63 (quoted)	God and Moses	horizontal
63(cont.)–66	God's speech to the Qur'anic audience	narratorial
67–68	God's speech to the Qur'anic audience	verdictive

2. Meta-Qur'anic Speech: Level, Function, and Act

Before turning to the horizontal exchanges and the recurring non-diegetic voice in detail, it is necessary to specify, in three analytical steps, what kind of phenomenon Meta-Qur'anic Speech names: its narrative level, its narrative function, and the type of speech act it performs. First, at the level of narrative structure. Genette's account of narrative levels distinguishes the extradiegetic, comprising "the narrative of events as taken on by the narrator's discourse," from the intradiegetic, comprising "the narrative of events as taken on by a character's discourse" (Genette, 1988, p. 62). This criterion is discursive rather than biographical: what determines a given utterance's level is not the identity,

authority, or power of the speaker, but which discursive role that utterance performs at the moment it occurs. This distinction resolves a difficulty the sura's own structure poses directly. God speaks in this passage in two capacities that must be kept analytically separate.

At Q. 26:10–17, God addresses Moses within a bounded narrated scene – issuing a directive, receiving Moses's reply – and here God's speech is performed as a character's discourse: however commanding its content, it remains intradiegetic, on a level with the sura's other horizontal exchanges (Moses and Pharaoh, etc.). Elsewhere in the same sura (Q. 26:32–33, 38, 45–46, 67–68), a formally distinct voice addresses not any character but the audience of the Qur'an directly, situated outside any narrated scene: here the same underlying source of speech is performing the narrator's discourse, and is accordingly extradiegetic. It is only this second capacity – narrator's discourse, addressed to the audience rather than to a character – that the present article designates Meta-Qur'anic Speech. Two terminological equivalences follow and are used consistently throughout the article. First, horizontal dialogism, in the Bakhtinian sense employed as reciprocal exchange between named characters, is, in Genette's terms, always intradiegetic: every horizontal exchange examined in this article is character's discourse, situated within a bounded narrated scene. Second, a narratorial frame – a brief clause introducing a horizontal exchange within a single verse – is not a third category, but an instance of the same narratorial register of Meta-Qur'anic Speech examined at Q. 26:32–33, 38, and 45–46 in "The Narratorial Register: Expositive Acts": narrator's discourse performing the narrating function, here compressed into a scene-setting clause immediately preceding a quoted intradiegetic exchange.

Several verses combine both discursive roles within a single verse: a narratorial frame reporting that an event occurred, immediately followed by a quoted utterance belonging to a horizontal exchange. At Q. 26:10, "And [mention] when your Lord called Moses" is narrator's discourse, extradiegetic; the quoted command that follows, "[Saying], 'Go to the wrongdoing people'," is character's discourse, intradiegetic, belonging to the horizontal exchange developed through Q. 26:17. The same structure recurs at Q. 26:61: "And when the two companies saw one another" is the extradiegetic narratorial frame, while "The companions of Moses said, 'Indeed, we are to be overtaken!'" is the intradiegetic quoted exchange continuing into Q. 26:62.

In both cases, Genette's discursive-role criterion allows the two levels to be separated cleanly within a single verse. Second, at the level of narrative function. Not every extradiegetic utterance in the sura performs the same work. Narratology distinguishes a narrator's function of narration proper –

recounting events – from a narrator's function of commentary, which Rimmon-Kenan characterizes as operating "either on the story or on the narration" (Rimmon-Kenan, 1983, p. 98), encompassing interpretation, judgement, and generalization directed at the narratee. Meta-Qur'anic Speech, as it recurs across Q. 26:10–68, performs both functions at different points. The instances at Q. 26:10 (frame), 32–33, 38, 45–46, and 61 (frame) exemplify the narrating function: each reports that an event took place without evaluating it. The instance at Q. 26:67–68 exemplifies the commentary function: rather than advancing the narrated action, it steps back to interpret and pass judgment on what has already been recounted. Third, at the level of speech act. It is specifically in its commentary function that Meta-Qur'anic Speech performs what Austin's taxonomy of illocutionary acts identifies as a verdictive: the act of delivering a finding, ruling, or reckoning on a matter of fact or value, characteristic of "a jury, arbitrator, or umpire" (Austin, 1962, p. 150).

