



Research Paper

Two Examples From The Holy Quran In Context Of Behavioral Aesthetics*

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ABSTRACT

Aesthetic experience does not occur exclusively between the subject and the object. This is because the aesthetic subject must place a value on the aesthetic object. Aesthetic value refers to the value that the subject places on the object, such as beauty, goodness, sublimity, tragedy, or comedy. For example, when my mental image of a book matches the book I am holding in my hand, I form the proposition, This is the book. If my mental image of the book matches the physical book in front of me, this proposition is considered true. In this sense, truth (truthfulness) denotes the logical value assigned to the book object. However, not all propositions may be logical. Humans appreciate and derive pleasure from objects, classifying them as pleasant, sublime, beautiful, or useful. The values assigned to such objects are aesthetic. On the other hand, the distinction between good-beautiful and classic-modern aesthetics has been a determining factor in aesthetic values. Is there a difference between the values of beauty and goodness? While discussing the answer to this question, we also reveal the path of aesthetics.

In his discourse on the nature of beauty, Socrates uses the phrase 'Could it be that beauty is not also useful and beneficial?' to suggest that beauty is defined as both useful and practical, emphasizing the intersection of beauty and goodness. According to him, an object is beautiful not only because it is attractive, but also because it is useful and practical. The underlying theme here is the importance of moral behavior in defining beauty. Thus, the value system that the Quran seeks to establish, a set of values manifested in a virtuous individual, becomes inextricably linked with both beauty and morality. From this perspective, the Quran's foundational value system first raises epistemological awareness before demanding direct application in human life. The study will begin by exploring the concept of aesthetic values, followed by an examination of the Quran's approach, which will be illustrated with two examples. These; It means speaking kind words and lending money for the sake of Allah.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Quran, which was revealed to Prophet Muhammad via divine revelation, is the final and authentic scripture. Examining its content, the Quran emphasizes belief, worship, interpersonal relationships, and moral behavior. The concept of aesthetics or beauty is inherent in this context, as well as in the life philosophy it imparts to Muslims.

When addressing the topic of aesthetics to Muslims, the Quran does not make a categorical statement such as, "This is aesthetics." Instead, it encourages people to study and research recommended behaviors to determine their aesthetic significance.

However, understanding the aesthetic value of a verse necessitates an initial awareness of aesthetics. For instance, consider the beauty of Allah's actions. The second stage focuses on the emergence of aesthetics, such as ontological ones. The third stage focuses on the aesthetics that manifest in believers' actions, such as the beauty of conduct. Furthermore, the Quran implies that the three aesthetic perspectives it expresses should coexist in a believer. As a result, the presentation will begin with a definition of aesthetics, followed by an

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illustration of the aesthetic awareness instilled in individuals by the Quran in each of the three aesthetic stages, emphasizing its provision of moral beauty to human life.

1.1. AESTHETIC VALUE ANALYSIS OF THE HOLY QURAN

The word 'aesthetic' is derived from the Greek words 'Aisthanesthai,' meaning to perceive or sense, and 'aisthesis,' meaning emotion or sensation. The term "aisthesis," which means "perceptible perception" in Greek, is regarded as both the foundation of the aesthetic concept and the origin of beauty. In these terms, aesthetics, or beauty, is a phenomenon that governs the interaction between the individual and the aesthetic object within the framework of the human senses. However, because it is related to the aesthetic senses, developing a universally accepted definition is impossible due to the subjective nature of individual perceptions. (Göz, Mutluel, 2019: 96-122)

Aesthetic perception does not occur exclusively between the subject and the object. This is because aesthetics requires the subject to place value on the aesthetic object. Aesthetic value refers to the value that the subject places on an object, such as beauty, goodness, usefulness, sublimity, tragedy, or comedy. For example, when my mental image of a book matches the physical book in my hand, I form the proposition, "This is the book." If the mental and physical aspects agree, the proposition is considered true. In this sense, truth (reality) refers to the logical value assigned to the book object. However, not all propositions may be logical. Humans value and enjoy objects, assigning qualities such as pleasant, sublime, beautiful, and useful to those that make them happy. The values assigned to these objects are aesthetic. (Tunalı, 1996; 131-132).

The distinction between good and beautiful within aesthetic values has played a significant role in the classical-modern aesthetic divide. Is there a difference between the values of beauty and goodness? We discuss the answer to this question while also revealing the aesthetic journey.

