



The Implicit Speech Acts in Mohammad-Reza Hakimi's Normative Vocabulary on Social Justice

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ABSTRACT

Theories of justice in contemporary Islamic political thought—particularly among Shi'i scholars—remain relatively underdeveloped. Much of the existing literature either reiterates classical formulations or seeks to reconcile Islamic teachings with dominant Western theories of justice. Mohammad-Reza Hakimi, however, advances a distinctive approach by mobilizing religious and normative vocabulary in the service of social justice, grounded in the cultural and socio-historical context of Iranian society. Drawing on John Searle's theory of speech acts, this article examines the assertive, directive, and perlocutionary dimensions embedded in Hakimi's normative language of justice. Methodologically, the study employs qualitative content analysis of Hakimi's theological and socio-intellectual writings in order to trace how concepts such as justice, tawhīd (monotheism), and human dignity are transformed into mobilizing elements of discourse. The findings demonstrate that Hakimi articulates his vision of justice through a conscious distancing from both conservative religious interpretations and capitalist social relations, thereby positioning social justice at the center of his intellectual project. Normative concepts such as enjoining good and forbidding wrong (*amr bi'l-ma'rūf wa nahy 'an al-munkar*), divine justice (*'adl-i ilāhī*), and tawhīd provide the linguistic and conceptual foundations for linking faith to active social engagement aimed at eradicating poverty and oppression. By situating Hakimi's thought within Islamic intellectual traditions and contemporary socio-political challenges, this article highlights his contribution to a renewed conception of Islamic social justice and underscores the significance of linguistic analysis for bridging theology and social praxis.

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1. Introduction

Justice has consistently occupied a central position in Islamic thought and is presented in religious texts as one of the primary objectives of the prophetic mission (Motahhari, 1979: 16). In the contemporary context, however, a crucial question arises: how can religious concepts be reinterpreted in ways that meaningfully address social justice and the eradication of oppression in Muslim societies facing complex socio-economic challenges (Nasr, 2002: 173)?

Within this framework, Mohammad-Reza Hakimi emerges as a critical religious intellectual who, through his sustained critique of conservative religiosity and capitalist social structures, identifies justice as the very “core of faith.” He links justice intrinsically to monotheism, human dignity, and the realization of social equity (Hakimi, 1999). For Hakimi, religion that lacks a firm commitment to social justice is stripped of its substantive meaning and reduced to a mechanism for legitimizing existing power relations.

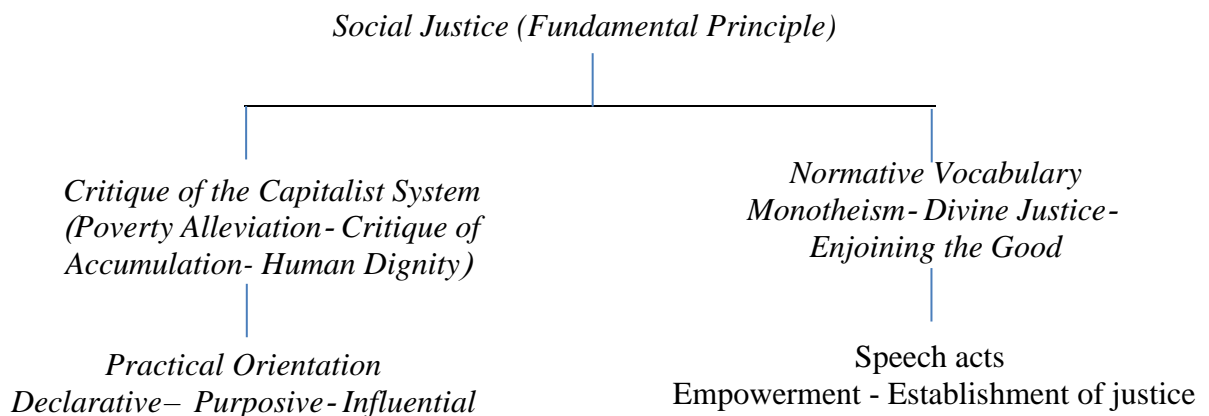
The central concern of this study is to examine the role of Hakimi’s language and normative vocabulary in shaping his conception of justice, and to analyze how these linguistic elements function as speech acts that transform justice into a mobilizing discourse. A review of the literature indicates that most studies on Islamic justice have focused either on theological exegesis or on comparative analyses with Western theories, such as Rawlsian justice. By contrast, linguistic and discourse-oriented approaches to justice in Islamic thought remain relatively unexplored. From this perspective, an analysis of Hakimi’s language opens a new analytical horizon for understanding the dynamic relationship between religion, justice, and society.

2. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative and analytical research design. Data were collected from Mohammad-Reza Hakimi’s major theological and socio-intellectual writings. The theoretical framework is grounded in John Searle’s theory of speech acts, which distinguishes among assertive, directive/commissive, and perlocutionary acts. Through qualitative content analysis, Hakimi’s normative vocabulary was examined in order to identify how different types of speech acts operate within his discourse on justice and contribute to its mobilizing function.

3. Findings

The analysis reveals that key concepts such as justice, *tawhīd*, oppression (*istiz‘āf*), and human dignity function as normative and mobilizing elements within Hakimi’s discourse. His assertive speech acts articulate foundational religious claims, such as the assertion that justice constitutes the essence of faith. His directive and commissive speech acts call upon individuals and communities to assume moral responsibility and actively engage in struggles against poverty and oppression. Finally, his perlocutionary acts generate moral sensitivity, indignation, and a sense of collective responsibility, thereby relocating justice from the realm of abstract theory to that of concrete social action.



4. Discussion and Conclusion

The findings indicate that Hakimi's conception of justice cannot be reduced to either a purely theological doctrine or a narrowly defined political theory. Rather, it constitutes a theocentric and socio-moral principle oriented toward combating oppression and realizing human dignity. Through the strategic use of normative vocabulary, Hakimi's language functions as an instrument of social awakening and mobilization.

Accordingly, this study argues that justice in Hakimi's thought is not merely a matter of theoretical conceptualization but a linguistic mechanism for inspiring socio-religious praxis. His speech acts operate as tools of ethical stimulation and social struggle, reflecting his fundamental objective of concretizing justice within Islamic society.

The significance of this research can be articulated on two levels:

A. Scientific and Theoretical Functions

1. **Indigenization of justice theory:** In a global intellectual landscape dominated by Western theories of justice, such as those of Rawls and Amartya Sen, Hakimi's thought demonstrates the possibility of articulating a justice framework rooted in Iranian-Islamic intellectual traditions.
2. **Expansion of critical linguistics in religious studies:** This approach reveals that religious language is not merely expressive but performative and mobilizing, enabling a reinterpretation of religious texts through interdisciplinary perspectives.
3. **Bridging theology and contemporary humanities:** Applying theories from linguistics and the philosophy of language to religious texts fosters a productive dialogue between tradition and modern analytical frameworks.

B. Social and Cultural Functions

1. **Redefining justice in contemporary society:** In Hakimi's thought, justice transcends legalism and distributive concerns, emerging as a theocentric-social principle aimed at resisting oppression, combating poverty, and affirming human dignity.
2. **Critique of conservative religiosity:** The study underscores how religion, when detached from justice-oriented discourse, risks serving as an instrument for legitimizing social inequality and political stagnation.
3. **Strengthening justice-oriented discourse among youth and intellectuals:** By articulating indigenous concepts of justice through contemporary analytical tools, Hakimi's discourse offers a bridge between generations and intellectual traditions.

In sum, such analyses do not merely reinterpret religious texts; they situate the language of religious tradition within an active dialogue with contemporary social challenges, thereby providing intellectual resources for critiquing inequality and pursuing meaningful social reform.

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