



Website: <https://ejournal.uinib.ac.id/jurnal/index.php/mashdar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15548/mashdar.v7i2.12133>

P-ISSN: [2685-1547](#) | E-ISSN: [2685-1555](#)

The Art of Persuading God through Generosity and Miserliness: A Saussurean Semiotic Reading of Q.S. al-Layl (92): 5–11

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Submitted: 2025-07-11	Revised: 2025-09-07	Accepted: 2025-12-10	Published: 2025-12-30
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Abstract : This study examines three paradoxical phenomena frequently observed in contemporary Muslim societies: generous Muslims who nonetheless endure persistent worldly hardship, miserly individuals who appear outwardly content, and non-Muslims who exhibit notably charitable behaviour. Employing a qualitative, library-based design with documentation as its primary data-gathering method, the study applies Ferdinand de Saussure's structural semiotics through four analytical stages: *langue-parole*, *signifier–signified*, *synchronic–diachronic*, and *syntagmatic–paradigmatic* relations, to reinterpret Q.S. al-Layl (92): 5–11. The findings reveal that when generous Muslims who affirm divine recompense continue to experience worldly difficulty, this reflects an unfulfilled dimension of *taqwā*, whereby the promised ease is deferred to the hereafter while hardship persists in the present life. Conversely, non-Muslims who practise generosity without faith receive their worldly ease in full yet face adversity in the eschatological realm. The apparent happiness of miserly individuals – Muslim and non-Muslim alike – proves illusory and transient, masking deeper forms of suffering that manifest as social disintegration in this world and punitive consequences in the hereafter. Such miserliness further cultivates arrogance, perceived self-sufficiency, anxiety over material loss, and a fundamental rejection of the principle of divine recompense. These findings underscore that ease and hardship, as articulated in Q.S. al-Layl (92): 5–11, operate across both temporal and eschatological dimensions and cannot be assessed solely through observable worldly outcomes.

Keywords: *Structural semiotics; Ferdinand de Saussure; Generosity; Miserliness; Q.S. al-Layl (92): 5–11; Qur'anic interpretation.*

Abstrak : Penelitian ini mengkaji tiga fenomena paradoks yang sering dijumpai dalam masyarakat Muslim kontemporer, yaitu Muslim dermawan yang tetap mengalami kesulitan hidup yang berkepanjangan, individu kikir yang tampak hidup bahagia, serta non-Muslim yang menunjukkan perilaku kedermawanan yang menonjol. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif berbasis studi kepustakaan dengan metode dokumentasi sebagai teknik utama pengumpulan data. Analisis dilakukan menggunakan semiotika struktural Ferdinand de Saussure melalui empat tahap, yaitu *langue-parole*, *signifier–signified* (penanda–petanda), sinkronik–diakronik, serta relasi sintagmatik–paradigmatik, untuk menafsirkan kembali Q.S. al-Layl (92): 5–11. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ketika seorang Muslim yang dermawan dan meyakini balasan dari Allah tetap mengalami kesulitan hidup di dunia, hal tersebut mencerminkan adanya dimensi takwa yang belum terpenuhi secara sempurna. Dalam kondisi demikian, kemudahan yang dijanjikan Allah ditangguhkan hingga kehidupan akhirat, sementara kesulitan masih berlangsung dalam kehidupan dunia.

Sebaliknya, non-Muslim yang berbuat dermawan tanpa landasan iman memperoleh kemudahan hidup secara penuh di dunia, tetapi menghadapi kesulitan pada kehidupan akhirat. Kebahagiaan yang tampak pada individu kikir, baik Muslim maupun non-Muslim, pada hakikatnya bersifat semu dan sementara karena menutupi bentuk-bentuk penderitaan yang lebih mendalam, yang terwujud dalam keretakan sosial di dunia serta konsekuensi hukuman di akhirat. Sifat kikir juga menumbuhkan kesombongan, perasaan tidak membutuhkan pihak lain, kecemasan terhadap kehilangan harta, serta penolakan mendasar terhadap prinsip balasan ilahi. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa kemudahan dan kesulitan sebagaimana dijelaskan dalam Q.S. al-Layl (92): 5–11 berlangsung dalam dimensi temporal (duniawi) sekaligus eskatologis (akhirat), sehingga tidak dapat dinilai hanya berdasarkan hasil yang tampak dalam kehidupan dunia.

Kata Kunci: Semiotika Struktural; Ferdinand de Saussure; Kedermawanan; Kekikiran; Q.S. al-Layl (92): 5–11; Tafsir Al-Qur'an.

INTRODUCTION

Generosity is widely regarded as a commendable moral virtue, whereas miserliness is viewed as a reprehensible trait (Bisri, 2012). Within Islamic thought, moral character (*akhlāq*) represents the outward expression of creed (*'aqidah*). Just as a building depends upon a solid foundation, ethical conduct reflects the beliefs upon which it is grounded (Wahyudi, 2017). The Qur'an addresses generosity through a range of lexical forms, each highlighting particular dimensions of giving and benevolence. These include *al-karam* (47 occurrences), *al-infāq* (73 occurrences), *al-taṣadduq* (25 occurrences), *al-zakāh* (32 occurrences), and *al-i'ṭā'* (14 occurrences). By contrast, the concept of miserliness is expressed through several terms that emphasize withholding and excessive attachment to possessions, namely *al-bukhl* (12 occurrences), *al-syuhh* (five occurrences), *al-dann* (one occurrence), and *al-qatar* (five occurrences) (Al-Bāqī, 1945). The Qur'an also alludes to the vice of stinginess in QS. al-Ḥumāzah (104):2 (Al-Qur'an, 2019). These terms appear in both Meccan (*makkiyyah*) and Medinan (*madaniyyah*) revelations, indicating that generosity and miserliness were social and moral concerns familiar to Arab society. Historically, the Arabs were widely known for their generosity, particularly in their treatment of guests. Hospitality was highly valued, and hosts were often willing to slaughter their horses or camels to honour visitors even when they possessed little else to offer. At the same time, pre-Islamic society was marked by a number of practices regarded as morally reprehensible, including the consumption of alcohol, gambling, theft, the appropriation of orphans' property, female infanticide, and adultery (Syuhbah, 1996).

In the pre-Islamic era, certain groups accumulated substantial wealth through both lawful means, such as trade and land transactions, and unlawful practices, including usury, plunder, and the seizure of orphans' rights. Wealth was often used for personal interests, while support for the poor remained limited. As a result, many were characterized as unwilling to share their resources in times of abundance and incapable of offering assistance when faced with hardship. Although a small number of individuals demonstrated concern for the poor, social inequality remained pervasive. Some impoverished people sought assistance from the wealthy, whereas others chose to preserve their dignity by refusing charity, enduring hunger rather than experiencing humiliation. Poverty was reflected in harsh living conditions, including sleeping on bare ground, relying on minimal shelter, consuming animal fat as a staple food, and wearing worn-out clothing ('Alī, 1961, Vol. 5).

The celebrated generosity of the Arabs was therefore not extended equally across all segments of society. Rather, it was directed primarily toward guests, while existing social

hierarchies continued to separate the wealthy from lower-status groups, including the poor and enslaved (Maḥmūd, n.d.). This situation suggests that wealth distribution remained highly unequal. Economic activity was largely oriented toward the accumulation of wealth through trade conducted across different regions. Wealth itself appeared to occupy a central position in social life, yet it was rarely invested or utilized for broader social benefit. Considerable effort was also devoted to ensuring that personal wealth did not diminish in the slightest (Ḥusayn, 1959). With the advent of Islam in Mecca, the Prophet initiated a transformation of both individual and social life through religious reform and the propagation of Islamic teachings. Among the ethical principles he emphasized was the obligation to provide for the poor, to fulfill their rights regardless of whether they explicitly requested assistance, and to practice charity through *ṣadaqah* (charity) and *infāq* (donation) (Al-Badawī, 1999). Later, in Medina, as the Muslim community became more established, the regulation of wealth was further institutionalized through the obligation of *zakat*, including its legal conditions and prescribed *niṣāb* (the minimum wealth threshold for *zakat*), thereby strengthening social welfare and economic resilience within the community (Al-ʿAlā, n.d.).

