

Alfred Jules Ayer's Logical Positivism: A Critical Examination and Its Relevance in Islamic Studies

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Abstract: *This article delves into the philosophical ideas of Alfred Jules Ayer, specifically focusing on his contributions to logical positivism. The research methodology employed is a literature review, utilizing a descriptive-analytical qualitative approach. The study is structured around four key aspects. Firstly, it provides an overview of the historical evolution of logical positivism. Secondly, it elucidates the theoretical framework of Alfred Jules Ayer's logical positivism. Thirdly, it explores the criticisms leveled by Karl Popper against Ayer's logical positivism, particularly concerning induction and verification. Lastly, the article investigates the relevance of Ayer's concept of verification to the field of Islamic studies. The study concludes by discussing the applicability of Ayer's verification concept to Islamic studies, drawing parallels with the concept of "tabayyun" in Islamic jurisprudence. "Tabayyun" signifies the meticulous scrutiny and verification of information, particularly when it originates from an untrustworthy source (a "fasiq"). This process aligns with Ayer's emphasis on verifying meaningful propositions, ensuring the quest for clear truths in both philosophy and Islamic jurisprudence.*

Keywords: *Alfred Jules Ayer, Logical positivism, Positivism, Tabayyun*

A. Introduction

Each philosophical school exhibits a unique set of characteristics derived from the methodologies it employs to pursue the truth, effectively distinguishing one school from another. Analytic philosophy, as an exemplar, showcases its distinct traits. The defining essence of analytic philosophy transcends mere methodological considerations; it is deeply ingrained within the purview of analytic philosophers. The topics under scrutiny within the realm of analytic philosophy are notably distinct from those explored by philosophers in the broader sense. A recurring theme in discussions of analytic philosophy is its close association with the philosophy of language, leading to numerous scholarly works drawing parallels between analytic philosophy and the philosophy of language.

The evolution of analytic philosophy has left an indelible mark on the progress of contemporary science, particularly in the quest for truth. Analytic

philosophy has progressed through three pivotal stages in establishing rigorous and lucid principles for the application of linguistic analysis. These stages are identified as Logical Atomism, Logical Positivism, and Ordinary Language Philosophy. Among these evolutionary stages, this discourse centers its attention on Logical Positivism.

Logical Positivism, as championed by Alfred Jules Ayer, occupies a distinct niche within philosophical inquiry due to its pronounced emphasis on linguistic analysis and the principle of verification. The principle of verification postulates that a proposition holds meaning if it can be subjected to empirical testing and validated through observational evidence.¹ Logical Positivism represents a contemporary epistemological framework that, in its progressive strides, advances through the realms of observation, experimentation, and comparison. Scientific truth, within the positivistic paradigm, is gauged on the premise that what is true and genuine should manifest concreteness, logical coherence, accuracy, and utility.²

This study encompasses a comprehensive exploration of four key facets. Firstly, it delves into the historical evolution and development of Logical Positivism. Secondly, it elucidates the intricate construction of Alfred Jules Ayer's Logical Positivism. Thirdly, it outlines the critical examinations and objections posited by Karl Popper against Alfred Jules Ayer's Logical Positivism. Lastly, it endeavors to unveil the pertinence of Alfred Jules Ayer's verification concept within the domain of Islamic studies.

The investigation of positivism, particularly the strand of logical positivism exemplified by Alfred Jules Ayer, has been a subject of scholarly inquiry by academic researchers and scholars of yore. The current study does not claim novelty in this pursuit, recognizing a lineage of research preceding it. As exemplified by Soemantri's work,³ previous research has embraced the broader theme of positivism, transcending a sole preoccupation with the tenets of any single intellectual figure.

In the domain of logical positivism, several studies have made invaluable contributions to the scholarly discourse, although the specific focal point may not align with the subject of the present inquiry. Among

¹ Samsuri, Bahasa Positivisme Logis dan Maknanya Bagi Agama: Kajian Pemikiran Rudolf Carnap, *Jurnal Millah*, Vol 3, No.1, Agustus 2003, p. 128.

² Ainun Sakinah, Rational Emotive Therapy Dalam Menangani Negative Thingking Perspektif Positivisme Logis, *Jurnal Transformatif*, Vol 3, No 1, 2019, p.88.

³ Hj Emma Dismala Somantri, "Kritik Terhadap Paradigma Positivisme," *Jurnal Wawasan Hukum* 28, no. 01 (2013): 12.

these, Samsuri's investigation stands noteworthy.⁴ Additionally, Firdaus has probed the intricate interplay between empirical facts and semantic meaning within the framework of Ayer's principle of verification.⁵ Of particular relevance to this current article, Firdaus's study offers valuable insights into Ayer's philosophical perspectives. However, it is noteworthy that these extant studies predominantly concentrate on Ayer's exposition of the concept of verification, leaving Ayer's critical examination of metaphysical issues relatively unexplored.

In light of these considerations, this study directs its focus toward elucidating Ayer's elucidations on logical positivism, expounding his critiques of metaphysical tenets, and discerning the applicability of Ayer's verification concept within the context of Islamic studies.

