

Subject and Scripture: Exploring Existential Moments in the Ordinary Reading of Scripture

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Abstract: Scripture reading is not only a means of extracting meaning from sacred texts, but also a way to attain certain spiritual experiences. In the Islamic tradition, reading the scriptural text, such as the holy Quran, can lead readers to certain spiritual experiences that may fundamentally alter their awareness and understanding of reality. These experiences are accessible not only to readers with certain modalities but also to ordinary readers. This study analyses how ordinary readers can experience these existential moments. Data was collected through a literature review and documentation of the experiences of ordinary readers who have had spiritual-existential moments while reading scripture (the holy Quran). Data was analysed using Heidegger's phenomenological hermeneutics. The results of the study indicate that readers of scripture, such as the holy Quran, have the same potential to experience existential moments that can alter their awareness and perspective on the meaning of life. These existential moments are moments of revelation of the meaning and divine guidance within oneself, allowing the reader to gain spiritual experience. The nature of scripture and the role of God as the author who is continuously present throughout the reading process allows even ordinary readers to experience existential moments that can alter their awareness and their way of being in the world.

Keywords: Existential Moments; Ordinary Readers; Phenomenological Hermeneutics; Spiritual Experience.

Abstrak: Membaca kitab suci bukan hanya sebuah cara untuk mengekstrak makna dari teks-teks suci, tetapi juga merupakan cara untuk mencapai pengalaman spiritual tertentu. Dalam tradisi Islam, membaca teks suci, seperti Al-Quran, dapat membawa pembaca kepada pengalaman spiritual tertentu yang mungkin secara fundamental mengubah kesadaran dan pemahaman mereka terhadap realitas. Pengalaman-pengalaman ini dapat diakses tidak hanya oleh pembaca dengan modalitas tertentu, tetapi juga oleh pembaca biasa. Studi ini menganalisis bagaimana pembaca biasa dapat mengalami momen-momen eksistensial ini. Data dikumpulkan melalui tinjauan literatur dan dokumentasi pengalaman pembaca biasa yang telah mengalami momen eksistensial saat membaca kitab suci (Al-Quran). Data dianalisis menggunakan hermeneutika fenomenologis Heidegger. Hasil studi ini menunjukkan bahwa pembaca teks suci, seperti Al-Quran, memiliki potensi yang sama untuk mengalami momen-momen eksistensial yang dapat mengubah kesadaran dan perspektif mereka terhadap makna kehidupan. Momen-momen eksistensial ini adalah momen pengungkapan makna dan bimbingan Ilahi dalam diri sendiri, memungkinkan pembaca untuk mendapatkan pengalaman spiritual. Sifat teks suci dan peran Allah sebagai penulis yang hadir terus menerus selama proses membaca memungkinkan bahkan pembaca biasa mengalami momen eksistensial yang dapat mengubah kesadaran dan cara mereka hidup di dunia.

Kata Kunci: Momen Eksistensial; Pembaca Biasa; Hermeneutika Fenomenologis; Pengalaman Spiritual.

1. Introduction

Reading religious scriptures for many believers is not just about reading the text, but also a way to gain rewards and guidance for their lives. For Muslims, this belief is based on the Islamic doctrine that the Quran is the word of God (*kalam*) and is historically significant and a holy book that provides benevolent values and rewards to its readers. Certain events or experiences in the Islamic tradition, recorded in history or the testimonies of its adherents, show that reading the Quran can provide peace, happiness, psychological comfort, and change one's existential awareness (Khan et al., 2010; Mottaghi et al., 2016; Nayef & Wahab, 2018; Nukman, 2007; Pashib et al., 2014; Zeinali et al., 2013).

One popular story related to this transformative experience is the story of Umar ibn Khattab, who was moved to study Islam after hearing a recitation of a verse from the Quran, specifically Surah Taha. Umar originally intended to kill his sister Fatima and her husband Sa'd ibn Zaid, but after listening to Surah Taha from the Quran held by Fatimah, he was awakened and his consciousness was changed. This historical event, which initiated Umar ibn Khattab's awareness to study and convert to Islam, shows that reading holy texts such as the Quran may lead to certain experiences that can change one's views and awareness. Other research has also reported on the impact of reading the Quran on mental and physical health, inner peace, happiness, and zest for life (Kamal et al., 2013; Mashitah & Lenggono, 2020; Ubale & Abdullah, 2015).