This verdictive classification excludes three competing candidates that likewise carry evaluative content without being verdictives in Austin's technical sense. A bare assertion with evaluative content ("Pharaoh is a tyrant") would describe a state of affairs tinged with moral judgment, without the institutional gesture of rendering a verdict on a case already heard. A behabitive – expressing indignation, blaming – would be an affective reaction to another's conduct, not a finding rendered from a position of arbitration external to the dispute. An expositive – situating an utterance within the unfolding discourse – would structure the narrative without rendering any judgment on its substance. The refrain at Q. 26:67–68 escapes all three: it intervenes after a complete sequence of narrated events, as a finding rendered on a closed case; it renders two opposed verdicts simultaneously – condemnation and glorification — the binary structure characteristic of a judgment rather than an isolated remark; and it is addressed to a third, extradiegetic party, the audience, rather than to the parties themselves, much as a court's verdict, while concerning the parties to a case, is delivered before a public that stands outside the dispute itself yet is directly present to hear and heed it. The refrain at Q. 26:67–68 – "Indeed in that is a sign, but most of them were not to be believers. And indeed, your Lord – He is the Exalted in Might, the Merciful" – does not narrate a further event; it renders a finding on the response just narrated and affirms a claim about the nature of God, precisely the kind of act Austin's category names. The narratorial instances, by contrast, are closer to what Austin terms expositive: situating an event within the ongoing discourse, without rendering judgment upon it. On this basis, Meta-Qur'anic Speech names, throughout this article, an extradiegetic voice that recurs in Q. 26:10–68 in two distinct registers: a narratorial register, performing the narrating function through expositive acts, and a verdictive register, performing the commentary function through the Austinian verdictive

act. Both registers are extradiegetic; the horizontal exchanges among Moses, Pharaoh, the magicians, and Moses's companions remain, throughout, intradiegetic – character's discourse, whether reciprocal, as in the Moses/Pharaoh confrontation examined in "Horizontal Dialogism: Moses and Pharaoh," or internally asymmetric, as in the Moses/his Lord exchange (Q. 26:10–17) developed further in "Internally Asymmetric Horizontal Dialogism: Moses and His Lord."

3. The Narratorial Register: Expositive Acts

The narratorial instances of Meta-Qur'anic Speech – Q. 26:32–33, 38, 45–46 – share a common structure: each reports an event in the unfolding confrontation between Moses and Pharaoh's court without commenting on its significance. "So he threw his staff, and suddenly it was a serpent, manifest. And he drew out his hand; thereupon it was white for the observers" (Q. 26:32–33). This verse reports the two signs Moses performs before Pharaoh's court – the staff transformed, the hand made luminous – in the flattest possible narrative register. There is no evaluative vocabulary here, no address to the audience beyond the bare act of narration, and no ruling on how the event ought to be received. In Austin's terms, this is closer to an expositive act: it situates an event within the unfolding discourse, making "plain how our utterances fit into the course of an argument or conversation" (Austin, 1962, p. 151). The verse's function is to advance the narrated action – to tell the audience what happened – not to tell the audience what to think or what to say. The same structure recurs at Q. 26:38 – "So the magicians were assembled for the appointment of a well-known day" – a pure scene-transition, again without evaluative content; and at Q. 26:45–46 – "So Moses threw his staff, and at once it devoured what they falsified. So the magicians fell down in prostration" – which reports the outcome of the contest but does not yet pass judgment on it; the judgment on belief and unbelief is reserved for the sura's later verdictive instance. This deferral is itself significant: it shows that the narratorial register is not simply commentary that happens not to evaluate, but a distinct discursive operation, confined to advancing and situating the narrated sequence, leaving evaluation to a formally separate moment that prepares the narratee to receive, in due course, the judgment whose sense emerges precisely from the narration just assimilated.

4. The Verdictive Register: The Refrain as Verdictive Act

The verdictive register is instantiated by the refrain at Q. 26:67–68: "Indeed in that is a sign, but most of them were not to be believers. And indeed, your Lord

– He is the Exalted in Might, the Merciful." Unlike the narratorial instances, this utterance does not advance the narrated sequence but instead turns back upon the sequence just narrated to render a finding on it. Two distinct findings are delivered in immediate succession, both addressed directly to the audience rather than to any character: first, a ruling on the epistemic and moral standing of "most of them" – Pharaoh's people – with respect to the signs just recounted; second, a ruling on the nature of God, affirmed in the same verdictive breath. This is precisely the structure Austin's category of the verdictive was designed to capture: "Verdictives consist in the delivering of a finding, official or unofficial, upon evidence or reasons as to value or fact" (Austin, 1962, p. 152).