B. Methods

This research employs a qualitative analytical-descriptive research method, focusing on the comprehensive examination and analysis of Alfred Jules Ayer's philosophical perspectives on logical positivism. It falls within the purview of literature research, conducted through an exhaustive review and scrutiny of literary sources directly or tangentially linked to Alfred Jules Ayer, positivism, and logical positivism. The primary data collection method utilized in this study is documentation, encompassing the meticulous retrieval of relevant materials such as notes, transcripts, journals, books, and other pertinent documents that pertain to Alfred Jules Ayer, positivism, and logical positivism. The data analysis process involves a systematic categorization, content analysis, and synthesis of the collected materials to extract meaningful insights and draw well-founded conclusions.

C. Result and Discussions

Intellectual Biography of Alfred Jules Ayer

Alfred Jules Ayer was born on October 29, 1910, in London. His father was of Swiss nationality, while his mother hailed from Belgium. Notably, his wife, of Jewish lineage, was born in Antwerp and shared familial ties with the

⁴ Samsuri, "Bahasa Positivisme Logis dan Maknanya Bagi Agama: Kajian Pemikiran Rudolf Camap."

⁵ Mu'minatus Fitriati Firdaus, "Hubungan Fakta Dan Makna Pada Prinsip Verifikasi Perspektif Alfred Jules Ayer," *Jurnal Filsafat* 6, no. 1 (2017): 12.

Citroen family, renowned for establishing the iconic French automobile factory. Ayer's foray into the realm of education, with a pronounced focus on philosophy and classical philology, commenced during his academic pursuits at the University of Oxford, spanning the years 1932 to 1935.

Ayer stands as one of the philosophers who propelled the concept of logical positivism to greater radicalism, significantly contributing to its philosophical development. His academic endeavors led him to Vienna, where he delved into the intellectual milieu, before returning to England to assume the role of a lecturer at Oxford.⁶

The tumultuous era of World War II saw Ayer donning the uniform of the British Army, serving predominantly in the domain of military intelligence. Post-war, his academic journey continued with a professorship at the University of London from 1946 to 1959, and a distinguished position as a professor of logic at the University of Oxford. Ayer's philosophical legacy is notably characterized by his acclaimed work, "Language, Truth, and Logic," a masterpiece that garnered admiration from English philosophers throughout the 20th century. Within the pages of this seminal work, Ayer articulated ideas of a distinctly radical nature. Another significant opus authored by Ayer, "The Problem of Knowledge" (1956), grapples with the intricate intricacies of philosophical skepticism.⁷

Among his scholarly contributions, several works stand out, including "The Foundation of Empirical Knowledge" (1940), "The Origins of Pragmatism" (1968), "Russell and Moore, The Analytical Heritage" (1971), "Russell" (1972), "Probability and Evidence" (1972), and "The Central Problems of Philosophy" (1973). Ayer's intellectual contributions in his book "Language, Truth, and Logic" may not have introduced entirely novel concepts in the philosophical landscape of the 20th century, as certain elements therein resonated with the tenets put forth by the Vienna Circle.

Post-World War II, Ayer transitioned back to the academic realm, assuming the position of dean at Wadham College, Oxford, after a period of military service predominantly focused on intelligence operations. An intriguing narrative pertains to Ayer's logical and empiricist thinking. In 1988, he encountered a momentous event when his heart ceased beating for four minutes, during which he reported experiencing a distressing red light.

⁶ K. Bertens, *Filsafat Barat Abad XX Inggris-Jerman*. (Jakarta: Gramedia, 1990), p. 32.

⁷ Fiandy Mauliansyah, "Positivisme Logis Dalam 'Language, Truth, And Logic' Karya Alfred Jules Ayer: Sebuah Pandangan Kritis," *Jurnal Source* 3, no. 2 (2017): 233.

This episode prompted him to entertain the notion that human existence may extend beyond mortal life. Nevertheless, Ayer remained steadfast in his positivistic and atheistic convictions. He passed away a year after this occurrence, leaving a lasting imprint on the trajectory of scientific inquiry.⁸

Logical Positivism: Its Origin and Philosophical Essence

Before delving into the intricate realm of logical positivism, it is imperative to embark on a journey into its historical roots. The 19th century witnessed the emergence of a philosophical movement known as positivism, which serves as the philosophical precursor of logical positivism, particularly in its objective approach to knowledge. This movement can be traced back to the empiricist tradition, grounded in the relentless pursuit of the tangible and factual while eschewing speculative intellectual endeavors. Its influence extended significantly into the domains of social and humanities studies, ultimately giving rise to the school of thought known as positivism. In its core, positivism scrutinizes human society through the lens of material and empirical dimensions. A shared emphasis on experience binds positivism and empiricism; however, a fundamental divergence emerges, with positivism confining itself to objective experiences, while empiricism embraces the subjective realm.⁹

The term “positivism” derives from the word “positive,” denoting the known, the factual, and the affirmative. Positively known elements encompass all that is observable and quantifiable. Hence, any statement venturing beyond facts or reality is systematically excluded from consideration.¹⁰ Positivism exclusively engages with objective, lucid, and factual phenomena—those amenable to substantiation through sensory perception. The inception of positivism is attributed to Auguste Comte, a French philosopher often hailed as the progenitor of sociology.¹¹ His philosophical framework was profoundly shaped by the positive sciences, giving rise to the term “positivism.” Comte championed the pivotal role of the senses in acquiring knowledge, while emphasizing the need to refine this

⁸ Firdaus, “Hubungan Fakta Dan Makna Pada Prinsip Verifikasi Perspektif Alfred Jules Ayer,” 49.