In Socrates' discussion of the nature of beauty, the phrase "Could it be that beauty is not also useful and beneficial?" reveals his definition of beauty as both useful and practical, emphasizing the relationship between beauty and goodness. According to him, an object is beautiful not only because it is attractive, but also because it is useful and practical. The underlying theme emphasized here is the definition of moral behavior as beautiful. Thus, the aesthetic behavior that emerges in a morally upright individual, as described in the Quran, becomes inextricably linked to both beauty and morality.

The Quran uses the terms beneficial, useful, and beautiful interchangeably, making no distinctions. In this context, an example from the Quran is the verse:

"He created the large and small livestock to be ridden, as well as for other purposes, and from them you obtain various benefits, and some of them you eat." And there is beauty in them when you bring them home at night and lead them out to pasture in the morning. And they transport your loads to a location you could not have reached without great difficulty. Surely your Lord is most compassionate and merciful. He created horses, mules, and donkeys for you to ride and adorn. And he creates what you don't know."

This verse is a beautiful illustration. When contemplated for their beauty, animals that are consumed, whose milk is drunk, and used for transportation are considered living beings that provide humans with pleasure and enjoyment.

However, in the modern aesthetic understanding, which began with Kant, an object must be considered beautiful... For example, consider the concept advocated by the Quran: 'Acting solely for Allah's pleasure.' A Muslim who performs a good deed or acts of kindness without seeking material gain or knowledge may be evaluated from a modern aesthetic perspective. However, when viewed in terms of the ultimate goal, it differs from Kant's modern aesthetic understanding. Finally, what is demanded is Allah's pleasure, and the desired outcome is genuine happiness after death. However, there is no material gain to be had in this world. In this regard, all kindness done to please Allah does not seek profit or benefit in this world. Indeed, the narrow scope of Kant's aesthetic understanding of material objects makes it both meaningless and impossible.

To summarize, the judgment of taste encompasses all aspects of life within the overall narrative of the Quran, except for those things that are defined and prohibited as forbidden. In contrast, the scope of liking should, at the very least, be permissible in this worldly life. It should not venture into the forbidden and doubtful areas of the world.

1. 2. THE HOLY QURAN AIMS TO CULTIVATE BEHAVIORAL BEAUTY RATHER THAN COGNITIVE BEAUTY

However, according to Islamic aesthetics, beauty is more than just cognitive beauty. This is because a Muslim spends every moment of their life striving to implement beauty in their mind and set a good example for others. This approach is regarded in aesthetics as expression (narrative) and vitality, and in Islamic aesthetics, it is directly related to morality. It denotes not only the appropriate behavior of any being within its kind but also the superiority of its behavior when compared to others of the same type. A horse, for example, is thought to be more lively and impactful in its movements than a donkey, and humans, due to their high level of competence in their behavior, rank at the top of the competence scale among all living beings.

This understanding is referred to as behavioral aesthetics in the Quran. Behavioral aesthetics also includes beautiful behaviors that result from the combination of belief, worship, and moral rules (Surah Ar-Ra'd, 13:29; Surah Al-Buruj, 85:22). The Quran attributes these behaviors to Allah's beautiful names, known as 'Asma-ul Husna (Surah Al-A'raf, 7:206). Several examples in the Quran show how any behavior can be carried out perfectly and beautifully. These include making beautiful assumptions (Surah An-Nur, 24:11–13), showing patience in the face of afflictions and hardships (Surah Sad, 38:44), speaking eloquently (Surah Al-Isra, 17:53), being a cause of good deeds (Surah An-Nisa, 2:85), divorcing with kindness (Surah At-Talaq, 65:2), lending money beautifully (Surah Al-Hadid, 57:18), setting a beautiful example (Surah Al-Ahzab, 33:21), earning a living beautifully (Surah Behavioral aesthetics refers to the collective expression of an individual's vitality and liveliness through all of these behaviors. Because the presence of these behaviors indicates an individual's level of competence, in this regard, at the highest level of such competence, there is Prophet Muhammad, described in the Quran as "uswa hasana" (Surah Al-Ahzab, 33:21). As a result, according to the Quran, he represents the pinnacle of expressiveness and vitality in human behavior. In other words, the Quran contains the answer to the question of how a person with behavioral aesthetics should be, as demonstrated by Prophet Muhammad.