In 2024, Indonesia was recognized by the Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) as the world's most generous country, marking its first return to the top position since 2017 (OBE, 2024). Despite this achievement, the country ranks only 90th globally in terms of wealth (Ventura, 2024) and remains the seventh poorest nation in Southeast Asia (Puspita, 2024). This contrast points to the persistence of social inequality amid widespread charitable practices. Such a condition appears paradoxical, particularly given the Qur'anic promise that charitable giving will be multiplied in reward, as expressed in QS. al-Baqarah:261 (Halida, 2021), a principle that could contribute to addressing poverty. In Islamic teachings, acts of giving encompass *zakat*, *infāq*, *ṣadaqah*, and *waqf*, each of which may take either material or immaterial forms (Makhrus, 2018). Data from Indonesia's Ministry of Religious Affairs indicate that the collection of *zakat*, *infāq*, *ṣadaqah*, and other religious social funds increased by Rp 26.13 trillion compared to the previous year (RI, 2024). Yet this growth has not significantly reduced poverty, which, according to World Bank calculations, continues to affect 171.8 million people (BPS, 2025). This situation raises an important concern for Indonesian society, particularly for Muslims, who are encouraged not only to receive but also to become active contributors through charitable giving.

In this light, the present study examines a phenomenon that appears to challenge conventional expectations: the hardship experienced by some charitable Muslims (Kasali, 2024) alongside the apparent prosperity enjoyed by individuals known for their miserliness (iNews, 2020). Such cases seem difficult to reconcile with QS. al-Layl (92):5–11, which associates generosity with ease and miserliness with hardship, both in worldly life and in the hereafter (Hasnan, 2024). A further question emerges when generosity is not limited to Muslims alone. If charitable conduct is also displayed by non-Muslims, how should such actions be understood within the Qur'anic framework? These issues warrant closer examination in order to explore the outcomes associated with different forms of giving.

Beyond its discussion of generosity and miserliness, QS. al-Layl (92):5–11 is structured around a series of contrasting moral and theological categories. The verse pairs concepts such as *ittaqā* and *istagnā*, *ṣaddaqa* and *kazzaba*, as well as *yusrā* and *'usrā*, creating a pattern of opposition that reflects a broader rhetorical design. Within the discipline of *'ilm al-badī'*,

this stylistic feature is known as *muqābalah*, a form of balanced correspondence in which four elements are contrasted with four opposing elements ('Aṭīq, n.d.). The elegance of this structure creates an impression of coherence among the interconnected concepts (Mir, 2019), suggesting that the outcomes described in the passage are inseparable from the moral qualities that precede them. From this perspective, the ethical dispositions presented in the verses—particularly generosity and miserliness—may be understood as forms of appeal to God, whether expressed positively or negatively. To examine this coherent linguistic structure, the study employs Ferdinand de Saussure's structural semiotics, drawing on the concepts of *langue* and *parole*, signifier and signified, synchronic and diachronic analysis, as well as syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations (Rusmana, 2014). This framework enables the identification of signs that contribute to the dynamic production of meaning in the Qur'an. In this sense, the text does not function as a static entity; rather, meaning emerges through its engagement with readers (Millah, 2022), allowing Qur'anic discourse to respond to contemporary social realities.

Several previous studies have examined QS. al-Layl from different perspectives. Hasnan investigates the relationship between human actions and the categories of joyful and suffering individuals through the thematic approach of Ibn Kathīr (Hasnan, 2024). Nurul explores praiseworthy and reprehensible moral traits by drawing an analogy between bright and tranquil weather and dark, frightening weather (Fadzil, 2022). Alveridho focuses on the antonymic structure of the surah in relation to dimensions of faith, including belief in God, divine decree, the Day of Judgment, and the classification of human beings (Alveridho, 2022). Julisa, meanwhile, examines the characteristics, implications, and functions of avoiding miserliness in the Qur'an (Julisa et al., 2022), whereas Zanil emphasizes philanthropy as a manifestation of perfected faith through acts of giving to those in need (Zanil et al., 2020). Although these studies offer valuable insights, none directly addresses the central concerns of the present research, namely the charitable Muslim who nevertheless experiences hardship, the miserly individual who appears to enjoy material comfort, and the phenomenon of generosity among non-Muslims. Moreover, the interconnected antonymic structure that runs throughout QS. al-Layl (92):5–11 provides a compelling basis for applying Saussure's structuralist theory in order to uncover the dynamic meanings embedded within the text.

METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative library research design, drawing on literary sources collected through documentation techniques (Hartono, 2019). In line with qualitative research principles, the researcher functions as the primary instrument in the process of data collection and analysis (Rahmadi, 2011). The study utilizes both primary and secondary sources. Primary materials include classical, linguistic, and contemporary works of Qur'anic exegesis, studies on Qur'anic grammar (*i'rāb*) and vocabulary, as well as Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic theory. Secondary sources consist of journal articles, theses, and scholarly books relevant to the subject under investigation. The analysis focuses on the apparent discrepancy between the realities described in QS. al-Layl (92): 5–11 and observable social phenomena, particularly the experience of hardship among generous Muslims and the prosperity enjoyed by individuals characterized by miserliness. Such circumstances appear to challenge the expectation that generosity leads to ease, whereas miserliness results in hardship. The study also considers the question of generous conduct among non-Muslims. To examine these issues, the research employs

Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic approach within a structuralist framework. The analytical process proceeds through four interconnected dimensions. The first is the langue-parole relation, which addresses the interaction between the language of social reality and actual speech acts. The second concerns the signifier-signified relationship, focusing on linguistic signs and the meanings they convey. The third dimension, synchronic-diachronic analysis, examines language both within a particular historical moment and across its temporal development. The fourth, the syntagmatic-paradigmatic dimension, explores patterns of word arrangement as well as terms and expressions that remain absent from the text.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Saussure and an Overview of Structuralist Theory

Ferdinand de Saussure, whose full name was Mongin-Ferdinand de Saussure, was born in Geneva on 26 November 1857 and died on 22 February 1913 (Habibi, 2019; Rusmana, 2014; Budiman, 1999). He was raised in a French Protestant (Huguenot) family (Kridalaksana, 2005) and demonstrated an exceptional aptitude for languages from an early age. This talent was already evident in *Essai sur les Langues*, an article he wrote at the age of fifteen (Rusmana, 2014). Saussure's academic engagement with language began through the study of Sanskrit in 1874. Although he initially enrolled in chemistry and physics at the University of Geneva in 1875 in accordance with family tradition, he soon abandoned these fields in favour of Greek and Latin studies (Culler, 1996). He subsequently pursued linguistic studies in Leipzig between 1876 and 1878 before continuing in Berlin from 1878 to 1879. During this period, his intellectual development was shaped by prominent scholars such as Brugmann and Hübschmann. He was also influenced by the work of William Dwight Whitney, particularly *The Life and Growth of Language: An Outline of Linguistic Science* (1875). In 1880, Saussure completed his doctoral studies at the University of Leipzig, graduating summa cum laude with a dissertation entitled *De l'emploi du génitif absolu en sanscrit* (Kridalaksana, 2005).