The Meta-Qur'anic voice here occupies exactly this structural position – not a participant in the narrated dispute, but an instance standing outside the dispute, ruling on it after the fact, for an audience that was never a party to the original exchange at all. Two features of this verdictive act are worth isolating. First, the verdict is rendered retrospectively: it presupposes the entire preceding sequence of intradiegetic exchanges as the evidentiary basis on which the finding is delivered – "indeed in that," referring back to the sign just narrated. Second, the verdict is doubly addressed: it speaks about Pharaoh's people in the third person while speaking to the Qur'anic audience in the implied second person, positioning that audience as the party for whom the finding is actually intended. Pharaoh's people are judged; the Qur'anic audience is the one instructed by the judgment. This double structure raises the question of whether such an act could, even in principle, be reconstructed by a purely statistical treatment of language. This question is taken up directly in the section "Epistemological Implications: AI, Judgment, and Human Agency."

5. The Addressee's Axiological and Practical Capacity

The verdictive register at vv. 67–68 does not merely close the narrative file that precedes it: it interpellates its addressee. The judgment rendered bears on an *āyah*, a "sign," whose mode of reception the Qur'an itself designates elsewhere: "[…] that they might reflect (*yaddabbarū*) upon its verses (*āyātihi*)" (Q. 38:29). The term *tadabbur* – whose Form V verbal pattern carries a nuance of progressivity, and whose root (د-ب-ر, "to track") designates the movement by which one pursues, beyond the surface appearances of words, *ẓawāhir al-alfāẓ*, their concealed meanings, *al-maʿānī al-maknūna* (Ibn ʿĀshūr, 1984, vol. 23, p. 252) – does not designate passive registration, but an active interpretive uptake.

This requirement exceeds the mere "uptake" that Austin's account requires of any ordinary illocutionary act: the verdictive solicits, from its addressee, an

active axiological and practical capacity, deployed, as the subsection "Axiological and Practical Intentionality" showed, on an evaluative plane (weighing the merit of the judgment rendered) and a practical plane (orienting oneself, in consequence, toward a course of action or a belief of one's own). It is precisely this double capacity that the LLM lacks – not through technical insufficiency, but because its reception of utterances remains, by construction, a statistical treatment of the *ẓawāhir al-alfāẓ*, without meditation oriented toward a judgment of value of its own. The LLM can thus occupy neither the position from which the verdictive is produced (see "Meta-Qur'anic Speech: Level, Function, and Act"), nor the position to which it is addressed.

6. Summary of the Distinction

Table 2 summarizes the contrast developed across the subsections "The Narratorial Register: Expositive Acts" and "The Verdictive Register: The Refrain as Verdictive Act."

Table 2. Summary of the Narratorial/Verdictive Distinction

(Q. 26:10–68, Meta-Qur'anic Speech)

	Narratorial register (e.g., 32–33, 38, 45–46)	**Verdictive register** (67–68)
Narrative function	Narration (advancing the sequence)	Commentary (evaluating the sequence)
Austinian act	Expositive	Verdictive
Addressee	Qur'anic audience (implicit)	Qur'anic audience (explicit, doubly structured)
Relation to prior narrated events	Continues them	Renders judgment retrospectively upon them

7. Horizontal Dialogism: Moses and Pharaoh

If Q. 26:10–17 exhibits horizontal dialogism marked by internal asymmetry, the confrontation between Moses and Pharaoh at Q. 26:18–31 exhibits horizontal dialogism in its more fully reciprocal form: two named interlocutors,

neither subordinate to the other in address, contesting a claim through successive, mutually responsive speech acts – precisely the structure Bakhtin's dialogism anticipates, in which "every utterance… is oriented toward a response" (Bakhtin, 1978, p. 103, my translation; see "Dialogism as a Structural Correlate of Intentionality"). The exchange opens with Pharaoh recalling Moses's upbringing at court and his past offense: "Did we not raise you among us as a child, and you remained among us for years of your life? And [then] you did your deed which you did, and you were of the ungrateful" (Q. 26:18–19). This is an assertive, in Searle's sense, but its illocutionary force is that of an accusation, establishing Pharaoh's authority over the terms of the exchange before any theological content is raised. Moses's reply neither rejects the factual claim nor submits to its accusatory force: "I did it, then, while I was of those astray. So I fled from you when I feared you. Then my Lord granted me wisdom and prophethood and appointed me [as one] of the messengers" (Q. 26:20–21). Moses concedes the fact, reframes its significance, and pivots the exchange onto new ground – his own status as messenger. From a Bakhtinian perspective, this reframing enacts what Bakhtin calls the microdialogue, in which "all words in it are double-voiced, and in each of them a conflict of voices takes place" (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 74). Moses's utterance takes up the very grammatical form of Pharaoh's accusation and redirects it: Pharaoh – "…and you were of the ungrateful" (Q. 26:19); Moses – "…while I was of those astray" (Q. 26:20).