The experience of reading scriptures, such as the Quran, in the hermeneutic tradition involves a moment where the reader confronts the text and attempts to understand the author's intention. Other hermeneutical traditions view the process of reading as an experience where the subject may be involved in formulating meaning through a fusion of horizons (Fawzy, 2018; Garagalza, 2013; Palmer, 1969; Schleiermacher, 1977). From another hermeneutical perspective, the act of reading is an experience that yields a certain existential meaning, which manifests as a change in self-awareness as a whole (Rolfe et al., 2017; Taels, 2017). This moment of change in existential awareness can be inferred from the events experienced by Umar ibn Khattab and other readers of holy books, such as the Quran.

Reading a text to achieve a moment of change in existential awareness or to produce a certain meaning that can alter behavior is not easily obtained by ordinary readers. The process of reading texts in the hermeneutical tradition, whether to obtain personal meaning or to fuse horizons between the reader and the author, presupposes a good understanding and adequate knowledge of the text by the reader. Therefore, the existential moment that the reader experiences can only be attained by readers with a certain knowledge modality (reader's horizon) and the ability to interpret the text according to the author's intention. This conditional hermeneutical reading further diminishes the possibility for ordinary readers to attain that existential moment (Barron et al., 2021; Black, 2008; Fawzy, 2018; Hemingway et al., 2001).

However, reflecting on the previous case of Umar ibn Khattab or the experiences of reading the holy scriptures by followers of certain traditions, especially ordinary readers of the holy Quran, who often experience changes in awareness, attitude, behavior, increased faith, calmness, happiness, and healing from mental and physical ailments, among others, suggests that even ordinary readers are capable of experiencing these existential moments (Khan et al., 2010; Mashitah & Lenggono, 2020; Mottaghi et al., 2016; Nayef & Wahab, 2018; Pashib et al., 2014). In other words, reading a holy book, such as the Quran, provides an opportunity for ordinary readers - who may not have knowledge and mastery beyond their own belief in the text they read - to obtain existential moments for a change of consciousness and deep meaning.

This study attempts to understand and analyse how ordinary readers can achieve existential moments while reading the scriptures, especially by using Heidegger's phenomenological hermeneutics perspective. The use of this perspective and Heidegger's existential reading is based on the belief that the existential moment is the result of the interaction between the subject (reader) and the holy book (text), which is not based on concepts and theories, but on ontological beliefs about the reality of the text (the Quran) as a living reality that can guide its readers. This study is descriptive-qualitative research aimed at exploring religious existential experiences that occur among ordinary readers of the holy book (Quran). The data for this study will be gathered through a review of relevant

literature and documentation of experiences shared by readers of the Quran who have encountered certain moments of existential significance while reading. The interviews will be conducted with several ordinary Muslim readers who have read the holy book for over 20 years. There are ten respondents for this study with 6 male respondents and 4 female respondents all of them are live in Bandung. Most of the participants have bachelor's degrees with different types of occupations. Most of the respondents are over 40 years old, but one at the age of 38.

2. Reading the scripture: A hermeneutical exploration

There have been several hermeneutical studies on the reading process of texts, especially scriptures. These studies aim to explain how the experience of reading scriptures can present a religious experience that alters one's consciousness. However, some of these studies have focused exclusively on readers with a certain level of experience and knowledge that allows them to derive meaning from the texts they read.

Fawzy's (2018) study on hermeneutics and the interpretation of scriptures, using the perspective of methodical hermeneutics of Paul Ricoeur, demonstrates that the text (scriptures) comprises four aspects of meaning, which include literal, allegorical, moral, and anagogical meanings. Based on the hermeneutic reading, every reader can extract meaning from the text they read in various aspects of its meaning. According to Ricoeur's perspective, this is related to the ontological dimension of language that makes the text appear like a mirror through which the reader can understand his world. At this point, it is the reader who formulates the meaning of what they read, having broken away from the author and the ideas recorded in the text. The process of reading the text (the holy book) is a process in which the reader can understand themselves as they try to understand the text they are reading.

Another study by Black (2008) on Augustine's hermeneutics for Bible reading shows that people often struggle to connect the academic and spiritual aspects of interpreting the Bible. Augustine of Hippo (St. Augustine) wrote extensively about the tension between the sacred text and the spirit. In Augustine's view, Bible interpreters must understand the combination of God's spiritual and human means of communicating truth, cultivate a humble Christlike character, possess practical knowledge of the entire Bible, and respect the "rule of faith." Augustine then offers methodological guidelines that evangelical interpreters can use, such as being aware of how language works, comparing translations, studying Greek and Hebrew, making selective use of secular studies for background knowledge, comparing difficult passages with those that are clearer, giving consideration to context, not taking literal things figuratively and praying for understanding. Augustine believed that a passage of scripture may have more than one meaning, which is a gift from God as a privilege of scripture. Nevertheless, Augustine does not promote an unlimited interpretation of the biblical text. Any new spiritual meaning discovered by the interpreter must be consistent with the meaning intended by the author and the overall teaching of the Bible, and in some cases, it must depend on the literal-historical meaning of existing passages.