In 1878, two years before receiving his doctorate, Saussure had already attracted scholarly attention through the publication of *Mémoire sur le système primitif des voyelles dans les langues indo-européennes*. The work established his reputation among the *Junggrammatiker* and demonstrated his analytical sophistication as a linguist. In this study, he explained ablaut relationships across Indo-European languages through a method of internal reconstruction. Following the completion of his doctorate, he taught at the École Pratique des Hautes Études in Paris until 1891, offering courses on Sanskrit, Gothic, High German, and comparative Indo-European linguistics. He later returned to Geneva, where he was appointed professor of linguistics and became associated with the development of what would later be known as the Geneva School (Budiman, 1999; Culler, 1996; Rusmana, 2014).

Although Saussure made important contributions to historical linguistics, his enduring influence stems primarily from his work in general linguistics. Encouraged by his colleague Joseph Wertheimer, he devoted increasing attention to broader theoretical questions concerning language. Ironically, the work that secured his international reputation was never written by Saussure himself. Instead, it emerged from lecture notes compiled by three of his students—Ch. Bally, A. Sechehayé, and A. Riedlinger—and published posthumously in 1916 as *Cours de linguistique générale*. Through this work,

Saussure came to be recognised as the founder of modern linguistics and one of the principal intellectual figures behind structuralism (Rusmana, 2014; Taufiq, 2016).

Saussure's structuralist theory is commonly organized around four interrelated conceptual frameworks: *langage–langue–parole*, *signifier–signified*, *synchrony–diachrony*, and *syntagmatic–paradigmatic relations*. Among these, *langage* refers to language as a universal and abstract human phenomenon encompassing both *langue* and *parole*. It is inherently heterogeneous, comprising multiple linguistic forms as well as the interaction between individual speech and the rules governing language. Although *langage* includes the social dimension represented by *langue*, it cannot itself be regarded as a social fact because it remains intertwined with the speaker's individual activity (Saussure, 1996). In this sense, *langage* denotes human communicative activity in its broadest form, transcending particular languages, places, and historical periods.

Unlike *langage*, *langue* is the product of a specific speech community. It consists of conventions and shared rules that make communication possible and thereby constitutes a concrete and homogeneous social reality. As a system of sounds embedded within the collective consciousness of a community, *langue* is confined to a particular linguistic variety (Saussure, 2021). Individuals acquire it passively through habitual exposure to the linguistic practices of preceding generations, allowing their intentions to be understood by others within the same community. Because of this relative stability, *langue* can be examined systematically despite undergoing gradual change over time. It is therefore best understood not as a physical entity but as a social fact whose patterns remain sufficiently stable to be investigated across historical periods and within the consciousness of speakers. Although linguistic systems evolve, such transformations generally occur slowly enough for *langue* to preserve its essential character (Saussure, 1996). In short, *langue* may be understood as a collective and conventional system of spoken or written norms that regulates interpersonal communication.

Parole, by contrast, refers to actual speech acts—the totality of linguistic expressions produced by individuals. It represents the concrete realization of *langue* and serves as the medium through which speakers express themselves freely. Because *parole* is inseparable from individual agency, it cannot be considered an operative social fact in the same sense as *langue*. Saussure therefore argues that *parole* resists systematic study, since its variability and individual character prevent the formation of a unified underlying system (Saussure, 1996). Its heterogeneous nature reflects the countless ways in which speakers continually reconstruct language in accordance with their intentions and communicative needs.

Another fundamental component of Saussure's theory is the distinction between the signifier and the signified. The signifier refers to an abstract acoustic image consisting of mental sound patterns that exist in the mind regardless of whether they are physically articulated (Saussure, 2021). As a sound-image, it encompasses both verbal and visual forms and may therefore be represented through speech, writing, drawings, or other readable expressions (Saussure, 1996). The signified, by contrast, denotes the concept associated with the signifier. It exists as a mental representation of meaning and is consequently more abstract in nature (Chaer, 2014; Saussure, 1996; Saussure, 2021). Although analytically distinguishable, the signifier and signified cannot be separated in practice. Together, they constitute a unified psychological entity, comparable to two inseparable sides of a coin, which Saussure identifies as the linguistic sign (Saussure, 1996).

To account for the temporal dimension of language, Saussure further distinguished between *synchronic* and *diachronic* approaches. A *synchronic* analysis focuses on the logical and psychological relations among linguistic elements that coexist at a particular moment and collectively form a system recognized through shared consciousness. A *diachronic* analysis, by contrast, examines relations among successive elements across time. These elements do not coexist within a common system; rather, one replaces another through historical development (Saussure, 2021).

The distinction also reflects different analytical perspectives. *Synchronic* inquiry is limited to the viewpoint of speakers at a given moment and relies on their awareness and testimony. From this perspective, a phenomenon is considered real insofar as it exists within collective consciousness. *Diachronic* inquiry, however, may proceed either prospectively, by following the movement of time, or retrospectively, by tracing developments backward from a later point (Saussure, 1996). Accordingly, *synchronic* analysis investigates linguistic structure and function within a particular period without reference to historical change, whereas diachronic analysis explores how those structures and functions evolve over time. For Saussure, neither approach can replace the other. Privileging one perspective alone provides only a partial understanding of linguistic reality and is insufficient for comprehending langue in its entirety. Synchronic analysis, therefore, should be understood as complementary to rather than exclusive of diachronic analysis (Saussure, 1996).

The final pair of concepts concerns the distinction between the *syntagmatic* and the *paradigmatic*. For Saussure, *syntagmatic* relations operate in *praesentia*, referring to the sequential arrangement of linguistic units and to the terms that appear together within a given series of utterances (Saussure, 1996). These relations can therefore be understood as the connections among words, sentences, and grammatical elements that collectively constitute a chain of discourse. *Paradigmatic* relations, on the other hand, operate in *absentia*, linking terms that are not present in the immediate sequence of speech but are associated through similarities or differences in meaning and form (Saussure, 1996). Words become connected within the speaker's memory through such associations, forming part of the underlying linguistic repertoire from which expressions are selected.

Application of Saussure's Structuralism to QS. al-Layl (92):5–11

The verses concerning generosity and miserliness in QS. al-Layl (92):5–11 are presented as follows:

فَأَمَّا مَنْ أَعْطَى وَاتَّقَى ٥ وَصَدَّقَ بِالْحُسْنَى ٦ فَسَنُيَسِّرُهُ ٧ لِلْيُسْرَى ٧ وَأَمَّا مَنْ بَخِلَ وَاسْتَغْنَى ٨ وَكَذَّبَ
بِالْحُسْنَى ٩ فَسَنُيَسِّرُهُ ١٠ لِلْعُسْرَى ١٠ وَمَا يُغْنِي عَنْهُ مَالُهُ ١١ إِذَا تَرَدَّى ١١

"As for the one who gives, fears God, and believes in the goodness (of the reward to come), We shall ease his way toward ease. But as for the one who withholds, deems himself self-sufficient, and denies the goodness (of the reward to come), We shall ease his way toward hardship. And his wealth will not benefit him when he perishes."
(Al-Qur'an, 2019)

Based on the preceding discussion of Saussurean structuralism, the analysis turns to an examination of the verses in relation to the principal components of language, through which their interconnections and meanings are explored.

Langue and Parole

As a social phenomenon, language (*langage*) operates through two interconnected dimensions: langue and parole. Langue refers to a system of signs through which ideas are expressed, encompassing an abstract network of conventions shared by a linguistic community. Because it exists collectively within social consciousness, Saussure regarded langue as a social fact, comparable to standard Indonesian as a nationally recognized language. In this sense, langue functions as a code that enables social interaction and is inherited across generations of speakers (Taufiq, 2016). It comprises the concepts and rules that make linguistic expression possible; consequently, the use of *langage* presupposes mastery of the underlying langue. Without knowledge of the langue of Urdu, for example, one cannot produce Urdu parole (Hoed, 2014).