The parallel construction – "you were of [X]" answered by "I was of [Y]" – retains Pharaoh's syntactic frame while substituting error for the moral failing Pharaoh's accusation implied, before Moses turns the accusation back onto Pharaoh: "And is this a favor of which you remind me – that you have enslaved the Children of Israel?" (Q. 26:22). This is dialogism in its adversarial register: each utterance answers the one before it by reframing the terms on which the exchange continues. The confrontation's theological center follows when Pharaoh asks, "And what is the Lord of the worlds?" (Q. 26:23) – a request for definition that Moses answers, across three successive exchanges, with an expanding series of assertives: "The Lord of the heavens and earth and that between them" (Q. 26:24); "Your Lord and the Lord of your first forefathers" (Q. 26:26); "Lord of the east and the west and that between them, if you were to reason" (Q. 26:28). Pharaoh does not engage these assertives on their own terms. Instead, at two points, he turns away from Moses to address a third party within the narrated scene: "Do you not hear?" (Q. 26:25), addressed to "those around him," and "Indeed, your 'messenger' who has been sent to you is mad" (Q. 26:27), again addressed to his court rather than to Moses.

This resembles the structure of Meta-Qur'anic Speech examined above – an utterance stepping outside the immediate exchange to address a wider audience –

while remaining, in fact, entirely intradiegetic: Pharaoh's audience is his own court, a party internal to the narrated scene, not the audience of the Qur'an. The contrast sharpens, rather than blurs, the criterion established in "Meta-Qur'anic Speech: Level, Function, and Act": what distinguishes Meta-Qur'anic Speech is not the rhetorical gesture of turning to address a third party, but the specific identity of that addressee – the Qur'anic audience, standing entirely outside the diegesis, as opposed to a character positioned within it. The exchange concludes with a shift in illocutionary type. Having failed to answer Moses's assertives on their own terms, Pharaoh issues a commissive – a threat committing himself to future action: "If you take a god other than me, I will surely place you among those imprisoned" (Q. 26:29). Moses's reply is a challenge: "Even if I brought you proof manifest?" (Q. 26:30), to which Pharaoh responds, "Then bring it, if you should be of the truthful" (Q. 26:31) – setting up the sign-performance narrated in the sura's subsequent verses. The confrontation thus moves, across its span, through assertive, accusatory, definitional, commissive, and challenge-based speech acts, each responsive to the one preceding it – a dense concentration of reciprocal illocutionary activity that stands in contrast to the single directive-and-request structure of Q. 26:10–17 examined in the next subsection. This structural density is not incidental: both confrontations stage a contest between divergent frameworks of authority, Moses's monotheistic claim set against the rival framework shared by Pharaoh and the magicians, and it is precisely this divergence that generates challenge as their organizing illocutionary stake. The exchange at Q. 26:10–17, examined in the next subsection, occurs within a single shared framework – Moses never contests the legitimacy or identity of his interlocutor – and is, correspondingly, devoid of challenge.

8. Internally Asymmetric Horizontal Dialogism: Moses and His Lord

Verses Q. 26:10–17 present a horizontal exchange, intradiegetic in Genette's sense (Genette, 1988): God addresses Moses, and Moses replies, within a single bounded narrated scene, distinct from the recurring extradiegetic voice examined above under Meta-Qur'anic Speech. Yet this exchange is not symmetrical in the way the sura's other horizontal exchanges are. Its speech-act structure marks a hierarchy internal to the dialogue itself, prior to and independent of any subsequent Meta-Qur'anic arbitration. The exchange opens with a directive: God commands Moses, "Go to the wrongdoing people" (Q. 26:10), specifying the mission in the verses that follow – "the people of Pharaoh. Will they not fear Allah?" (Q. 26:11). Moses's reply does not simply accept the command; it responds with an objection grounded in fear of the consequences: "My Lord, indeed I fear that they will deny me, and that my breast will tighten

and my tongue will not be fluent, so send for Aaron. And they have upon me a [claim due to] sin, so I fear that they will kill me" (Q. 26:12–14).