Furthermore, the Quran expresses the desire for behavioral beauty to manifest in all members of society. This means that the Quran's intended behavioral aesthetics are not limited to specific individuals in society. The Quran encourages people living in society to improve their behavior through their willpower. Certainly, there should be beautiful examples, as the level of beauty manifested in behaviors is not the same in each individual. Each person strives to implement these behaviors in their lives based on their intellectual level. The reason for this is the person's level of awareness. According to the Quran, Prophet Muhammad represents a certain level of awareness of behavioral aesthetics. Every person adjusts their competence level to that of Prophet Muhammad, intending to match his behavior. However, it is impossible to reach the level of Prophet Muhammad because he is a prophet shaped by Allah's discipline and has expressed his perfection in the Quran (Surah Kalam, 68:4). Furthermore, he declared that he had a perfect moral character according to the Quran (Surah Kalam, 68:4). As a result, his goal as an exemplary figure is to stand before all members of society, representing the pinnacle of good behavior. I'd like to focus on two examples from the Quran that enhance human life and contribute to aesthetic value.

EXAMPLE 1: SPEAKING/ACTING BEAUTIFULLY

The Quran emphasizes the value of good behavior, particularly the importance of speaking and acting well. This is because speech, or communication, is the most important way of interacting with others. The Quran's expressions in speech and eloquence are remarkable. The Quran takes an instructive and educational approach to speech, covering everything from style and content to tone and emphasis. The use of imperative forms in the Quran demonstrates the importance placed on this matter. The Quran even refers to itself as the "most beautiful of words," emphasizing the value placed on speech. A poignant example of this emphasis occurs when Allah sends Prophet Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh, instructing them to speak gently. The Quran suggests that Pharaoh may heed advice due to the power of gentle and beautiful words. This emphasizes the importance of communicating softly and eloquently, particularly when offering advice. (Mutluel, 2016:150)

Furthermore, the Quran recommends using the most beautiful words when communicating with non-believers, especially when explaining Islam to them. The concept of the "most beautiful words" can be understood here, particularly in light of the fundamental Islamic principle of Tawhid. Alternatively, it may indicate the need for careful and measured speech when communicating with non-believers to gradually warm their hearts to Islam.

"Instruct my faithful servants to speak the most beautiful words to the disbelievers, lest Satan sow discord among them." (Surah Isra17/53) In another verse, it advises Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) to be patient in response to the disbelievers' opposition to his early calls to Allah's religion, as well as to gracefully distance himself from the situation.

"Be patient in the face of their words, and gracefully distance yourself from them." (Surah Müzemmil73/10)

The admonition to Muslims not to raise their voices when speaking with Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is significant in establishing how people should behave in the presence of those older or more venerable than them.

"O you who have believed, do not raise your voices above the Prophet's voice, nor speak aloud to him as you do to one another, lest your deeds become worthless while you are unaware." (Surah Hucurat 49/3-4).

The phrase "do not raise your voices" in the verse not only implies that a Muslim should not raise their voice in the presence of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), but also suggests that individuals should not let their personal opinions and preferences override the definitive legal commandments and ethical principles set forth by Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). (Esed, 1999;1054).

Furthermore, the Quran's discourse on inheritance distribution emphasizes generosity and kind words toward close and distant relatives present during the division of inheritance, even if they do not have a share.

The verse encourages benevolent treatment, the use of good and kind words, and even the provision of financial or material assistance to poor family members or orphans present at the inheritance ceremony. The Quran emphasizes the importance of avoiding harsh treatment and the use of unkind words, instead urging a compassionate and considerate approach in such situations. (Mawdudi, 1988; 1/333).

"If relatives, orphans, and the needy are present during inheritance distribution, provide for them and speak to them kindly." (Surah Nisa 4/8).

The Qur'an emphasizes that wealth given for the necessities of life should not be given to foolish and thoughtless individuals who are incapable of using it correctly and honestly and who, once wealthy, engage in behaviors that disrupt and corrupt the community's social and moral structure. In such cases, the Qur'an emphasizes the importance of demonstrating sensitivity in meeting the needs of these people. However, it also emphasizes that people who are prone to extravagance, set a bad example in society, and encourage others to spend money recklessly should not be allowed to do so. It implies that when such people lead a regular and organized life, they should be approached convincingly and politely to explain that their property will be favorably given to them if certain conditions are met. (Sabuni, 1992;1/489).

"Do not entrust those with little understanding with the sustenance that Allah has provided for you; instead, provide for them, clothe them, and speak to them with kindness." (Surah Nisa 4/5).

Allah emphasizes that Allah has revealed the Qur'an as the most beautiful expression

"Allah has sent down the most beautiful expression, a harmonious book that repeats its expressions."
(Surah Zümer 39/23)

Altıntaş believes that "the most beautiful words are undoubtedly the words of the Creator" and provides a comprehensive assessment:

"The most beautiful words are truthful, divine in origin, suitable for human nature, listened to and accepted, and carry words of compassion, mercy, care, kindness, grace, and love." (Altıntaş, 1988;86).