This study approaches Qur'anic semiotics through the Arabic language. In Arabic grammar, sentence construction is generally structured around two principal elements: *musnad* and *musnad ilayh*. The *musnad* (*al-maḥkūm bih*, "that which predicates") includes such components as the verb (*fi'l*) and the predicate (*khavar*), whereas the *musnad ilayh* (*al-maḥkūm 'alayh*, "that which is predicated upon") encompasses the subject (*mubtada'*) and the agent (*fā'il*). These categories form the basis of the two primary sentence types in Arabic: the nominal sentence (*jumlah ismiyyah*), consisting of the *mubtada'* and *khavar*, and the verbal sentence (*jumlah fi'liyyah*), consisting of the *fi'l* and *fā'il*. Verbal sentences are further classified according to whether the verb is intransitive (*lāzim*) or transitive (*muta'addi*). An intransitive verb does not require an object (*maf'ūl*), whereas a transitive verb does (Al-Galāyīnī, 2018, Vol. 1). From this, the langue underlying the Qur'anic discourse on generosity and miserliness in QS. al-Layl (92):5–11 may be represented as follows:

Predicate (<i>Khavar</i>)	Relative Clause (<i>Ṣilat al-Mawṣūl</i>)	Subject (<i>Mubtada'</i>)
سَنِيْسِرُهُ لِلْيُسْرَى	أَعْطَى - صَدَقَ بِالْحُسْنَى	مَنْ
سَنِيْسِرُهُ لِلْعُسْرَى	بَخِلَ - كَذَّبَ بِالْحُسْنَى	مَنْ

Tabel 1 General Rules of Arabic Grammar

Based on the table above, the langue of the Qur'anic verses concerning generosity and miserliness is expressed through a nominal sentence (*jumlah ismiyyah*). This structure can be identified as follows: the *mubtada'* is the term *man* (*an ism al-mawṣūl*, or relative pronoun); the verbs *a'ṭā* and *bakhila* function as the *ṣilat al-mawṣūl* (relative clause); and the *khavar* is represented by the clauses *sanuyassiruhu lilyusrā* and *lil'usrā*. The *mubtada'* refers to the sentence element that appears at the beginning of a clause and is not governed by any overt verbal agent (*'āmil lafẓī*) (Daḥlān, 2008). The *ṣilat al-mawṣūl* serves to complete the meaning of the relative pronoun (Al-Galāyīnī, 2018, Vol. 1), whereas the *khavar* is the nominative element (*rafa'*) predicated upon the *mubtada'* (Daḥlān, 2008). In the verb *a'ṭā*, both objects are omitted, leaving unspecified both the recipient and the form of giving, provided that the act is undertaken in the way of God (Al-Andalusī, 1993, Vol. 8). The term *ittaqā* denotes fear of God and abstention from everything He has prohibited.

The connection between these two elements is particularly significant, as no righteous act possesses value in the absence of *taqwā* (piety). In this sense, *taqwā* functions as a moral

safeguard, ensuring that acts of giving are motivated neither by ostentation nor by the pursuit of social recognition, but solely by the desire to attain God's pleasure (Al-Qurṭubī, 2006, Vol. 22; Al-Sa'dī, 2002; Al-Syāṭi', 1977, Vol. 2; Al-Ṭabarī, 1994, Vol. 7; Kathīr, 1999, Vol. 8). Likewise, the term *al-ḥusnā* is intentionally left unspecified, thereby conveying a broader meaning that is not restricted to any single referent, whether reward, divine assistance, paradise, a favourable recompense, or grace (Al-Syāṭi', 1977, Vol. 2). The use of *yusrā*, rather than its comparative form *aysara*, also preserves the rhetorical balance of the verse in accordance with the principle of *muqābalaḥ* (Al-Syaykhalī, 2001, Vol. 10). Consequently, the path of ease is granted to those who are generous, who possess *taqwā*, and who affirm every form of goodness, whereas the path of hardship is assigned to those who are miserly, who regard themselves as self-sufficient, and who reject every form of goodness.

By contrast, parole refers to the pronunciation and practical realization of langue within social life (Taufiq, 2016). Unlike langue, parole is not governed by fixed rules and is inherently more subjective in nature (Lier, 2004). Within the semiotics of generosity, manifestations of parole appear in numerous Qur'anic passages, including QS. al-Layl (92):5, QS. al-Tawbah (9):58, QS. Ṣād (38):39, QS. al-Kahf (18):42, QS. al-Anfāl (8):63, QS. al-Baqarah (2):215, QS. al-Mā'idah (5):45, QS. al-Munāfiqūn (63):10, QS. Yūsuf (12):88, QS. Maryam (19):13, QS. al-Anbiyā' (21):73, and QS. al-Ḥajj (22):41. Similarly, within the semiotics of miserliness, manifestations of parole can be found in QS. al-Layl (92):8, QS. Āl 'Imrān (3):180, QS. al-Tawbah (9):76, QS. al-Nisā' (4):128, QS. al-Ḥashr (59):9, and QS. al-Taghābun (64):16.

Signifier and Signified

Before applying the concepts of *signifier* and *signified* to the Qur'anic verses on generosity and miserliness, it is important to clarify their meanings as understood within Saussurean semiotics. Saussure defines the *signifier* as an acoustic image, namely the mental impression of a sound rather than its actual verbal articulation. It consists of a finite set of phonetic elements that can be represented through both visual and verbal forms (Taufiq, 2016). Accordingly, the *signifier* is associated with material manifestations, including sounds, emojis, and physical objects (Rusmana, 2014). The *signified*, on the other hand, refers to the concept or meaning evoked by the signifier (Taufiq, 2016). Together, the *signifier* and *signified* constitute a sign, understood as the inseparable union of form and meaning. The *signifier* and *signified* identified in the verses on generosity and miserliness in QS. al-Layl (92):5–11 are summarized in the table below.

Signifier	Signified
أَعْطَى	<i>A'ṭā</i> means <i>al-ināla</i> and <i>manaḥa</i> , i.e., giving and bestowing ('Umar, 2008, Volume 2; Al-Aṣḥānī, 2009).
اتَّقَى	<i>Ittaqā</i> derives from <i>wiqāya</i> , meaning protection from danger. The term subsequently evolved into <i>taqwā</i> (piety). In Islamic tradition, <i>taqwā</i> denotes guarding oneself against sin, whether by avoiding what is forbidden or what is merely permissible (for greater perfection) (Al-Aṣḥānī, 2009). It may also signify being safeguarded from that which God dislikes ('Umar, 2008, Volume 3).
صَدَّقَ	<i>Ṣaddaqa</i> is rooted in <i>ṣidq</i> , meaning truthfulness, commonly used for utterances—whether past or future, promissory or otherwise. The