God's opening utterance is a directive in Austin's and Searle's shared sense; Moses's reply is a request, seeking accommodation – the sending of Aaron – rather than a counter-command. This asymmetry is marked lexically as well as illocutionarily. Moses addresses God as *rabbī* – "my Lord" – a possessive form of address that positions the speaker as subordinate to the one addressed. Where God's utterance moves downward, as an order directed at Moses, Moses's utterance moves upward, as a request directed at his Lord. The exchange is horizontal in Genette's narratological sense – both parties are characters within a single narrated scene – but it is not symmetrical in Bakhtin's dialogic sense: the two utterances stand as a directive and the request it occasions, marked by an asymmetry of address that recurs nowhere else in this form among the sura's other horizontal exchanges.

This observation carries a methodological consequence. It would be possible to mistake this asymmetry – God's authority, Moses's subordination, the directive-then-request structure – for an instance of Meta-Qur'anic Speech, on the grounds that God's utterance here orchestrates the mission that structures the rest of the narrated action. The subsection "Meta-Qur'anic Speech: Level, Function, and Act" addressed this possibility directly: by Genette's discursive-role criterion, this exchange remains intradiegetic, since God's utterance here is performed as a character's discourse, addressed to another character within a bounded scene, and not as the narrator's discourse addressed to the Qur'anic audience. What Q. 26:10–17 demonstrates instead is that horizontal dialogism, in this sura, is not uniformly symmetrical: internal hierarchy and directive/request asymmetry can structure an intradiegetic exchange without that exchange thereby becoming extradiegetic. This refinement – internally asymmetric horizontal dialogism – stands as a finding in its own right, distinct from, though compatible with, the narratorial/verdictive distinction developed for Meta-Qur'anic Speech above.

9. Synthesis

The analysis developed in this section establishes a three-level distinction. At the level of narrative structure, Genette's discursive-role criterion separates the intradiegetic exchanges among the sura's characters from the extradiegetic voice addressed to the Qur'anic audience (see "Meta-Qur'anic Speech: Level, Function, and Act"). At the level of narrative function, this voice divides into a narratorial register, advancing the sequence without evaluating it, and a verdictive register, suspending it to render judgment (see "The Narratorial

Register" and "The Verdictive Register" above). At the level of speech act, this functional distinction maps onto Austin's own categories: the narratorial register performs expositive acts; the verdictive register performs the act his taxonomy names, exactly, verdictive (see the same two subsections).

The verdictive act at Q. 26:67–68 presupposes the entire preceding intradiegetic sequence as its evidentiary basis and renders its finding retrospectively: two intradiegetic verdicts – condemnation for Pharaoh's people, glorification for Moses and his companions – while instructing a third, extradiegetic party, the Qur'anic audience, invited to identify with both outcomes. This double structure is legible even in the verse's own vocabulary, where the two divine attributes conjoined – *al-ʿazīz* ("the Almighty," the attribute of rigor answering the condemnation of Pharaoh's people) and *al-raḥīm* ("the Merciful," the attribute of grace answering the glorification of Moses and his companions) – correspond respectively to the fate of the two parties. This invited identification is itself doubly named – once by Ricœur's theoretical category of narrative identity, the constitution of a subject's self-understanding through exemplary narratives (Ricœur, 1990), and once by the Qur'an's own internal term, *ʿibra*, the "lesson" a narrative offers "for whoever fears [Allah]" (Q. 79:26), applied by the Qur'an itself to the Moses/Pharaoh narrative. This question is taken up directly in the section "Epistemological Implications: AI, Judgment, and Human Agency."

Epistemological Implications: AI, Judgment, and Human Agency

1. Returning to the Question

The preceding section closed by asking whether the verdictive act performed by Meta-Qur'anic Speech at Q. 26:67–68 – a retrospective, doubly addressed ruling on a preceding sequence of intradiegetic exchange – could, even in principle, be reconstructed by a purely statistical treatment of language. The apparatus developed in the sections on the phenomenological framework and on algorithmic language processing supplies a direct answer, though one that requires distinguishing between what algorithmic language processing can redescribe and what it can perform. An LLM could, without difficulty, produce a string of text resembling Q. 26:67–68: given sufficient training data containing Qur'anic exegesis and commentary on the sura's refrain structure, a model could generate an utterance with the same propositional content, following the same recurring pattern identified across the sura. This is not in dispute: surface reproduction of the verdictive utterance's form is well within the reach of a system operating on lexical frequency, occurrence, and co-

occurrence, particularly given how often this refrain itself recurs across the Qur'anic corpus on which such a model would likely be trained. What such a system could not do is perform the act Q. 26:67–68 performs, for exactly the reasons that account specifies at each of its five points.