⁹ Harun Hadiwijoyo, *Sari Sejarah Filsafat Barat 2* (Yogyakarta: Kansus, 1980), p. 190.

¹⁰ Amsal Bakhtiar, *Filsafat Agama: Wisata Pemikiran dan Kepercayaan Manusia* (Jakarta: PT Raja Grafindo Persada, 2007), p.114.

¹¹ Irham Nugroho, “Positivisme Auguste Comte: Analisa Epistemologis dan Nilai Etisnya Terhadap Sains,” *Cakrawala* XI, no. 2 (2016): 167.

knowledge through instruments and to fortify it through experimentation. In this context, positivism found its earliest manifestation in Auguste Comte's Social Positivism, responding to the societal and historical needs of the era.¹²

As the sands of time continued to flow, positivism underwent substantial transformations on multiple fronts. Ultimately, in the 20th century, a philosophical movement known as logical positivism emerged. The genesis of logical positivism was intricately intertwined with the sweeping societal changes that characterized early 20th-century Europe. This period bore witness to World War I, a conflict that bore the unmistakable imprint of political dynamics, culminating in the fall of ancient royal dynasties and the ascent of republics. This unprecedented conflict exacted a toll measured not only in material losses but also in the lives of countless young men. World War I stand as a unique chapter in European history, distinct from previous conflicts.¹³

European nations faced the formidable challenge of reconstructing their societies as the curtain fell on World War I, encompassing political, economic, social, and cultural dimensions. The concept of restoration emerged, embodying a concerted effort to reinstate the political and social authority that had prevailed before the cataclysmic war. According to this movement, society needed to be rebuilt on the bedrock of specific theological (religious) or metaphysical (philosophical) principles. In contrast, there were factions advocating for the liberation of society from the confines of theological and metaphysical principles, championing a foundation grounded in scientific knowledge. The adherents of logical positivism asserted that the challenges of societal reconstruction should be addressed as scientific problems, with research methods serving as invaluable tools for enhancing the lives of individuals and society at large. This gave rise to what is commonly referred to as "the spirit of a scientific conception of the world." Logical positivism was characterized by its profound focus on the natural and exact sciences, which had achieved the pinnacle of development and garnered immense admiration for their accomplishments.¹⁴

Logical positivism, often referred to as neopositivism, emerged as a pivotal philosophical movement within the intellectual milieu of the Vienna

¹² Irham Nugroho, "Positivisme Auguste Comte: Analisa Epistemologis dan Nilai Etisnya Terhadap Sains," *Cakrawala* XI, no. 2 (2016): 168.

¹³ Somantri, "Kritik Terhadap Paradigma Positivisme," p. 625.

¹⁴ Somantri, "Kritik Terhadap Paradigma Positivisme," p. 626.

Circle. The Vienna Circle was a collective of philosophers united by a shared vision of establishing a comprehensive “unified science.” This ambitious program aimed to extend the methodologies employed in the natural sciences to encompass the realms of the humanities, including the domain of philosophy. Founded by Moritz Schlick, the Vienna Circle drew its membership from diverse academic backgrounds, encompassing the natural and exact sciences, mathematics, logic, and various scientific disciplines.¹⁵ Central to the ethos of this intellectual movement were principles of positivism, precision, and scientific rigor.

The proponents of logical positivism, or neopositivism, directed their attention towards the intricate interplay of language and meaning. They contended that the conceptual confusions arising from the various metaphysical approaches of idealist philosophers were fundamentally rooted in the inadequacy and emptiness of the language they employed. As advocates of positivism, they consistently upheld the primacy of empirical experience as the foundation of knowledge. However, their philosophical stance encompassed several specific and unequivocal tenets, including:

- a. The rejection of distinctions between the natural sciences and the social sciences.
- b. The classification of statements that could not be empirically verified, such as those pertaining to ethics, aesthetics, religion, and metaphysics, as devoid of meaningful content, and hence, as nonsensical.
- c. The ambitious pursuit of unifying diverse forms of knowledge within a universal scientific language, a concept termed “Unified Science.”
- d. The perception of the role of philosophy as primarily concerned with the analysis of language and statements.¹⁶

One of the prominent figures associated with the Vienna Circle, who played a pivotal role in introducing logical positivism to English-speaking audiences, was Alfred Jules Ayer. While Auguste Comte’s strain of positivism could be characterized as social positivism, owing to its emphasis on social activities, logical positivism can aptly be described as linguistic positivism due to its pronounced focus on language.

¹⁵ K. Bertens, *Filsafat Barat Abad XX Inggris-Jerman*, p. 166.