	<i>maṣḍar taṣdīq</i> , derived from <i>ṣaddaqa</i> , denotes anything containing truth, whether in action or in writing (Al-Aṣfahānī, 2009). It also means to firmly believe and trust someone's words ('Umar, 2008, Volume 2).
الْحُسْنَى	<i>Husnā</i> signifies goodness or excellence, used to describe events rather than objects (Al-Aṣfahānī, 2009). It may also mean to treat with generosity and kindness ('Umar, 2008, Volume 1).
الْيُسْرَى	<i>Yusrā</i> means ease and tranquillity (Al-Aṣfahānī, 2009). It may also denote the left direction (Munawwir, 1997). <i>Yusrā</i> is the feminine form of <i>aysar</i> , which signifies good conduct, paradise, and the ease of Islamic law ('Umar, 2008, Volume 3).
بَخِيلٌ	<i>Bakhila</i> is rooted in <i>bukhl</i> , meaning to withhold another's due right that ought not to be withheld. To call someone <i>bakhil</i> (miserly) implies that he withholds even his own rightful due. Miserliness may pertain to one's own wealth or to inciting others toward miserly conduct (Al-Aṣfahānī, 2009).
اِسْتَعْنَى	<i>Istagnā</i> derives from <i>ganiy</i> , meaning wealthy—whether through lacking need (a quality exclusive to God), having minimal needs, or possessing abundant wealth as human necessity dictates (Al-Aṣfahānī, 2009). It may also mean to feel self-sufficient (Munawwir, 1997).
كَذَّبَ	<i>Kaẓẓaba</i> is rooted in <i>kazība</i> , meaning falsehood, whether in speech or in action. It may also mean attributing falsehood to someone, regardless of whether that person is truthful, accurate, or actually lying (Al-Aṣfahānī, 2009). In the Mu'jam, it denotes denial, non-fulfillment, and rejection ('Umar, 2008, Volume 3).
الْعُسْرَى	' <i>Uṣrā</i> is rooted in <i>al-ʿusr</i> , meaning hardship—whether in providing sustenance or in economic constraint (Al-Aṣfahānī, 2009). In the Mu'jam, ' <i>usrā</i> denotes something leading toward suffering and difficulty ('Umar, 2008, Volume 2).
مَالٌ	<i>Mālun</i> derives from <i>maylu</i> , meaning inclination. Wealth is termed <i>māl</i> because it inherently tends toward fluctuation and may at times vanish (Al-Aṣfahānī, 2009). It also refers to everything owned by an individual or group, including property, merchandise, real estate, cash, and livestock, whether in small or large quantities ('Umar, 2008, Volume 3).
تَرَدَّى	<i>Taraddā</i> is rooted in <i>radiya</i> , meaning to fall or to perish ('Umar, 2008, Volume 2).

Tabel 2 Signifiers and Signifieds

The foregoing analysis identifies eleven *signifiers* and *signifieds* in QS. al-Layl (92):5 - 11. These terms constitute the semantic core of the passage and therefore merit closer examination in order to uncover the deeper layers of meaning embedded within the verses.

Synchronic and Diachronic Analysis

Because interpretations of the Qur'an are shaped by changing historical contexts, the meanings associated with its vocabulary are likewise subject to transformation. This assumption underlies Saussure's distinction between synchronic and diachronic analysis. While synchronic analysis examines language within a particular temporal setting, diachronic analysis traces semantic developments across different historical periods (Taufiq, 2016). In the study of Qur'anic vocabulary, these developments may be observed through three phases: *the pre-Qur'anic period*, preceding the revelation of the Qur'an; *the Qur'anic period*, corresponding to the process of revelation; and *the post-Qur'anic period*, following the completion of revelation. The synchronic and diachronic dimensions of the vocabulary related to generosity and miserliness in QS. al-Layl (92):5–11 are discussed below.

From a synchronic perspective, *a'ṭā* means "to give." Its diachronic development, however, reveals a broader semantic history. In the pre-Qur'anic period, the term conveyed meanings such as "to extend," "to lengthen," or "to raise," as reflected in the poetry of Bishr ibn Abī Khāzim (535–590 CE) (Manzūr, 1119, Vol. 4; Ṭarād, 1994).

أَوِ الْأَظْمِ الْمُوشَّحَةِ الْعَوَاطِي # بِأَيْدِيهِنَّ مِنْ سَلَمِ التَّعَافِ

"Or like the doe whose two flanks bear contrasting markings, stretching out her forelegs to reach the salam leaves at the foot of the mountain."

During the Qur'anic period, *a'ṭā* primarily denoted the bestowal of divine favour, a meaning attributed exclusively to God, as well as the giving of material wealth. In post-Qur'anic interpretations, its semantic scope expanded considerably. Al-Ṭabarī defines the term as giving something one possesses, whether wealth, divine blessings, obligations owed to God, or remembrance of Him (*ẓikrullāh*) (Al-Ṭabarī, 1994, Vol. 7). Al-Andalusī associates it with spending wealth in the path of God, whether as an obligation, a recommended act, or a moral virtue (Al-Andalusī, 1993, Vol. 8). In Tafsīr Sya'rāwī, the concept extends to the offering of both one's possessions and oneself (Al-Sya'rāwī, 2008). Similarly, Shihab interprets *a'ṭā* as giving whatever falls within one's ownership, ability, or responsibility, including expenditures related to zakat and similar obligations (Shihab, 2005, Vol. 15). Collectively, these interpretations indicate that *a'ṭā* encompasses both material and immaterial forms of giving, whether obligatory or voluntary.

Synchronically, *ittaqā* signifies "fearing God" or "being God-conscious." Diachronically, its meaning also evolved across three periods. Before the Qur'anic revelation, the term referred to protection from harm and suffering, as illustrated in the poetry of Muḥalhil ibn Rabī'ah (d. 530 CE) (Manzūr, 1119, Vol. 6):

صَرَبْتُ صَدْرَهَا إِلَيَّ وَقَالَتْ # يَا عَدِيَّ عَقَّتْكَ الْأَوَاقِي

"She struck her chest before me, in wonder and admiration, and said: 'O 'Adī, truly you have been granted protection from every calamity.'"

In the Qur'anic period, *ittaqā* came to denote self-awareness and vigilance in relation to God, hellfire, the Day of Judgment, and divine punishment (Shihab et al., 2007, Vol. 3).

Post-Qur'anic exegetes further developed this meaning. Al-Zamakhsharī describes it as guarding oneself before God and avoiding all forms of disobedience (Al-Zamakhsharī, 2009), while Al-Sya'rāwī emphasizes fear of divine punishment and wrath (Al-Sya'rāwī, 2008). Accordingly, *ittaqā* may be understood as protecting oneself through continuous obedience and avoidance of prohibition in order to remain secure from divine punishment.

The term *ṣaddaqa* synchronically means “to affirm” or “to believe.” In the pre-Qur'anic period, it referred to the acceptance of speech as truthful and was applied to both human and non-human subjects, often carrying positive connotations. This usage appears in the poetry of Al-A'syā (d. 629 CE) and Khafāf ibn Nudbah ('Ūdah, 1985; Manẓūr, 1119, Vol. 4):

فَصَدَّقْتُهَا أَوْ كَذَبْتُهَا # وَالْمَرْءُ يَنْفَعُهُ كَذَابُهُ

“Whether I spoke truthfully or falsely to her, a man may yet benefit from his own falsehood.”

إِذَا مَا اسْتَحَمَّتْ أَرْضُهُ مِنْ سَمَائِهِ # جَرَى وَهُوَ مُؤَدُّوعٌ وَوَاعِدُ مَصْدَقٍ

“When the ground beneath him grows moist with the sweat raining from above, he runs on, neither driven nor restrained, true to the promise of his speed.”

Within the Qur'anic period, *ṣaddaqa* came to signify affirmation grounded in faith and manifested through righteous action. It encompassed affirming statements, assumptions, dreams, and the messages brought by previous prophets through adherence to their teachings (Firdaus, 2015). In post-Qur'anic discourse, the concept developed into the correspondence between inner conviction, reason, and action. Affirmation was therefore understood not merely as belief but as the consistency between conviction and conduct.

Synchronically, *ḥusnā* denotes “goodness.” In the pre-Qur'anic period, however, it was closely associated with adornment and beauty, reflecting the notion that goodness was symbolized through aesthetic excellence (Manẓūr, 1119, Vol. 2). This usage is evident in the poetry of Saḥm ibn Ḥanẓalah:

لَمْ يَمْنَعْ النَّاسُ مِنِّي مَا أَرَدْتُ وَمَا # أُعْطِيهِمْ مَا أَرَادُوا حُسْنَ ذَا أَدَبَا

“People could not prevent me from obtaining what I desired, yet I did not grant them what they desired—such was the excellence of this conduct.”