2. Why Redescription Is Not Ruling

The transition from the intentional apparatus built in the phenomenological and algorithmic sections to the conclusion regarding the LLM's verdictive incapacity holds in a single chain: producing a verdictive act requires occupying an arbiter's position, intentionally oriented toward an audience whose horizon of understanding one seeks to transform (see "The Phenomenological Framework: Intentionality, Horizon, and the Hermeneutic Circle") – and it is precisely this intentional structure, not mere conversational passivity, that the LLM constitutively lacks (see "Algorithmic Language Processing: What a Large Language Model Does"). Symmetrically, on the addressee's side (see "The Addressee's Axiological and Practical Capacity"), the LLM cannot position itself axiologically and practically before the judgment rendered either – a lack that echoes, by extension rather than direct citation, the structure of Skiba's (2026) argument on the speaker: where Skiba shows that the LLM cannot care about its normative standing as a potentially sanctioned speaker, the foregoing analysis shows, symmetrically, that it cannot care about its normative standing as a potentially addressed recipient of a verdict.

First, an Austinian verdictive presupposes a speaker positioned to render judgment – occupying the adjudicating role of a figure such as an umpire or magistrate (Austin, 1962) – a standpoint from which the preceding sequence of events can be evaluated as evidence. As the subsection "Synthesis" showed of Q. 26:67–68's own double verdict, this standpoint is not merely adjudicative, but sovereign: capable of condemning one party and affirming or glorifying another from a position of authority external to the dispute itself. The subsection "No Epochē, No Bracketing" established that an LLM has no standpoint of this kind to occupy: it cannot bracket presuppositions through an Epochē, because it has no naive presuppositions belonging to a consciousness in the first place, only statistical regularities belonging to a training distribution. A verdictive act requires someone who judges; an LLM's output, however verdictive in surface form, has no such someone behind it. A further consequence follows from Rimmon-Kenan's account of narrator reliability. The very possibility of judging a narrator's evaluations as reliable or unreliable – "Contrasts and incongruities in the narrator's language alert us to a possible unreliability in the narrator's evaluations, though not necessarily in his reporting of facts" (Rimmon-Kenan, 1983,

p. 102) – presupposes a speaking subject whose evaluations could diverge from the facts being reported: a gap between what is said and what is meant that only a genuine evaluative standpoint makes possible. An LLM's output admits of no such gap: its statistically generated continuations are neither reliable nor unreliable evaluations, because they are not evaluations at all.

Second, the verdict at Q. 26:67–68 renders two intradiegetic verdicts – condemnation for Pharaoh's people, glorification for Moses and his companions – while instructing a third, extradiegetic party, the Qur'anic audience: a structure that presupposes exactly the fusion of horizons described in "The Horizon of Expectation and the Fusion of Horizons" and shown, in "No Horizon, No Fusion," to have no correlate on the model's side. An LLM's "attention" to a preceding context is a weighted statistical operation over token representations; it is not an orientation toward an audience whose own horizon of understanding the utterance seeks to reshape.

Third, the retrospective character of the verdict – its dependence on the entire preceding sequence of intradiegetic exchange as evidentiary basis – is an act of *Verstehen* in Ricœur's sense: a global synthesis binding together partial meanings into a single judgment. The subsection "Explanation Without Understanding" established that an LLM performs, at most, a radicalized *Erklären* – tracking traces at scale – without the reciprocal movement toward a global, intended sense that *Verstehen* requires, because there is no speaking subject for whom that sense is being constituted.

Fourth, the verdictive act is, definitionally, a performative act in Austin's original sense – delivering a verdict does not describe a state of affairs so much as bring a ruling into force. The subsection "Simulated Performativity" established that an LLM's output can imitate the surface grammatical form of such acts without satisfying the felicity conditions on which their illocutionary force depends. An output resembling a verdict is not thereby a verdict.