¹⁶ Mohammad Muslih, *Filsafat Ilmu*, Yogyakarta: Belukar, 2008, p. 113.

The philosophers of the Vienna Circle, Ayer included, positioned philosophy as a discipline underpinned by empirical parameters. Their methodology for scrutinizing logical positivism and the scientific enterprise was rooted in the meticulous examination of statements, or language. In the view of logical positivism, the core essence of pure philosophy lay in the logical dissection of scientific language, a process aimed at purging it of metaphysical elements while elevating the empirical content of scientific knowledge and statements. Logical positivism was fundamentally concerned with ascertaining the meaningfulness of expressions within the domains of philosophy and science, transitioning the focal point from the truth-value of statements to their semantic coherence.¹⁷

Logical positivism was characterized by a deliberate circumscription of intellectual inquiries, with a concerted effort to exclude discussions deemed devoid of significance. This methodological approach was adopted to liberate philosophy from protracted and inconsequential debates that had persisted for centuries, thereby dispelling cognitive obscurity. In stark contrast to the philosophical traditions of ancient Greece, which the proponents of logical positivism viewed as having consumed considerable time and effort without providing resolutions to substantive questions, this movement contended that humanity had been ensnared by its own ruminations.¹⁸ Logical positivism subjected matters such as the existence or non-existence of God, which lay beyond empirical verification, to scrutiny, categorizing them as vacuous statements.

Alfred Jules Ayer's Development of Logical Positivism

Logical positivism represents a philosophical movement deeply rooted in positivity and empiricism.¹⁹ It stands as a philosophy grounded in observable facts, empirical evidence, and sensory perception, as opposed to dwelling in the realm of pure speculation. The term "positive," as elucidated by John M. Echols, implies certainty, clarity, and persuasiveness, serving as the antithesis to "negative." According to the Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia, positivism is defined as a philosophical standpoint that asserts that knowledge is exclusively

¹⁷ A. Sony Keraf dan Mikhael Dua, *Ilmu Pengetahuan Sebuah Tinjauan Filosofis* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2001).

¹⁸ Husna Amin, "Ayer dan Kritik Logical-Positivism: Studi Metafisika Ketuhanan," *Jurnal ar-Raniry* 17, no. 1 (2015): 126.

¹⁹ Susanto, *Filfasat Ilmu: Suatu Kajian Dalam Dimensi Ontologism, Epistemologis Dan Aksiologi*, Jakarta: Bumi Aksara, 2016, p. 40.

derived from experience and the realm of certain empirical sciences. It dismisses the metaphysical and occult as mere illusions and obscurities, thus rejecting them as forms of speculative reasoning. This philosophical orientation asserts that human comprehension is confined to the realm of facts and the observable, precluding any capacity to grasp what exists beyond these empirical boundaries.²⁰

The Concept of Verification

At the heart of logical positivism resides a commitment to positivity and empiricism, drawing heavily from the domains of logic, mathematics, and the natural sciences. It emphasizes knowledge founded entirely on sensory experiences, diverging from the reliance on pure reason. The method of analyzing logical positivism or scientific propositions entails the rigorous testing of statements or propositions. These statements fall into two distinct categories: analytic and synthetic. Analytic propositions are crafted through rational deduction, being true by their very definitions. In contrast, synthetic propositions are anchored in empirical evidence, their veracity dependent on factual support. Philosophy's role within this framework centers on the analysis of analytic propositions, a practice that eventually evolves into an analysis of language. Consequently, logical positivism is often referred to as linguistic positivism, given its primary focus on language, statements, and propositions.

Before embarking on the analysis of propositions, it is essential to establish boundaries, a delineation known as demarcation. Demarcation delineates two fundamental categories: meaningful and meaningless propositions. Meaningful propositions encompass those that are open to discussion, measurable, and substantiable through empirical means. Conversely, meaningless propositions encompass those that remain beyond the realms of discussion, measurement, or empirical substantiation.

It is vital to note that meaningless statements are not inherently false; rather, they defy empirical verification. For instance, consider discussions pertaining to adjectives such as patience, beauty, and goodness. While these discussions are not erroneous, the truth of these statements eludes empirical verification. Each individual brings their unique perspective based on their reasoning, and there exists no universal yardstick for assessing these

²⁰ Taufik Mandaling, *Mengenal Filsafat Lebih Dekat*, Yogyakarta: Idea Press, 2013, p. 129.

meaningless statements. It is on this premise that Ayer dissents from meaningless statements.

Ayer's philosophical foundation hinges on the certainties and empiricism inherent in the realm of science. Ayer leans toward embracing meaningful statements due to their verifiability – they are amenable to testing. Verification involves a correspondence test, a process through which the truth or falsity of a statement is determined by its alignment with reality. For instance, in the context of a traffic accident, a statement's veracity can be ascertained through sensory perception, transcending the confines of mere reason or skepticism.