In the Qur'anic period, *ḥusnā* came to denote God, paradise, divine favour, and blessing (Hidayah, 2009). Later exegetes associated the term with divine reward, God's oneness, paradise, and His promises (Al-Tabarī, 1994, Vol. 7). Al-Zamakhsharī interprets it as good conduct expressed through faith, Islam, and the reward of paradise (Al-Zamakhsharī, 2009). Shihab likewise understands it as a favourable outcome, including glory and divine recompense (Shihab, 2005, Vol. 15). These interpretations collectively portray *ḥusnā* as an elevated and transcendent form of goodness.

The term *yusrā* synchronically means “ease.” In pre-Qur'anic usage, it derived from the root conveying opening, facilitation, and relief. Related derivatives included *al-yasār*, referring both to wealth and to the left side supported by the right (Shihab et al., 2007, Vol. 3). This meaning appears in the poetry of 'Amr ibn Kulṣūm:

وَكُنَّا الْأَيْمَنُ إِذَا التَقَيْنَا # وَكَانَ الْأَيْسَرُ بَنُو أَيْبِنَا

"We formed the right flank when we met the enemy, while our kinsmen formed the left flank."

During the Qur'anic period, *yusrā* generally conveyed positive meanings related to relief, simplicity, and facilitation. Post-Qur'anic exegetes connected it to divine approval and ultimate salvation (Al-Ṭabarī, 1994, Vol. 7). Al-Andalusī interprets it as the provision of favourable conditions in both worldly and eternal life (Al-Andalusī, 1993, Vol. 8), while Al-Sya'rāwī associates it with ease in action, travel, and the resolution of difficulties (Al-Sya'rāwī, 2008). Shihab further describes it as the availability of paths leading to tranquillity and virtue (Shihab, 2005, Vol. 15). Accordingly, *yusrā* may be understood as a divinely sanctioned path of ease leading to goodness.

In synchronic usage, *bakhila* means "to be miserly." Before the Qur'anic period, however, it conveyed notions of hardness and rigidity, as reflected in the poetry of Ṭarafah ibn al-'Abd (543–569 CE):

أَرَى الْمَوْتَ يَغْتَاُمُ النَّفُوسَ (الْكَرَامَ) وَيَصْطَفِي # عَقِيلَةَ مَالِ الْفَاحِشِ (الْبَاخِلِ) الْمُتَشَدِّدِ

"I see death singling out the souls of the noble and generous, while sparing the most prized possessions of the obstinate miser."

In the Qur'anic period, *bakhila* came to denote reluctance to give, whether wealth, affection, or righteous deeds (Prabowo, 2022). Later exegetes expanded this meaning to include withholding property, *zakat*, and obligations owed to God (Al-Ṭabarī, 1994, Vol. 8). Al-Sya'rāwī similarly associates the term with reluctance to sacrifice wealth or oneself in fulfilling divine obligations (Al-Sya'rāwī, 2008). The term therefore signifies unwillingness to give, whether materially or immaterially.

Synchronically, *istagnā* means "to be self-sufficient" or "to possess wealth." In the pre-Qur'anic period, however, it conveyed the sense of dwelling or residing, as reflected in the poetry of Muḥalhil:

غَنِيَتْ دَارُنَا تِهَامَةَ فِي الدَّهْرِ وَفِيهَا بَنُو مَعَدٍّ حُلُولًا

"Our dwelling has long remained in Tihāmah, where the descendants of Ma'ad have also settled."

During the Qur'anic period, the term shifted toward the notion of independence from need, whether material or immaterial (Shihab et al., 2007, Vol. 1). In post-Qur'anic exegesis, it acquired a stronger theological dimension. Al-Ṭabarī defines it as considering oneself independent of God's assistance (Al-Ṭabarī, 1994, Vol. 8), while Al-Zamakhsharī associates it with distancing oneself from God and preferring worldly pleasures over divine reward (Al-Zamakhsharī, 2009). Shihab interprets it as excessive confidence in one's own abilities that leads to neglect of divine guidance (Shihab, 2005, Vol. 15). Overall, *istagnā* denotes a sense of self-sufficiency that fosters the perception of needing no one beyond oneself.

The term *kazzaba* synchronically means “to deny” or “to reject.” In pre-Qur’anic usage, it often carried negative connotations such as rejection, aversion, and fear (Manzūr, 1119, Vol. 5), although it could also express encouragement, as illustrated by Labīd ibn Rabi‘ah:

وَكَذِبِ النَّفْسَ إِذَا حَدَّثَتْهَا إِنَّ صِدْقَ النَّفْسِ يُزْرِئِي بِالْأَمَلِ

“Deceive your soul when speaking to it, for excessive candour may diminish hope.”

Within the Qur’anic context, *kazzaba* refers to rejecting truth through speech, action, or false reports (Shihab et al., 2007, Vol. 2). Post-Qur’anic commentators extended the meaning to the denial of divine reward, God’s promises, His oneness, and paradise (Ath-Thabari, 2007, Vol. 26). Al-Sya‘rāwī further associates it with rejecting prophetic messages and the moral corruption that follows (Al-Sya‘rāwī, 2008). Thus, *kazzaba* signifies a rupture between conscience, speech, and action in responding to information.

Synchronically, *‘usrā* denotes “hardship.” Prior to the Qur’anic revelation, it referred to constraint, ruin, and misfortune, as reflected in the poetry of Ma‘qil al-Huḏālī:

وَرُحْنَا بِعُقُومٍ مِنْ بَدَالَةٍ قُرُنُوا # وَظَلَّ هُمْ يَوْمٌ مِنَ الشَّرِّ أَغْسَرُ

“We departed with a people from Badālah, bound together, and a day of misfortune-born of evil-loomed before them.”

During the Qur’anic period, the term denoted severe hardship in this world or the hereafter (Shihab et al., 2007, Vol. 3). Subsequent exegetes associated it with neglecting virtue and obstructing goodness, thereby making obedience increasingly difficult (Al-Andalusī, 1993, Vol. 8; Al-Zamakhsharī, 2009). Al-Sya‘rāwī links it to deeper involvement in temptation and disobedience, while Shihab interprets it as pathways leading to persistent difficulty and anxiety (Shihab, 2005, Vol. 15). Collectively, these interpretations portray *‘usrā* as a path of hardship resulting from wrongful conduct.

The term *māl* synchronically means “wealth,” yet its semantic history is more complex. In pre-Qur’anic usage, it conveyed the sense of inclination or leaning, as illustrated in a verse attributed to Imru‘ al-Qays:

وَيَوْمَ دَخَلْتُ الْحِذَرَ حِذَرَ غُنَيْزَةٍ ... تَقُولُ وَقَدْ مَالَ الْقَيْطُ بِنَا مَعًا

“And when the howdah leaned to one side beneath our combined weight, she said, ‘You have lamed my camel, O Imru‘ al-Qays—dismount at once!’”

According to Ibn Asīr, *al-māl* originally referred to camels, the principal form of wealth among pre-Islamic Arabs, before expanding to encompass anything possessed by an individual (Manzūr, 1119, Vol. 6). In the Qur’an, the term may carry either positive or negative connotations. Negative associations emerge when wealth is linked to ostentation, usury, exploitation, or wastefulness, whereas positive associations appear when it is directed toward *zakat*, charity, inheritance, livelihood, and jihad (Rusiana, 2022). Post-Qur’anic interpretations generally preserve the meaning of wealth as possession. Al-Sya‘rāwī defines it as accumulated property (Al-Sya‘rāwī, 2008), while Al-Qaradāwī emphasizes humanity’s natural inclination to acquire and preserve wealth (Al-Qaradāwī, 1973, Vol. 1). Al-Zarqā’ broadens the definition to include any tangible object possessing

recognized value (Al-Zarqā', 1961, Vol. 2). Consequently, *māl* refers to material objects regarded as valuable within a particular social context.