Fifth, and finally, the verdictive act operates within precisely the dialogic structure examined in "Simulated Dialogism": it presupposes, and responds to, the entire preceding sequence of horizontal voices as a real dialogic history. An LLM's apparent responsiveness to context reproduces the form dialogic orientation takes in its training data, without the underlying intentional orientation of one consciousness toward another that dialogism actually consists in.

3. A Qualified Answer to the Article's Opening Questions

The analysis conducted from the phenomenological framework through "Why Redescription Is Not Ruling" supports a qualified, not an absolute, answer to the

question of the separation between intentional and algorithmic language. This separation is not absolute at the level of redescription: an LLM can track, reproduce, and recombine the lexical and distributional traces that a verdictive act like Q. 26:67–68 leaves in a corpus – precisely what makes such systems useful for surfacing patterns across a body of text. But it is absolute at the level of the act itself: no accumulation of traces, however extensive, constitutes the performing of a verdictive – an act that requires a subject positioned to judge, oriented toward an audience whose horizon it seeks to reshape, and situated within a real dialogic history. An LLM can process the residue of judgment; it cannot judge.

4. Implications for Human Agency and AI

This asymmetry bears on the broader question this issue poses concerning AI, consciousness, and human agency. If the capacity to render a verdictive act – occupying a standpoint from which prior events become evidence for a judgment addressed to another's horizon of understanding – is constitutively unavailable to a system operating by accumulation and calibration alone, then this capacity marks a precise, textually argued boundary of human linguistic agency that algorithmic language processing does not cross. The case examined is a limit case, but the structural point it isolates – the difference between tracing a judgment's residue and performing the judgment itself – is not confined to Qur'anic discourse: it applies wherever human speech renders a verdict, though rarely as legibly. The Meta-Qur'anic Speech case demonstrates this point with particular clarity: rather than merely happening to instantiate the distinction cleanly, it stands as an exemplary case in the eidetic sense set out in "Intentionality and the Eidetic Reduction" – one in which the formal boundary between narrating and judging is made visible as such, where in ordinary speech the same boundary is instantiated only diffusely.

Conclusion

This article set out from a phenomenological premise: that human speech is structured by an intentionality irreducible to the statistical treatment of linguistic traces. *Sūrat Ash-Shuʿarāʾ* (Q. 26:10–68) served as a test case: beneath a dense sequence of intradiegetic exchanges, a recurring extradiegetic voice – Meta-Qur'anic Speech – divides into a narratorial register that advances the narrated sequence and a verdictive register that suspends it to render judgment. This last register, instantiated in the refrain at Q. 26:67–68, was shown to perform what Austin's taxonomy names a verdictive act: a finding rendered retrospectively,

on the evidentiary basis of the entire preceding exchange, doubly addressed – two intradiegetic verdicts, condemnation for Pharaoh's people, glorification for Moses and his companions – while instructing a third, extradiegetic party, the Qur'anic audience.

The article's central claim is that such an act cannot, even in principle, be reconstructed by a system operating through the accumulation and calibration of lexical frequency, occurrence, and co-occurrence – not because such a system is technically limited in ways future engineering might overcome, but because the act requires precisely what the preceding sections specified an intentional, judging, dialogically situated subject to possess, and a statistical model, by its own constitutive design, to lack: a standpoint from which prior events become evidence, an orientation toward an audience whose horizon of understanding the utterance seeks to reshape, and a real dialogic history within which the judgment intervenes. An algorithmic system can trace the sedimented residue these acts leave in a corpus; it cannot perform the acts themselves.

The case examined here is deliberately narrow – a single, illustrative passage, without claim to exhaustive coverage of Meta-Qur'anic Speech across the wider Qur'anic corpus – and its extension beyond Qur'anic discourse, to courts, criticism, or everyday moral appraisal, remains a plausible hypothesis rather than a completed demonstration. What the analysis establishes is a qualified answer to the question with which the article began: the gap between lived, intentional human speech and its algorithmic redescription is not uniform across every register of speech. It is at its narrowest where language merely reports, and at its widest, and most consequential, precisely where language judges.

▣ Conflict of Interest

The author declares no competing interests.

References

Attah, N. O. (2025). Do language models lack communicative intentions? *Synthese*, *205*, 187. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-025-05022-6

Austin, J. L. (1962). *How to do things with words*. Oxford University Press.

Bakhtin, M. (1978). *Esthétique et théorie du roman* (D. Olivier, Trans.). Gallimard.