The concept of verification finds its close association with empiricism. Ayer introduced an empirical cycle, offering insight into how theories develop within the domain of scientific disciplines. This empirical cycle can be aptly illustrated as follows:

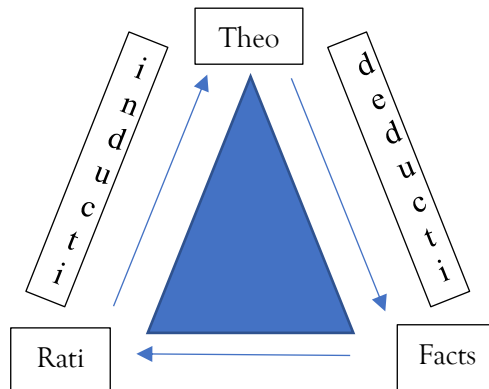


Figure 1. Alfred Jules Ayer's Formulation of Meaningful Statements

Ayer's philosophical framework posits that the development of any theory is contingent upon empirical facts. These facts are subject to rational processing, wherein they are cumulatively inducted into a theory, subsequently permitting the deduction of this theory for the explication of facts. To illustrate, consider the inception of the theory of gravity: it commences with observable facts, which are then comprehended through the faculty of reason, followed by their inductive synthesis. This process ultimately culminates in the emergence of the theory of gravity. Furthermore, this theory of gravity is then subjected to deduction, signifying the belief in its truth based on empirical observations.

Moritz Shlick stands as a foundational figure within the realm of logical positivism. He defines empirical observation as a direct event devoid of intermediaries, yet imbued with inherent meaning. Shlick's definition encountered criticism from certain quarters of the logical positivist circle, contending that it negated the historical dimension as a relic of the past and relegated scientific predictions, which convey forecasts of the future, into the realm of meaningful statements. In response to these concerns, Ayer broadened the purview of verification, asserting that a statement possesses meaning if it lends itself to analysis.

The statements advanced by Shlick and Ayer epitomize two distinct modes of verification, delineated as stringent verification and lenient verification. Shlick's exposition aligns with stringent verification, while Ayer champions lenient verification. Ayer's stance is predicated on his reluctance to summarily dismiss historical narratives based solely on Shlick's exacting standards of direct experiential verification, which necessitates the veracity of statements to be empirically demonstrable. Consequently, Ayer concedes to the credibility of statements that encompass the potential for experiential validation, whether indirectly or through witness accounts. His rationale stems from the realization that historical narratives constitute experiences that are inherently immune to direct empirical verification and, thus, necessitate reliance on trusted testimonies validated by the collective societal judgment.

The theory of verification, as propounded by Ayer, exerts a profound influence within the realm of scientific inquiry. It furnishes a framework within which propositions of religious and theological import can be subjected to critical scrutiny.²¹ Al-Munir explicates that the inexorable and immediate implications of Ayer's logical positivism, through the principle of verification, engender the extirpation of metaphysical speculation. Furthermore, he underscores that the principle of verification reverberates through scientific methodology, impacting the manifold facets of cognitive processes, procedural workflows, technical methodologies, and data-gathering procedures intrinsic to the quest for knowledge. One notable consequence within the domain of scientific methodology is the recognition that verification should extend beyond mere empirical validation, transcending the realm of theoretical principle into practical applicability.²²

²¹ Mohamad Rapik, *Diskursus Filsafat Ilmu: Dari Peradaban Manusia Ke Peradaban Tuhan*, *Jurnal Titian*, Vol 1, No 2, 2017, p. 161.

²² Satria, "Implikasi Positivisme Logis Terhadap Filsafat dan Ilmu," *UGM*, 2016, p. 2.

Analytic Propositions

As posited by Ayer, a sentence carries significance when the propositions it conveys can be subjected to analysis or empirical verification. Predicated on this assertion, one can delineate two categories of propositions: empirical propositions and analytic propositions. Empirical propositions encompass all hypotheses amenable to validation or refutation. The veracity of empirical propositions is discernible through the configuration of events or observable facts that are amenable to verification. In contrast, analytic propositions constitute statements whose veracity or falsehood is not contingent upon empirical experience but rather on the scrutiny of propositions. Analytic propositions can be classified into four categories:

- 1) Propositions founded on the arrangement of their symbols (evidence), exemplified in mathematics, as in the equation $30 + 27 = 57$.
- 2) Propositions grounded in the apriori (logical knowledge), such as the statement “every eye specialist is an ophthalmologist.”
- 3) Propositions containing certainty and necessity, referred to as tautologies, which are logically irrefutable, as seen in the statement “all humans are mortal.”
- 4) Propositions rooted in precise terminology, as in the statement “Aldi adheres to principles in his life that contribute to the welfare of others and is not a parasitic individual.”²³

Critique of Metaphysics

Ayer vehemently rejects metaphysical statements, characterized by their unverifiable nature, as they lack grounding in empirical data and facts that can be subjected to verification. According to Ayer, metaphysical beliefs cannot withstand logical scrutiny due to their inherent unverifiability. He adamantly maintains that there is no valid reason to question the concept of God, a position aligned with Wittgenstein’s approach to determining the validity of philosophical discourse. Wittgenstein’s doctrine, encapsulated by the phrase “to say what can be said,” advocates silence as the appropriate response to subjects that lie beyond the realm of discussion. Metaphysics falls under this category, as the signs of metaphysical propositions inherently lack the capacity to prove their veracity or falsity.