Finally, *taraddā* synchronically means "to fall." In pre-Qur'anic usage, it was frequently associated with perishing or dying, as reflected in the poetry of 'Adī ibn Zayd:

خَطَفَتْهُ كَمِيَّةٌ فَتَرَدَّى # وَهُوَ فِي الْمُلْكِ يَأْمَلُ التَّعْمِيرَ

"An unseen fate seized him, and he perished even as he remained in his kingdom, still hoping for a life of prosperity."

Within the Qur'anic context, *taraddā* consistently denotes ruin and downfall. It is associated with turning away from truth, denying resurrection, fearing poverty, engaging in disobedience, and withholding wealth. Post-Qur'anic exegetes reinforce this understanding. Al-Ṭabarī interprets the term as falling into destruction and the fire of Hell (Al-Ṭabarī, 1994, Vol. 7), while Al-Zamakhsharī relates it to calamities that ultimately destroy human beings, whether in the grave or in Hell (Al-Zamakhsharī, 2009). Across these interpretations, *taraddā* consistently signifies ruin, misfortune, and ultimate loss resulting from moral and spiritual failure.

Syntagmatic and Paradigmatic Analysis

Within linguistic analysis, an important dimension of understanding a sign lies in examining its structural relationship with other signs. The syntagmatic and paradigmatic dimensions constitute two forms of structural organization through which the operation of language can be analysed. The relationship between the signifier and the signified is organized linearly and unfolds through time. This characteristic is particularly evident in the signifier, whose constituent elements are articulated and arranged sequentially, forming a structured system that necessarily occupies a temporal order. Saussure designates this form of association as a syntagm. Accordingly, syntagmatic relations refer to the connections among units that combine to form a system within a sequence of speech. These are commonly described as relations in *praesentia*, as they establish grammatical, utterance-based, and discursive connections within a single chain of expression (Rusmana, 2014). The syntagmatic structure of QS. al-Layl (92):5–11 is presented below.

Tabel 3 Grammatical Parsing of the Verses

Predicate (<i>Khabar</i>)	Relative Clause (<i>Ṣilat al-Mawṣūl</i>)	Subject (<i>Mubtada'</i>)
فَسَنِّيَرُهُ لِلْيُسْرَى	أَعْطَى	مَنْ (verses 5–7)
	وَأَنْفَى	
	وَصَدَّقَ بِالْحُسْنَى	
فَسَنِّيَرُهُ لِلْعُسْرَى	بَخِلَ	مَنْ (verses 8–10)
	وَأَسْتَعَى	
	وَكَذَّبَ بِالْحُسْنَى	
Verb of Negation (<i>Fi'l Nafy</i>)	Subject (<i>Fā'il</i>)	Additional Phrase (<i>al-Iḍāfah</i>)
مَا يُغْنِي عَنْهُ	مَالُهُ	إِذَا تَرَدَّى (verse 11)

According to the table above, *man* functions either as an *ism al-mawṣūl* (relative pronoun) or an *ism syarṭ* (conditional noun) occupying the position of *mubtada'*. The verbs *a'ṭā*, *ittaqā*, and *ṣaddaqa* are *fi'l māḍī* (past-tense verbs) with an implied subject (*huwa*, "he"), and may likewise function as conditional verbs governed by *man*. These verbs collectively serve as the *ṣilat al-mawṣūl* (relative clause) and are linked by the conjunction *wa* ("and"), which in this context denotes *li-muṭlaq al-jam'* (unqualified conjunction), conveying simultaneity, succession, or contrast. *Biḥusnā* constitutes a prepositional phrase (*jār wa majrūr*). The clause *fasanuyassiruhu* consists of *fa*, functioning as the response to the conditional particle *man*; *sa*, indicating an event expected in the near future; *nuyassiru*, a *fi'l muḍāri'* (present-tense verb) with an implied subject (*nahnu*, "we"); and *hu*, an attached pronoun (*ḍamīr muttaṣil*) functioning as the direct object (*maf'ūl bih*). This clause serves as the *khabar* of the *mubtada'* *man*, while *lilyusrā* forms a prepositional phrase (Al-Anṣārī, 2004; Al-Syaykhalī, 2001, Vol. 10; Yāqūt, n.d., Vol. 10). From this grammatical construction, ease is understood to be contingent upon the presence of three qualities—*a'ṭā*, *ittaqā*, and *ṣaddaqa*. The conjunction linking these elements does not require a fixed sequence of practice; any one of them may precede the others, provided that all three are ultimately present. This reading is further supported by the *sabab al-nuzūl* concerning Abū Bakr, who emancipated a Muslim slave and donated his wealth (Al-Suyūṭī, 2002).

The grammatical structure of verses 8–10 parallels that of verses 5–7. Accordingly, hardship likewise arises through the presence of three elements—*bakhila*, *istagnā*, and *kaẓẓaba*—without implying any obligatory order in their manifestation. Thus, *kaẓẓaba* or *istagnā* may appear first, so long as all three characteristics are eventually present. In verse 11, the clause *mā yugnī 'anhu māluhu izā taraddā* is structured as follows: *mā* functions as a particle of negation (*ḥarf nafi*); *yugnī* is a *fi'l muḍāri'*; *'anhu* forms a prepositional phrase (*jār wa majrūr*); *māluhu* serves as the subject of *yugnī* and constitutes an *iḍāfah* construction; *izā* functions as a temporal adverb (*ẓarf zamān*) and as a *muḍāf*; while *taraddā* is a *fi'l māḍī* with an implied subject (*huwa*, "he"), occupying the position of *muḍāf ilayh* (Al-Syaykhalī, 2001, Vol. 10; Yāqūt, n.d., Vol. 10). The verse therefore indicates that wealth, regardless of its amount, provides no benefit to those who fail to expend it when they face death. Possession alone is insufficient; unless wealth has been distributed, including through charitable giving, it offers no lasting advantage at the end of life.

Paradigmatic relations, in contrast, concern the associations between linguistic units within a particular system and those belonging to other systems, often described as relations in absentia. Rather than focusing on elements that appear sequentially in an utterance, paradigmatic analysis examines terms that are connected through semantic, morphological, or phonetic relationships despite not occurring simultaneously within the linear structure of language. Such relationships include synonymy, antonymy, derivation from a common root, and phonetic resemblance (Taufiq, 2016). In QS. al-Layl (92):5–11, paradigmatic relations are manifested through several antonymic pairs: *a'ṭā*–*bakhila*, *ittaqā*–*istagnā*, *ṣaddaqa*–*kaẓẓaba*, and *yusrā*–*'usrā*. These oppositional pairs may be grouped into two moral domains. The pairs *ittaqā*–*istagnā* and *ṣaddaqa*–*kaẓẓaba* primarily reflect one's relationship with God, whereas *a'ṭā*–*bakhila* pertains to ethical conduct toward fellow human beings.