From another perspective, a study by Barron (2021) on reading the scriptures demonstrates that the communication that God has built into His Word for mankind has always been institutionalised in culture. However, Barron also explains that instead of succumbing to the dreaded cultural relativization in Bible reading, this cultural contingency or specificity of divine-human communication requires the importance of contextual realities in different cultures, often represented by the reader's language itself. Therefore, hermeneutics must take cultural context and human condition seriously. However, the reader must also be cautious not to denigrate any cultural context due to its alleged inferiority to another, as is often the case in modern interactions between Europeans and Africans. In other words, this study emphasises the significance of considering culture and humanity, especially those recorded in the relativity of the breadth of language that shapes the reader's understanding of the holy book (text).

Several studies indicate that people must perceive the act of reading the holy book as a process of searching for and formulating meaning by combining their insights and experiences with considerations related to human conditions and surrounding factors. Hermeneutic reading involves

understanding certain expressions, especially in holy books. In this type of reading, the text is no longer seen solely as a medium or intermediary for the message of truth (*wahrheitsvermittler*) from God, but also as a living expression that can influence its readers. Reading texts should be seen as an effort to re-experience and enter into historical events, which are the origins and sources of the birth of texts. In this way, it is hoped that the reader will obtain or formulate meaning and gain certain awareness that can change their behavior and perspective on reality.

However, many studies on the subject's exposure to the text in the reading process rarely discuss the position and experiences of ordinary readers. Hermeneutic reading is the act of interpreters—readers with qualified knowledge and insight—exploring the required meaning. Therefore, this study aims to understand the position of ordinary readers in front of texts and provide opportunities for them to find existential moments that can give them new meaning and awareness, and subsequently, change their lives.

3. The Quran and the Everyday Life of Indonesian Muslims

The Quran, as the sacred scripture and primary guidance for the Muslim community, plays a central role in the daily life of Indonesia's predominantly Muslim population. As a source of divine revelation and a comprehensive guide for living, the Quran encompasses moral teachings, ethical principles, legal injunctions, and directives for worship and interpersonal interactions with fellow human beings and the natural world. In their daily lives, Indonesian society engages with the Quran through various profound and culturally significant ways.

Firstly, the recitation and understanding of the Quran hold significant importance in the daily routines of Indonesian Muslims. Many individuals dedicate time to read and contemplate its verses, either privately or through group readings in mosques or homes. The comprehension of Quranic verses is integrated into their daily life contexts, assisting them in navigating various life situations and challenges guided by their religious beliefs.

Secondly, in the lives of Indonesian Muslims, the Quran frequently serves as a reference for making decisions across various aspects of life. When confronted with ethical dilemmas, legal matters, or other critical decisions, many seek answers or guidance from the Quran. This reflects a strong belief in the Quran's authority as a source of knowledge and guidance to navigate the diverse and intricate aspects of life.

Thirdly, the use of the Quran in religious ceremonies and significant life events adds a spiritual dimension to the daily lives of the Indonesian people. Quranic verses are often recited during weddings, births, deaths, and other religious ceremonies, fostering warmth and a sense of closeness to religious values while providing wisdom and tranquility in facing the diverse events of life.

Fourthly, religious scholars and kyai (religious leaders) play a central role in disseminating an understanding of the Quran to the community. With profound knowledge and understanding of the Quran, they serve as spiritual guides, offering interpretations and explanations of Quranic messages and directing the application of these teachings in daily life.

The Quran assumes a profoundly influential role in the daily life of the Indonesian Muslim community. The deep comprehension and interaction with the Quran shape their spiritual and moral identities, assisting them in facing challenges and providing a foundation for ethical guidance and values in their interactions with the world around them. The values encapsulated in the Quran have deeply permeated Indonesian culture and national identity, rendering the Quran a fundamental pillar of intellectual, spiritual, and social significance within the religiously diverse and devout society of Indonesia.