In another verse of the Qur'an, it is expressed as "All beautiful words ascend to Allah." (Surah Fatır 35/10). Mawdudi interpreted the beautiful words ascending to Allah as belief in Tawhid (the oneness of God). He emphasizes the importance of beautiful deeds for beautiful words to reach Allah. (Mawdudi, 1988; 4/548) Thus, when beautiful words and deeds come together, perfection is attained, and the beautiful human that Islam seeks to create is revealed. The verse in Fussilat 33, revealed in the early years of Islam, especially during a period when poor and weak Muslims faced great torture and suffering for accepting Islam, states, "Who speaks better than one who calls to Allah, works righteousness, and says, 'I am one of those who submit (Muslims)?" This verse is significant because it emphasizes the beauty of the harmony between words and actions in the context of these individuals' difficulties, demonstrating that their efforts are not in vain.

Again, when discussing those whom Allah guides to the right path, the most distinguishing feature of these individuals is their use of the most beautiful expression.

"They listen to the word and choose the most beautiful of them. "These are the people whom Allah has led to the right path." (Surah Zümer 39/18)

The Qur'an condemns boasting about acts of kindness and states that it is not virtuous behavior. Instead of seeking people's respect for charity given or, when the opportunity arises, using harsh words in response to charity, the Qur'an suggests that speaking kindly is preferable to such charity.

"A kind word and forgiveness are preferable to charitable acts followed by harm." (Surah Bakara 2/263).

The Qur'an frequently encourages the use of beautiful words to cultivate beauty in interpersonal relationships, emphasizing the importance of speaking kindly to create a harmonious community.

EXAMPLE 2: LENDING BEAUTIFULLY

In the Qur'an, spending some or all of Allah's wealth for His sake is described as a beautiful loan. This behavior is critical for the community's social cohesion, the coexistence of rich and poor, and the development of a sense of trust in society. When a person has money and does not require it at the time, they may perform this act solely for the sake of Allah, without expecting anything in return, without any display or pursuit of fame. This act can take the form of either complete charity, as seen between the Ansar and the Muhajireen, or lending for a set period. (Mawdudi, 1988;6/126) The borrower must repay the debt on time and should never take advantage of this kindness. Exploiting a favor results in a negative situation in which the kindness may not be extended again.

"Who will give Allah a good loan?" Allah will multiply it for him/her numerous times, and he/she will receive an honorable reward." (Surah Hadid 57/11)

The promise in this verse that those who lend money for Allah's sake will receive multiplied rewards as well as additional valuable rewards emphasizes the virtue and beauty of lending. Another verse mentions Allah's forgiveness in addition to these rewards.

"If you make a generous loan to Allah, He will multiply it and forgive you, because Allah is appreciative and forgiving." (Surah Tegabun 64/17).

Thus, an effort is made to encourage people to meet each other's needs without expecting interest, usury, or any other benefit in return. The essence of such lending is to meet a need without expecting anything in return, whether it is interest, kindness, or another type of benefit. Forgetting the favor after the need has been met is critical.

“Indeed, the men and women who practice charity, as well as [those] who have loaned Allah a good loan, it will be multiplied for them, and they will receive a noble reward.” (Surah Hadid 57/18).

III. CONCLUSION

The Holy Qur'an does not proceed from abstract concepts in interpersonal relations. He gives examples of ideals and beauties from life and wants people to apply these examples in their lives. However, it is very difficult to apply these examples in life with the competence recommended by the Qur'an. The people who have achieved this feat are prophets. Other people have to follow the example of the prophet and apply these good behaviors in their lives.

The Qur'an does not treat aesthetics as the mere beauty of appearance. It integrates beauty as inner and outer beauty, and while it prioritizes inner beauty, it reveals that external beauty is not the main goal. For this purpose, the lifestyle he puts forward is to reveal the type of person who has become competent through inner beauty. In addition, it evaluates and values the value of everything in this direction.

In the same way, the Qur'an gives clear examples when revealing behaviors that do not express aesthetic value. He wants believers to organize their lives based on these examples. In order to spread the aesthetic value and make it a habit in human life, it recommends daily, weekly, annual and lifetime prayers. Thus, it enables behaviors that express aesthetic value to make them permanent as well as easy to do in people's daily life.

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