The pair *a'ṭā* and *bakhila* represents a clear moral opposition between giving and withholding. In Qur'anic usage, *a'ṭā* carries a broad range of meanings, encompassing divine favour, wealth, tribute (*jizyah*), zakat or charitable giving, and even the act of capturing a camel. Its semantic scope therefore extends beyond material transactions to

include immaterial forms of giving, a breadth that is likewise reflected in the meaning of *bakhila*. Through the term *a'tā*, the Qur'an encourages attentiveness to others, social awareness, a sense of responsibility, and a willingness to provide assistance where needed (Faturachman, 2009). Such an orientation toward giving has been associated with positive psychological and spiritual outcomes, including inner peace, emotional tranquillity, the formation of new social relationships, improved well-being, and a greater sense of personal security (McKinnon & Jamal, 2009). By contrast, *bakhila* underscores the need to avoid dispositions that erode the moral and emotional foundations of human relationships, including the absence of empathy, affection, and solidarity. In this regard, Hamka argues that excessive attachment to wealth may ultimately lead a person toward a form of idolatry directed at something other than God (Hamka, 2001, Volume 10). Such a condition not only distorts one's moral outlook but may also generate inconsistencies in social behaviour (Hafid, 2023; Supangat et al., 2020). Consequently, *bakhila* is associated with anxiety, social indifference, and the gradual deterioration of interpersonal relationships.

Within Sūrat al-Layl, *ittaqā* and *istagnā* appear as two opposing concepts whose juxtaposition is rarely found elsewhere in the Qur'an. While *ittaqā* conveys the notion of fear and reverence, *istagnā* denotes self-sufficiency and freedom from need. The Qur'an employs *ittaqā* and its derivatives in relation to God, hellfire, divine trials and punishment, and the Day of Judgment. In this sense, *ittaqā* reflects a disposition of reverential fear that encourages submission to God through obedience to His commands and avoidance of His prohibitions in both worldly and eschatological matters (Shihab et al., 2007, Vol. 3). Such a disposition also underscores humanity's fundamental dependence upon God. By contrast, *istagnā* signifies a state of perceived independence. Although *ghinā* (richness) may encompass spiritual as well as material dimensions (Al-Syāṭi', 1977, Vol. 2), a sense of self-sufficiency that leads one to disregard divine commands becomes a pathway to disbelief. Human beings therefore remain dependent upon God regardless of the wealth they possess (ʿĀsyūr, 1984, Vol. 30). The fear embedded in *ittaqā* develops into a heightened moral awareness that ultimately culminates in *taqwā*. When embraced as one's spiritual provision and guiding principle, *taqwā* becomes a transformative force capable of reshaping an individual's way of life. Accordingly, God presents *ittaqā* not merely as fear but as a disposition encompassing love (*mahabbah*), patience, contentment, and trust in God (*tawakkul*) (Kurnianto, 2016). Unlike *taqwā*, the attribute of absolute self-sufficiency cannot properly be ascribed to created beings. As Al-Jauziyah (2015) argues, such a quality belongs exclusively to God as an inherent aspect of His essence, whereas any form of wealth possessed by human beings remains relative and contingent. Consequently, *istagnā* comes to symbolize arrogance, disbelief, and conceit.

A similar contrast appears in the pair *ṣaddaqa* and *kazzaba*, two terms that recur throughout the Qur'an in a variety of contexts. The former denotes affirmation and sincerity in matters of faith and conduct, including belief in God, righteous action, divine reward, and the teachings of the prophets. Faith in the divine message conveyed through the Prophet is further expressed through acts of charity, which serve as evidence of sincerity and elevate a believer to the rank of *al-ṣiddīq* (Firdaus, 2015). By contrast, *kazzaba* signifies rejection and denial, encompassing disbelief in God's truth, His punishment, the prophets, revealed scriptures, the Day of Judgment, and other unseen realities (Shihab et al., 2007, Vol. 2). The Qur'anic emphasis on truthfulness reflects its central place within

religious and moral life. Honesty is described as a pillar of religion, a foundation of virtuous character, and a source of human dignity; those who embody it are associated with felicity, whereas falsehood is linked to wretchedness (Al-'Aẓīm, 2003). A person's true worth is therefore inseparable from their commitment to honesty. Such a commitment shapes both worldly and otherworldly outcomes, fostering determination, compassion, happiness, and strong social relationships in this life, while leading to divine forgiveness, abundant reward, and paradise in the next (Ārif, 1998). Within this framework, *ṣaddaqa* symbolizes goodness that extends across both personal and social dimensions of worldly existence as well as the hereafter. *Kaẓẓaba*, on the other hand, is portrayed as a manifestation of disgrace and moral weakness arising from the rejection of truth. It is likewise associated with the loss of inner peace, social estrangement, diminished self-confidence, and damage to one's honour (Hamka, 2017). For this reason, denial ultimately brings harm to those who persist in it.

The opposition between *yusrā* and '*usrā* is likewise distinctive, appearing together only in a limited number of Qur'anic passages, most notably Sūrat al-Insyirāḥ and Sūrat al-Layl. Throughout the Qur'an, *yusr* is generally associated with ease, relief, and positive outcomes, whereas '*usr* conveys severe hardship that demands perseverance and sustained effort. The concept of *yusr* is closely connected to the trials endured by the Prophet and the early Muslim community in their struggle against the polytheists. In response to these difficulties, God promises relief and joy, both in this world and the hereafter, transforming poverty into prosperity, weakness into honour, and enmity into affection (Shihab et al., 2007, Vol. 3). Bintu Syātī' accordingly interprets *yusrā* as the joy granted to the Prophet (Al-Syātī', 1977, Vol. 2), while Hamka understands it as steadfastness in adhering to the guidance bestowed by God (Hamka, 2001, Vol. 10). Taken together, these interpretations present *yusrā* as a path toward happiness attained through perseverance in the face of hardship. By contrast, Bintu Syātī' interprets '*usr* as a form of enduring suffering that continues throughout a person's life and beyond (Al-Syātī', 1977, Vol. 2). Al-Marāḡī (1946, Vol. 30) further argues that such hardship can diminish human dignity, leading individuals toward disgrace, sin, and error. In this sense, '*usr* represents more than difficulty alone; it signifies a condition that obstructs one's social life, draws one into wrongdoing, and distances one from obedience to God.

CONCLUSION

Based on Saussure's structuralist framework, QS. al-Layl (92):5–11 articulates a mode of supplication to God through two contrasting moral orientations: praiseworthy and reprehensible character. These orientations govern one's relationship with God (*ittaqā-istagnā* and *ṣaddaqa-kaẓẓaba*) as well as with fellow human beings (*a'ṭā-bakhila*). Within the interplay of langue and parole, the syntagmatic relations linking generosity and miserliness correspond to ease and hardship in both this world and the hereafter, provided that these moral obligations toward God and toward others are fulfilled simultaneously.

Viewed through the dimensions of signifier and signified, synchronic and diachronic analysis, and paradigmatic relations, a Muslim who demonstrates generosity in both material and immaterial forms and affirms the magnitude of the promised reward, yet continues to encounter hardship in life, cannot be regarded as having fully realized *ittaqā* (piety). In such circumstances, the ease promised by God is deferred to the hereafter, while hardship remains a feature of worldly existence. By contrast, individuals who are

miserly in both material and immaterial respects—whether Muslim or non-Muslim—are destined for hardship in this world and the next. This condition stems from arrogance, fear of losing possessions through giving, and denial of the greatness of the promised reward. The happiness they appear to enjoy merely conceals a deeper suffering that ultimately manifests in worldly social discord and, in the hereafter, in the threat of hellfire.

A similar pattern emerges when Saussure's dimensions of signifier-signified, synchronic-diachronic analysis, and paradigmatic relations are applied to non-Muslims who, despite lacking faith, nonetheless display generosity in both material and immaterial forms and even acknowledge the magnitude of the promised reward. Such individuals attain only *yusrā* (ease) in this world, while remaining subject to *'usrā* (hardship) in the hereafter. Consequently, regardless of the extent of their generosity, these acts secure only worldly ease, since ease in the hereafter depends upon the key of faith embodied in *taqwā*. As a result, they ultimately experience anxiety and distress arising from their separation from God.

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