4. Reading the Holy Qur'an: A Hermeneutical understanding

The experience of reading the Holy Quran from a hermeneutic perspective involves an understanding of several elements such as the author, text, reader, and meaning. The Holy Book is believed to contain words that were revealed to the Prophet as a medium for divine messages from Allah. Scholars have debated the nature of the Quran, with some arguing that it is a creation, while

others maintain that it is the literal word of Allah. This debate has implications for the authorship position of the Prophet Muhammad as the recipient of God's revelation.

The authorship of the Quran is attributed to Allah as the main author, and the Prophet Muhammad as the medium through which the divine messages were delivered. The text is considered sacred, with specific meanings, wisdom, and purposes related to its linguistic features. Reading the Quran has led to various works of interpretation and studies of the sciences of the Holy Quran.

The Holy Quran was revealed by Allah to the Prophet Muhammad, either directly or through the Angel Gabriel. It is meant to be read, studied, and taught by those who embrace Islam. Readers, especially Muslims, approach the Quran with faith and a desire for good values, wisdom, knowledge, and rewards. The Quran can be recited in various ways, including at least 10 canonical reading traditions that adhere to Uthman's racism, a single codifying standard of various types of Quranic texts recorded in the early decades of Islam (McElwain, 2007; van Putten, 2022). These readings, transmitted by prominent readers and narrators, differ in phonetics, phonology, and morphology, but are generally maintained as a repetition in worship. While differences in reading can lead to differences in meaning, ordinary readers often seek inner peace, spiritual experience, and God's reward, rather than a clear understanding of the words.

When reading the Quran, meaning is the ultimate goal, but interpretation can vary depending on whether the verse is clear (*muhkamat*) or ambiguous (*mutashabihat*). Clear verses require only a literal interpretation, while ambiguous verses require further interpretation and *takwil*. Some scholars believe that only Allah knows the meanings of ambiguous verses, while others believe that knowledgeable people can also understand their meanings. The interpretation of verses in the Quran can be developed through *asbab al-nuzul*, other verses that discuss similar themes, hadiths, or context-based interpretations (Abulad, 2008; Al-Syawkani, 1973; Busacchi et al., 2022; Garagalza, 2013; Hemingway et al., 2001; Khalafallah, 1953; Khulli, 1961; Kinberg, 1988; Prawitz, 1994; Saeed, 2004).

Hermeneutics is an important part of understanding the meaning of verses in the Quran, as it helps produce a complete understanding that can be applied to a particular context. This approach is used by classical and contemporary interpreters, such as Al-Razi, Al-Khuli, Khalafallah, Hanafi, Rahman, Abu Zayd, Esack, and Saeed. One can apply Heidegger's phenomenological reading as a method to approach the Quran more existentially. This approach, however, requires interpreters with certain knowledge modalities, insights, and scientific intentions, as well as an understanding of the socio-cultural-political context of Arab society, situational changes, and the desire to obtain new meanings for contextualizing the messages and values of the Quran today. Furthermore, the phenomenological method involves a process of confinement and suspension of all presuppositions to gain a better understanding of phenomena, resulting in a science of essence and transcendently reduced phenomena.

Martin Heidegger introduced phenomenological reading as a hermeneutical method for approaching texts more existentially. Edmund Husserl formulated the phenomenological method as a process of confinement and suspension of all presuppositions to gain a better understanding of phenomena. The phenomenological attitude is the result of the transcendental and eidetic reductions. Transcendental reduction uncovers transcendental phenomena, while eidetic reduction allows for a universal and valid description of observed phenomena. The eidetic reduction presents phenomenology as a science of essence, while the transcendental reduction reveals phenomenology as the science of transcendently reduced phenomena. Purity is the result of both reductions.

Husserl's phenomenological reduction includes transcendental reduction and eidetic reduction. Transcendental reduction helps in unveiling transcendental phenomena, while eidetic reduction provides a universal and valid description of observed phenomena. Transcendental reduction involves shifting from an attitude of judging reality to a transcendental attitude and deferring judgments about reality. On the other hand, eidetic reduction purifies phenomenological analysis from mere facts to achieve a universally valid description. Husserl's pure phenomenology is the science of unreal essences and is not part of either empirical or a priori sciences. Pure phenomenology is a method of escaping the desire to impose theories and perspectives on reality. However, Heidegger pointed out that this method

cannot eliminate all presuppositions due to the limitations of language. Heidegger developed Husserl's formulation as a method of reading and interpreting the text and named it phenomenological hermeneutics.