²³ Rizal Mustansyir dan Misnal Munir, *Filsafat Ilmu* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2012), p. 73.

Ayer underscores the pivotal role of language analysis in resolving philosophical dilemmas, emphasizing the need for language to be perspicuous, devoid of vagueness, ambiguity, and obscurity. Logical positivism, the philosophical framework to which Ayer adheres, stipulates that knowledge must be susceptible to sensory stimulation and include elements of truth.²⁴ Consequently, metaphysics is relegated to a branch of philosophy that warrants rejection, deeming it an exercise in mere linguistic play and illusion. As such, concepts like substance, existence, internality, and their ilk are dismissed as futile and without substance.²⁵

Ayer's repudiation of unverifiable metaphysical knowledge, particularly within the context of logical positivism, delineates the implications for the role of philosophy. Ayer harmoniously integrates Moore's perspective, rooted in everyday language, with the tenets of logical atomism, a framework built upon the foundations of logical language. Moore's utilization of ordinary language serves to counteract or unravel various metaphysical propositions. Metaphysical assertions that attempt to expound upon substance, existence, or the immortality of the soul are deemed nonsensical within the purview of logical positivism. This is chiefly due to the infeasibility of empirically analyzing metaphysical constructs, as their forms of occurrence lack relevance in ascertaining their truth or falsehood. Consequently, Ayer contends that the primary function of philosophy lies in the exposure and eradication of metaphysics. In Ayer's view, philosophy serves primarily as a critical endeavor, offering valuable critiques that guide the path towards scientific inquiries. However, this does not elevate philosophy to the status of the highest form of knowledge, as it does not possess the same positive task as empirical sciences.²⁶

Ayer's line of thought provides a lucid understanding of the overarching objectives of proponents of logical positivism. These philosophers aspire to position philosophy as a companion to the sciences, advocating for the evolution of philosophy towards a scientific logic. Thus, the elimination of metaphysics by logical positivism does not signify an opposition to metaphysics or an assertion of its futility. Instead, it reflects the primary objective of logical positivism, which includes the eradication of

²⁴ Paulus Wahana, "Menguak Kebenaran Ilmu Pengetahuan dan Aplikasinya dalam Kegiatan Perkuliahan," *Jurnal Filsafat* 18, no. 3 (2008): 286.

²⁵ Asep Ahmad Hidayat, *Filsafat Bahasa: mengungkap Hakikat Bahasa, Makna dan Tanda* (Bandung: PT Remaja Rosdakarya, 2009), p. 40.

²⁶ A.J Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic* (New York: Dover, 1953), p. 46.

metaphysics. Logical positivism seeks to establish a “unified science” characterized by clear standards, thereby dispelling any confusion in distinguishing between what is deemed scientific and what is not. Scientific propositions are those endowed with meaning and verifiability, while propositions lacking these attributes are considered non-scientific.

Critique of Logical Positivism

Every paradigm inevitably harbors its limitations, and Ayer’s conception of logical positivism is no exception. According to certain scholars, the deficiencies of logical positivism encompass the waning influence of religion during the Middle Ages, a period characterized by scientific dominance, and the failure to recognize the concepts of contingency, relativity, and human reason. This criticism extended to logical positivism, even originating from a notable member of the Vienna Circle, Karl Popper. Presented below is an exposition of Ayer’s logical positivism, subsequently subjected to critique by Popper.

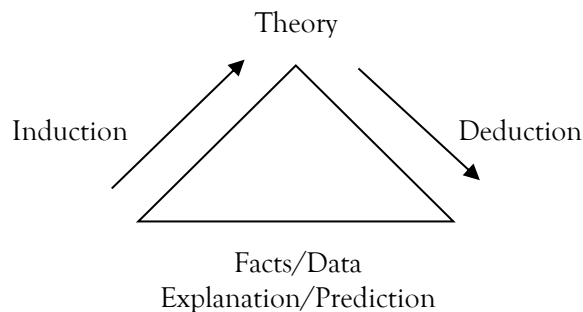


Figure 2. Alfred Jules Ayer’s Logical Positivism

As articulated by A.J. Ayer, the process commences with the collection of diverse facts or data, which are then subjected to induction (data gathering from facts, testing, experimentation) to formulate a theory. These theories may vary in strength, with the overarching objective being the establishment of a unified science. However, Karl R. Popper voiced reservations regarding Ayer’s approach. He contended that Ayer’s reliance on the inductive method, as elucidated above, appears to be the sole creator of scientific knowledge. Popper offered a straightforward logical proposition: no matter how many white chickens are observed, it cannot logically substantiate the claim that all

chickens are white.²⁷ He argued that Ayer's inductive process appears to be a quest for truth, marked by imagination, and a seemingly implausible journey towards scientific knowledge through induction. Popper asserted that induction is prone to inaccuracies and could lead to erroneous conclusions. In his view, precision and validity in knowledge can only be attained through inductive reasoning.