Bakhtin, M. (1981). *The dialogic imagination: Four essays* (M. Holquist, Ed.; C. Emerson & M. Holquist, Trans.). University of Texas Press.

Bakhtin, M. (1984a). *Problems of Dostoevsky's poetics* (C. Emerson, Ed. & Trans.). University of Minnesota Press.

Bakhtin, M. (1986). *Speech genres and other late essays* (C. Emerson & M. Holquist, Eds.; V. W. McGee, Trans.). University of Texas Press.

Bakhtin, M. (1984b). Les genres du discours. In *Esthétique de la création verbale* (A. Aucouturier, Trans.; pp. 263–308). Gallimard.

Bender, E. M., & Koller, A. (2020). Climbing towards NLU: On meaning, form, and understanding in the age of data. *Proceedings of the 58th Annual Meeting of the Association for Computational Linguistics*, 5185–5198. https://doi.org/10.18653/v1/2020.acl-main.463

Dilthey, W. (1947). *Le monde de l'esprit* (M. Rémy, Trans.). Aubier Montaigne.

Firth, J. R. (1957). A synopsis of linguistic theory, 1930–1955. In *Studies in linguistic analysis (Special volume of the Philological Society)* (pp. 1–32). Blackwell.

Gadamer, H.-G. (2013). *Truth and method* (J. Weinsheimer & D. G. Marshall, Trans.). Bloomsbury Academic.

Genette, G. (1988). *Narrative discourse revisited* (J. E. Lewin, Trans.). Cornell University Press.

Gubelmann, R. (2024). Large language models, agency, and why speech acts are beyond them (for now) – A Kantian-cum-pragmatist case. *Philosophy & Technology*, *37*, 32, 1–24. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13347-024-00696-1

Harris, Z. (1954). Distributional structure. *Word*, *10*(2–3), 146–162. https://doi.org/10.1080/00437956.1954.11659520

Husserl, E. (1966). *Méditations cartésiennes: Introduction à la phénoménologie* (G. Peiffer & E. Levinas, Trans.). Vrin.

Husserl, E. (1994). *L'idée de la phénoménologie: Cinq leçons* (A. Lowit, Trans.). Presses Universitaires de France.

Husserl, E. (2001). *Logical investigations* (Vol. II; J. N. Findlay, Trans.). Routledge. (Original work published 1900–1901; English translation first published 1970.)

Ibn ʿĀshūr, M. (1984). *Tafsīr al-Taḥrīr wa-al-Tanwīr* (Vol. 23). al-Dār al-Tūnisiyya li-l-Nashr.

Lenci, A., & Sahlgren, M. (2023). *Distributional semantics*. Cambridge University Press.

McKenna, W. R. (1997). Epochē and reduction. In L. Embree, E. A. Behnke, D. Carr, J. C. Evans, J. Huertas-Jourda, J. J. Kockelmans, W. R. McKenna, A. Mickunas, J. N. Mohanty, T. M. Seebohm, & R. M. Zaner (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of phenomenology* (pp. 177–180). Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Ricœur, P. (1977). Expliquer et comprendre : Sur quelques connexions remarquables entre la théorie du texte, la théorie de l'action et la théorie de l'histoire. *Revue Philosophique de Louvain*, *75*(25), 126–147. https://doi.org/10.3406/phlou.1977.5924

Ricœur, P. (1990). *Soi-même comme un autre*. Seuil.

Ricœur, P. (2004). *À l'école de la phénoménologie*. Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin.

Rimmon-Kenan, S. (1983). *Narrative fiction: Contemporary poetics*. Routledge.

Saheeh International. (1997). *The Qur'an: English meanings*. Al-Muntada Al-Islami Trust.

Searle, J. R. (1985). *Expression and meaning: Studies in the theory of speech acts*. Cambridge University Press.

Searle, J. R., & Vanderveken, D. (1985). *Foundations of illocutionary logic*. Cambridge University Press.

Skiba, L. (2026). Artificial speech acts. *Analysis*, *86*(2), anag022. https://doi.org/10.1093/analys/anag022

Vaswani, A., Shazeer, N., Parmar, N., Uszkoreit, J., Jones, L., Gomez, A. N., Kaiser, Ł., & Polosukhin, I. (2017). Attention is all you need. *Advances in Neural Information Processing Systems*, *30*, 5998–6008. https://papers.nips.cc/paper_files/paper/2017/hash/3f5ee243547dee91fbd053c1c4a845aa-Abstract.html