Heidegger's phenomenological hermeneutics is concerned with creating meaning and achieving a complete understanding of human experience by focusing on seemingly trivial aspects of life. Unlike Husserl, who focused on understanding phenomena, Heidegger focused on understanding "Dasein" or "Being in the World" and believed that humans can become aware of their facticity or fate of being thrown into an unfamiliar world. Heidegger viewed the process of interpreting the world as determining the correct way of being or ontology and believed that people can only understand reality by connecting their existence, experience, and timing with the text they read. Through this process, people can experience a moment of enlightenment or disclosure, which allows them to understand themselves and their world as a whole, discover their existence, and change their behavior in the world. (Darenskyi, 2006; Heidegger, 1985; Palmer, 1969; Shahbazian, 2015).

Heidegger's phenomenological hermeneutics involves reading the world to formulate a way of being, rather than seeking hidden meanings. He distinguishes between two ways of reading: the theoretical present-at-hand and the practical ready-to-hand. He argues that the problem with traditional philosophy is its focus on theoretical understanding, which leads to a separation from the world and a loss of the essence of one's existence. Heidegger suggests a "phenomenological destruction" of the history of philosophy to gain a more authentic understanding of its nature and relation to the world. His concept of "temporality" emphasises that our experience of time is tied to our understanding of the world.

Heidegger's phenomenological hermeneutics emphasises human experience in understanding and creating meaning in the world. It involves a practical and theoretical relationship with things, as well as an examination of the concepts used in history and philosophy. Reading the text (reality) enables humans to understand and accept their limitations, and the act of projection (*Entwurf*) liberates them by revealing the potential for freedom. Reading is an existential moment that allows one to become an authentic human being, leading to a condition of disclosure (*Aletheia*) in which reality opens its truth and essence. This magical moment gives rise to a new self-awareness.

5. Reading the Holy Quran: A Spiritual Experiences Journey

The author conducted interviews with three respondents (ordinary readers) to delve into their life stories and experiences in reading the holy book of the Quran. The outcomes of the interviews reveal captivating insights into the respondents' spiritual journey and their daily routines with the Quran.

From the observation of nine respondents of this research, three respondents namely MAH (Male, aged 54), FL (Female, aged 50), and SK (Female, aged 52) shared heartfelt experiences, expressing that they often find solace and tranquility in their encounters with the Quran, particularly during moments of self-reflection. They perceive the Quran as a profound source of guidance that aids them in navigating life's complexities and surmounting challenges. Before engaging with the Quran, they practice self-emptying, clearing their minds and hearts of any negativity or distractions.

Meanwhile, three other participants AR (Male, aged 53), AHR (male, aged 38), and SR (Female, aged 40) explained every time they read the Quran felt an intimate connection with the Divine and imbues their life with a profound sense of purpose. Describing the experience as a form of meditation, they find solace in delving deep into their faith and values. They reveal that the Quran often provides answers to their queries and dilemmas, fostering personal and spiritual growth.

Adding to the experiences shared by the above-mentioned participants, MH (male, aged 44), LS (Female, aged 43), and DS (male, aged 43) unveils a profound sense of wonder and awe when engaging with the Quran, perceiving it as an inspiration to ponder the beauty and intricacy of the universe. They view the Quran as a repository of knowledge and wisdom that enhances their comprehension of the world and their place within it. Emphasising an open-hearted and open-minded approach, reading the Quran has cultivated empathy and compassion for others within them.

In the daily lives of these respondents, the Quran emerges as a beacon of spiritual enlightenment, guiding them in their quest for inner peace, purpose, and understanding of the world around them. Their life stories vividly illustrate how reading the Quran has become an integral part of their existence, permeating their routines with spiritual reflection and enriching their experiences with profound insights and wisdom.

6. Engaging the Subject and the Scripture: Finding the Spiritual Moment

Referring to the documentation of the experiences of ordinary readers, or those who do not possess knowledge, religious insights, or language skills in Arabic when reading the Quran, the existing reading process is not focused on gaining meaning as was the case with previous hermeneutical readings (Kamal et al., 2013; Khan et al., 2010; Mashitah & Lenggono, 2020; Mottaghi et al., 2016; Nayef & Wahab, 2018; Pashib et al., 2014; Zeinali et al., 2013). Instead, ordinary readers have a greater intention to experience spiritual moments from reading the Quran. What they expect (without knowledge modalities, Islamic insights, language skills, etc.) is not the meaning or contextualisation of the values and teachings of the Quran in their lives, but rather religious experiences and certain spiritual moments where they can feel more religious or close to God existentially.