Furthermore, Popper levied criticism at Ayer's model of verification within the framework of logical positivism. Ayer posited that the verification of a scientific claim bolsters its credibility. Nevertheless, Popper counterargued by asserting that scientific progress does not solely hinge on verification but, rather, on the pursuit of errors and deficiencies (falsification). This same principle extends to scientific theories: their mere verification does not propel progress or stimulate the emergence of novel theories. According to Popper, the veracity of a scientific discipline is not substantiated solely through confirmation (verification) but, rather, by the rigorous scrutiny and negation of propositions intrinsic to the discipline itself (falsification).²⁸ The greater the effort to challenge a theory, and its resilience in withstanding these challenges, the more robust its presence becomes.²⁹ Popper contended that truth cannot be confined to sensory perception and empirical experience. Limited data do not suffice as universal justification, thus disqualifying experience as the basis for valid universal justification.

The Relevance of Ayer's Verification Concept to Islamic Studies

The exploration of Ayer's concept of verification evokes parallels with the Islamic doctrine of "*tabayyun*" or verification. "*Tabayyun*," stemming from the Arabic language, signifies the pursuit of clarity until the truth of a matter becomes unequivocal.³⁰ Classical scholars such as al-Maraghi, al-Qurtubi, al-Kisa'i, and Aidh al-Qarni have defined "*tabayyun*" as the meticulous verification of information, with the intent of ensuring precision to prevent the dissemination of potentially detrimental information to the public. This

²⁷ Karl R Popper, *Langkah Penemuan Ilmiah Terj Saut Pasaribu*, Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2008, p. 4.

²⁸ Asep Saepullah, "Epistemologi Falsifikasionisme Karl R. Popper: Relevansinya Bagi Teologi dan Pemikiran Keislaman," *Jurnal Of Islamic Civilization* 2, no. 2 (2020): 60.

²⁹ Komarudin, "Komarudin, Falsifikasi Karl Popper dan Kemungkinan Penerapannya dalam Keilmuan Islam," *at-Taqadum* 6, no. 2 (2016): 444.

³⁰ Ahmad Warson Munawwir, *Al Munawwir Kamus bahasa Arab – Indonesia* (Surabaya: Pustaka Progresif, 1997), p. 1199.

interpretation finds resonance with contemporary scholars like Quraish Shihab and Mutawalli asy-Sya'rawi, who underscore the necessity of exercising caution when disseminating information, particularly when dealing with individuals of questionable character, to avert sin, remorse, and the propagation of ignorance. The process of "*tabayyun*" entails engaging with various parties involved in the transmission of such information.³¹

The injunction to practice "*tabayyun*" holds profound significance. Allah instructs Muslims to exercise prudence and mandates the procurement of evidence when receiving information to forestall discord. "*Tabayyun*" is regarded as an esteemed ethical principle that assumes a pivotal role in upholding the purity of Islamic teachings and nurturing social harmony. Within the fabric of a community's social life, individuals can mitigate misunderstandings, conflicts, and even bloodshed by effectively implementing "*tabayyun*." This aligns with Surah Al-Hujurat, verse 6, which exhorts: "O you who have believed, if there comes to you a disobedient one with information, investigate, lest you harm a people out of ignorance and become, over what you have done, regretful." (Q. al-Hujurat: 6)

Scholarly interpretations of this verse, as presented by figures like Quraish Shihab, Hamka, and Sayyid Qutb, underscore the imperative of judiciously evaluating news or information delivered by individuals of questionable repute. Hasty acceptance and dissemination of such information to the public are discouraged, as it can bring harm to the community. It is essential not to base judgments solely on the words of an untrustworthy individual. Quraish Shihab clarifies that the term "*fasiq*" does not categorically apply to all bearers of news, as universally labeling them as such could instill doubt within the Muslim community. Hamka interprets "*fasiq*" as a derogatory term directed at al Walid ibn Uqbah, while Sayyid Qutb perceives "*fasiq*" as a synonym for a liar, necessitating the rejection of their news. Conversely, information conveyed by an upright individual may be considered trustworthy and valid.³²

Verification or *tabayyun* is a practice that extends beyond individuals with questionable character. While its emphasis is understandably greater in

³¹ Ahmad Fauzi Maldini, "Makna Tabayyun dalam Konteks Modern: Kajian Penafsiran al-Hujurat Ayat 6 Menurut Mutawalli al-Sya'rawi dan Quraish Shihab" (UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, 2019), p. 23.

³² Sri Rojiah, "Tabayyun Terhadap Berita Ditinjau Dari al-Qur'an dan Kode Etik Jurnalistik (Studi Atas Surat al-Hujurat ayat 6 dalam Tafsir al-Misbah, al-Azhar, dan Tafsir an-Nur)" (IAIN Purwokerto, 2020), p. 69.

such cases due to the inherent untrustworthiness associated with them, it is equally pertinent for individuals known for their faithfulness and trustworthiness. After all, human fallibility and forgetfulness are universal traits. The Quran, a foundational text in Islamic teachings, imparts invaluable guidance concerning the receipt of information. It advises that individuals, upon receiving information, should seek corroboration from knowledgeable and accountable sources. This approach aligns with the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), who cautioned against falsehood, elucidating its perilous path from untruths to sin and, ultimately, to the abyss of hell. Honesty, on the other hand, is extolled as a virtue that paves the way to paradise. A pivotal strategy in nurturing a robust and truthful generation lies in instilling the value of honesty. To put it succinctly, the formula for strength is honesty, while deceit breeds weakness, as the latter is rooted in qualities of baseness, timidity, and fear.