Ordinary readers or those who practice religious teachings as submission to basic religious orders alone, without an in-depth understanding of the messages and teachings of the holy Quran, will read the Quran as an act of worship, which is carried out repeatedly (*tikrar*), to obtain a certain religious experience. In more traditional Islamic practices, the verses of the Quran and its texts are often made into amulets and believed to have certain magical-spiritual powers that can protect the owner from the evils of jinn and humans. For ordinary readers, reading the Quran is a process of confirming this belief and a means to gain certain religious-spiritual experiences based on their beliefs about the miracles of the holy Quran.

Therefore, in this context, the act of reading the Quran for ordinary readers is not solely about understanding the text, but it is also about seeking religious experiences and spiritual moments. This is in contrast to the traditional hermeneutical approach, which focuses on extracting meanings and values from the text and contextualising them in one's life. Understanding this distinction is crucial for scholars and educators who want to teach the Quran to ordinary readers. They must be aware of the readers' intentions and goals when reading the Quran and adapt their teaching methods accordingly. Additionally, scholars and educators need to educate readers on the importance of contextualising the Quranic teachings in their daily lives and not just seeking spiritual experiences from the text. This can help to bridge the gap between the traditional hermeneutical approach and the approach of ordinary readers. Ultimately, by understanding the reading process of ordinary readers, scholars and educators can help to promote a more comprehensive and meaningful understanding of the Quran for all.

7. Existential Moments in Reading Sacred Scriptures

The act of reading the holy Quran by ordinary readers is intended as a routine act of worship to obtain good values and guidance from God for their lives, as well as to experience certain spiritual moments where they feel closer to God through His words. This process of ordinary reading can be considered an existential reading in Heidegger's phenomenological hermeneutics. In other words, the intention of ordinary readers to gain values and guidance from the Quran without relying on specific knowledge modalities or theoretical conceptions—except their belief in the glory of the Quran—allows them to experience a moment of revelation of meaning as a self-disclosure of the holy Quran itself.

Reading the holy text of the Quran is an act of worship for ordinary readers to gain good values, God's guidance, and spiritual experiences that allow them to feel closer to God through His words. In Heidegger's phenomenological hermeneutics, this process of ordinary reading is considered an existential reading. The ordinary reader intends to obtain values and guidance from the Quran, without relying on certain knowledge modalities and theoretical conceptions, except for the belief about the glory of the Quran that enables the reader to experience a moment of revelation of meaning as self-disclosure of the holy Quran itself.

The possibility for ordinary readers to experience an existential moment in which the Quran reveals its nature as a guide (*hudan*), a healer (*syifa'*), a grace (*rahmah*), and a truth (*haqq*) of itself, in the reading of phenomenological hermeneutics, is moments of disclosure (*Aletheia*). Ordinary readers who approach the holy text of the Quran can experience this moment, not only because they do not provide any assessment of the reality of the text but also because the ordinary reader places himself as a subject trying to formulate the meaning of his existence through the act of reading.

Reading the holy text of the Quran is an affirmation of the ordinary reader's belief about the benefits of the Quran (*zuhandenheit*). It is an act of reading without complicated thoughts and theoretical conceptions regarding the Quran, and it involves a weak self-declaration and acknowledgment of mortal servitude before God. This act of reading is experienced by the person as *Dasein*, which allows them to receive guidance from God. In the case of the experiences of ordinary readers who experience spiritual moments and change their awareness existentially, these events are also seen as transcendental reduction actions in Husserl's phenomenological method. This is because ordinary readers suspend their judgment of the text, and what remains is the reality of the text of the Quran as the word of God (*kalam*).

The difference between ordinary readers and those who know about approaching the Quran is that ordinary readers experience transcendental moments that allow them to understand the facts or truths of the Quran without theory. Expert readers, on the other hand, experience eidetic moments and transcendental moments that allow them to understand facts as well as generate new theories and meanings. Despite not having mastery of language, knowledge, and religious insight, ordinary readers can experience moments of revelation, where Allah makes the Quran reveal its true meaning and facts. This revelation can manifest in the form of serenity, happiness, feelings of peace, recovery from depression, or inspiration to the reader (Kamal et al., 2013; Khan et al., 2010; Mashitah & Lenggono, 2020; Mottaghi et al., 2016; Nayef & Wahab, 2018; Nukman, 2007; Pashib et al., 2014; Zeinali et al., 2013).

The discovery of this existential moment is made possible by the nature of the holy text of the Quran, which differs from non-scripture texts. To gain an understanding of the differences between the text of the Quran and non-scripture texts, it is necessary to first understand the nature of the elements involved in the reading of the two types of texts. The hermeneutical process that occurs in the reading of non-scripture texts and scriptural texts is explained in Figure 1 and Figure 2.

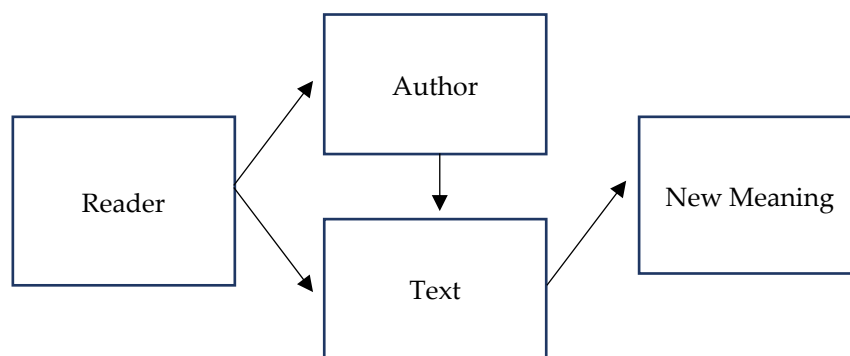


Figure 1 Process of Reading Non-scriptural Texts

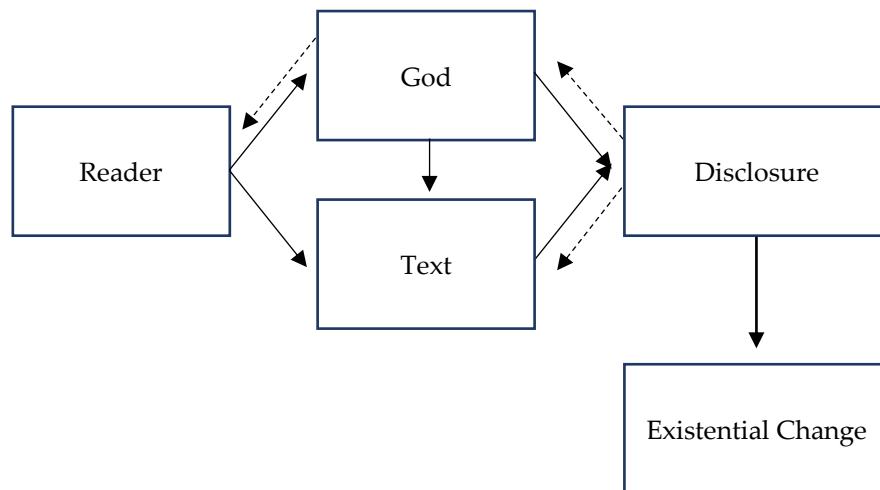


Figure 2 The Process of Reading the Scriptures (the Quran)

In the hermeneutical reading of non-scripture texts, as shown in Fig. 1, readers approach the text and try to understand the author's intent by considering various factors (contextual, linguistic, phenomenological, and others), then gain new meaning from the reading process. The goal of hermeneutical reading of non-scripture texts is to derive new meanings. In contrast, in the hermeneutical reading of scriptures, as seen in Fig. 2, the reader approaches the text with the belief that God is present not only in the creation of the text but also in the process of reading the text by the subject (reader). The reading of holy texts, which is generally repeated (*tikrar*) due to the value of worship and the reader's belief in the benefits of reading the holy text (guidance, healing, grace), can bring people to moments of revelation of the meaning of the text and certain spiritual experiences (God reveals His greatness which increases the reader's faith), where God and the Quran—as a living reality—become the determinants for the process of this disclosure. This moment of disclosure later becomes an existential moment for changes in the reader's awareness regarding their existence in the world.

The reading of the holy text of the Quran in this case aims not only to obtain meaning and truth through the revelation of God's words but also to enable the reader to discover certain spiritual moments in the form of divine awareness within oneself. This discovery can have an impact on the subject's way of being or existence in the world. However, it should be noted that this moment of disclosure is transcendent. Therefore, readers of the holy Quran are required to be in a state of purity (*tahir*) and empty themselves of desires that pollute the heart (*ikhlas*), while surrendering to God and His word. In doing so, God reveals clues and fills the readers with messages of truth that are capable of changing their self-awareness.

The process of phenomenological-existential reading is similar to the Sufistic journey of a servant who goes through three stages: *takhalli* (emptying), *tahalli* (filling), and *tajalli* (manifestations) (Al-Jampesi, 2022; Syukur, 2012). During the *takhalli* stage, the reader performs self-emptying by postponing various assessments of the text and the desires that pollute the heart when dealing with the Quran. During the *tahalli* stage, the reader fills themselves with ideas, concepts, and theories to interpret the text (eidetic reduction) or experiences a moment of revelation of the divine and the meaning of the Quran. Then, during the *tajalli* stage, the reader can arrive at the transcendental stage, find the facts, and then change their consciousness existentially, making changes within themselves. At this moment, readers can manifest the facts of truth in commendable attitudes and behaviors in life.