The divine injunction for verification serves a twofold purpose. It safeguards believers from embroilment in conflicts engendered by misinformation disseminated by unreliable sources, particularly those with questionable integrity. When contextualized within the realm of communication, the act of verification assumes contemporary relevance, advocating for a meticulous scrutiny of information in all social circumstances. It is worth noting that during the era when this command was revealed, the transmission of news was an inherently prolonged process, given the absence of advanced communication technologies. Consequently, information was susceptible to distortion and inaccuracies. The medium of transmission was human memory, which, when employed in sharing information, was susceptible to the introduction of errors, omissions, and alterations.³³

In the modern context, where information is sourced from individuals, social media, and the internet, the concept of “*tabayyun*” translates to exercising prudence in refraining from hasty judgment regarding the accuracy of information. Rather, upon receipt of information, one must diligently trace its origins. Furthermore, it is imperative to ascertain the credibility of the disseminator, whether the information originates from a reputable individual or organization. Only after the validation of received information can its accuracy be established. In addition to nurturing the disposition of “*tabayyun*,” the Islamic tradition encourages believers to cultivate the

³³ Faisal Syarifuddin, “Urgensi Tabayyun dan Kualitas Informasi dalam Membangun Komunikasi,” *Jurnal al-Kutub* 11, no. 2 (2019): 33.

capability to assess the quality of information, enabling them to distinguish between veracity and falsehood. The competence to gauge information quality is of paramount importance, for even accurate information may lack utility, either for oneself or others, particularly if it is erroneous or misleading. False information can wield pernicious effects, molding the perspectives of recipients and potentially leading them into the folds of misinformation.³⁴

The appraisal of information quality hinges upon three fundamental facets: reputation, relevance, and presentation. *Firstly*, an individual's reputation exerts a considerable influence on the quality of information conveyed. Awareness of the information source simplifies the task of verifying its accuracy. *Secondly*, the relevance of information must be manifest in the context of ongoing issues. Information divorced from its contextual moorings loses its pertinence and efficacy. Moreover, it is essential for information to substantiate the veracity of other related information. *Thirdly*, the presentation of information stands as a pivotal parameter in the evaluation of its quality. This encompasses aspects such as language usage, user interface, and information delivery. The employment of clear, concise language augments the value of information quality assessment. Information laden with excessive persuasive elements should be approached with caution, as it may incline towards opinion or personal bias. Language should conform to ethical norms, avoiding offensiveness and aligning with prevailing moral standards.³⁵

D. Conclusions

This study elucidates several pivotal aspects: First and foremost, Logical Positivism stands as an intricate intellectual development rooted in the traditions of empiricism and firmly situated within the domain of analytical philosophy. The core tenet of Logical Positivism is to circumscribe philosophical inquiries by abstaining from entanglement in discussions bereft of clear signification. Its focal point resides in the affirmative, the definite, and the empirically verifiable facets of discourse.

³⁴ Muhammad Usman Noor, "Penilaian Kualitas Informasi Sebagai Bentuk Sikap Tabayyun Ketika Menerima Informasi di Sosial Media dan Internet," *Jurnal Bibliotika* 2, no. 1 (2018): 33.

³⁵ Muhammad Usman Noor, "Penilaian Kualitas Informasi Sebagai Bentuk Sikap Tabayyun Ketika Menerima Informasi di Sosial Media dan Internet," p. 37.

Secondly, Logical Positivism is concerned with the meticulous examination of the meaningfulness of expressions within the realm of philosophy and science, as opposed to delving into the dichotomy of their veracity. An expression assumes significance when its proposition is susceptible to verification. Two modes of verification are recognized: rigorous verification, which dictates that a statement is true if buttressed by compelling, firsthand experiences; and soft verification, which posits that a statement carries the potential for experiential validation, be it indirectly or through witnesses. The ambit of discussion on divinity is spurned by Ayer, given that it veers into the metaphysical realm, marked by a lack of perspicuous signification and verifiability. This stance is grounded in the principal objective of Logical Positivism, which is to align philosophy as a companion to scientific inquiry, thereby deeming any discourse concerning divinity as unscientific.

The third facet entails the critical appraisal encountered by Logical Positivism at the hands of Karl Popper, specifically pertaining to induction and verification. Popper posits that the advancement of theories is contingent upon their susceptibility to falsification. This proposition resonates with the scientific domain, where progress ensues as a result of the relentless pursuit of identifying errors. Fourth and significantly, the pertinence of Ayer's verification concept to the domain of Islamic studies finds resonance in the concept of "*tabayyun*." This term denotes the meticulous and thorough scrutiny or verification of information, with the overarching objective of ascertaining unequivocal veracity. Such meticulous verification assumes paramount importance, particularly when information is disseminated by individuals of questionable character, categorized as "*fasiq*." In such cases, comprehensive verification becomes imperative.

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