The process of reading the Quran from the perspective of phenomenological-existential hermeneutics is an attempt by the reader to understand himself or his way of being in the world concerning God and reality (*khaliq-makhluk*), and to arrive at the meaning and message of truth expressed by God through the Quran as His words. The privilege of the scriptures as living texts with certain spiritual values makes the acceptance of this meaning and message of truth accessible to

ordinary readers. The difference between interpreters with certain scientific modalities and ordinary readers ultimately lies in the loss of eidetic moments in ordinary readers, but they still have access to transcendental moments that can impact existential changes in self-awareness and behavior.

Reading the scriptures, therefore, is a way for the reader to assert his existence in the world. Every reader, whether an ordinary reader or an interpreter, has an equal opportunity to experience an existential moment in front of the holy Quran, regardless of differences in background, breadth of insight, and knowledge horizon. This study also suggests that even ordinary readers without prior knowledge or the intention to derive meaning can experience moments of revelation (existential moments). Such readers may receive and comprehend the message of truth from the scriptures, which can change their awareness and guide their actions in the world based on faith in God's teachings.

The reading of the Quran is not only a matter of intellectual understanding, but it also involves the whole being of the reader. The reading process of the Quran from the perspective of phenomenological-existential hermeneutics is an invitation to the reader to immerse himself in the text, to be present at the moment, to be open to the message of truth that God wants to convey and to be transformed by the text. In this way, the reading of the Quran is not only a cognitive activity, but it also has a spiritual and transformative dimension.

Moreover, this perspective on reading the Quran emphasises the importance of the reader's intention and his or her approach to the text. The reader's intention should not only be to seek information or knowledge but also to seek spiritual guidance and transformation. The reader should approach the text with an open heart and mind, free from biases and prejudices, and with a sincere desire to understand and apply the message of truth in his or her life. In conclusion, the perspective of phenomenological-existential hermeneutics offers a unique approach to the reading of the Quran that emphasises the transformative and spiritual dimensions of the text. This perspective invites readers to approach the text with an open heart and mind, to immerse themselves in the text, and to be transformed by the message of truth conveyed by God through the Quran.

8. Conclusions

The study demonstrates that the reader's position in the presence of sacred texts, such as the Quran, provides the same opportunity to experience existential moments that can change the reader's awareness and perspective on the meaning of life. According to Heidegger's phenomenological hermeneutics, this existential moment is a moment of revealing the meaning and divine guidance within oneself (*aletheia*) that enables the reader to gain spiritual experiences. Ordinary readers can experience the same spiritual experiences and existential moments due to the privilege of the scripture, i.e., the holy Quran, with certain prerequisites such as self-emptying (*epoche/takhalli*), filling oneself with meaning (*eidetic/tahalli*), and changing awareness and affirming existence (*transcendental/tajalli*) about God. In the ordinary reading of the scriptures, God is the author who imparts meaning and messages of truth to readers through His self-revelation.

The novelty of this study lies in exploring the process of reading the Quran from the perspective of phenomenological-existential hermeneutics, which emphasises the reader's subjective experience and the transformative potential of the text. The study highlights the accessibility of the Quran's meaning and message of truth to ordinary readers and challenges the notion that only expert interpreters can fully comprehend its teachings.

The findings of this study have several implications for the fields of religious studies, hermeneutics, and psychology. *Firstly*, the study highlights the importance of understanding the subjective experience of the reader in the interpretation of sacred texts, which can deepen our understanding of religious practices and beliefs. *Secondly*, it emphasises the transformative potential of the Quran for ordinary readers, which can promote greater inclusivity and accessibility of religious teachings. *Thirdly*, the study has implications for the development of a more holistic approach to psychological well-being. The process of reading the Quran, as outlined in the study, involves self-emptying, filling oneself with meaning, and changing one's awareness, which aligns with the principles of mindfulness and cognitive-behavioral therapy.

The study suggests that reading the Quran can serve as a form of spiritual practice that can promote mental and emotional well-being. This study also highlights the transformative potential of the Quran and underscores the importance of understanding the reader's subjective experience in the interpretation of sacred texts. It has implications for promoting greater inclusivity and accessibility of religious teachings and for the development of a more holistic approach to psychological well-being.

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