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QUR'ANIC EPISTEMOLOGY AND THE MAKING OF ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION: REINTEGRATING REVELATION, REASON, AND SCIENTIFIC INQUIRY

Lukman Hakim[1] & Salina Khalid[2]
[1]PTIQ University Jakarta Indonesia, Email: lukmanhakim@ptiq.ac.id
[2]Universiti Sultan Azlan Shah (USAS) Perak Malaysia, Email: salina.khalid@usas.edu.my

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QUR'ANIC EPISTEMOLOGY AND THE MAKING OF ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION: REINTEGRATING REVELATION, REASON, AND SCIENTIFIC INQUIRY

Lukman Hakim, Salina Khalid

Abstract:
This study aims to reconstruct Qur'anic epistemology and examine its contribution to the formation of classical Islamic civilization. Employing a qualitative library-based method, the study combines thematic Qur'anic exegesis (*tafsīr mauḍūʿī*), conceptual epistemological analysis, and the intellectual history of Islamic civilization. Qur'anic terms related to cognition and knowledge—such as *tafakkur*, *taʿaqqul*, *tadhakkur*, *tadabbur*, *naẓar*, *tabaṣṣur*, *tafaqquh*, and *iʿtibār*—are analyzed through classical lexical sources, Qur'anic concordances, exegetical works, and modern scholarly literature. The findings show that Qur'anic epistemology constructs knowledge as a holistic and transformative process that integrates revelation, rational inquiry, empirical observation, ethical responsibility, and spiritual consciousness. This epistemological framework was historically articulated in the works of Muslim philosophers and scholars such as al-Kindī, al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, al-Ghazālī, and Ibn Rushd, who viewed reason not as an opponent of revelation but as an instrument for understanding divine signs in scripture, nature, history, and the human self. The study concludes that classical Islamic civilization emerged from an integrative Qur'anic paradigm of knowledge grounded in *tawḥīd*, and that revitalizing this paradigm may offer a constructive framework for contemporary Muslim engagement with science, philosophy, and civilization.
Keywords: Qur'anic epistemology; Islamic civilization; knowledge; revelation and reason; tafsīr mauḍūʿī; Islamic philosophy.

A. Introduction

One of the most fundamental challenges facing the contemporary Muslim world is the weakening—and in many contexts, the near disappearance—of a profound culture of critical and reflective thinking, which historically served as a principal force behind the intellectual and civilizational achievements of

Islam. Muhammad Abdus Salam, the 1979 Nobel Laureate in Physics, once observed that science remains comparatively weakest in the lands of Islam when measured against other civilizations.[1] This condition is particularly paradoxical given that, from the very beginning of revelation, the Qur'an placed knowledge at the heart of human and civilizational development. The divine command *iqraʾ* ("Read") was not merely an instruction to read in a literal sense, but a foundational declaration of the importance of literacy, scholarly inquiry, critical reflection, and ethical consciousness. In the Qur'anic worldview, knowledge (*'ilm*) occupies a central and transformative position. Numerous Qur'anic verses and Prophetic traditions emphasize the obligation of seeking knowledge and present it as a means of guiding humanity toward moral refinement, intellectual maturity, and civilizational advancement.

Historically, the pursuit of knowledge has been inseparable from the broader trajectory of human civilization. From ancient Greek philosophical inquiry to the flourishing of scientific and intellectual activity in the Islamic world and extending to contemporary developments in Western and East Asian societies, advances in knowledge have repeatedly catalyzed periods of remarkable civilizational achievement. Within the Islamic context, the zenith of scholarly productivity is exemplified by the Abbasid, Fatimid, and Umayyad II periods in Andalusia, as well as other prominent medieval Islamic polities, where scholars and polymaths were instrumental in producing enduring contributions to science, philosophy, and the arts.

As highlighted by Eric Chaney in *Religion and the Rise and Fall of Islamic Science*, the period between the ninth and twelfth centuries CE witnessed extraordinary intellectual flourishing. Cities such as Baghdad, Cordoba, Cairo, and Bukhara emerged as major centers of global learning and scientific inquiry. Institutions like the *Bayt al-Hikmah* functioned as hubs for translation, research, and intercivilizational dialogue, fostering an environment in which polymaths—including Al-Khwarizmi, Al-Kindi, Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, Al-Biruni, and Ibn al-Haytham—produced works that later became foundational to the development of modern science. This historical precedent underscores the centrality of Qur'anic epistemology, reflective reasoning, and scholarly rigor in shaping civilizations capable of sustained intellectual and cultural advancement.[2]

With the transition to the middle period of Islamic history, particularly after the decline of the Abbasid intellectual zenith, scientific and scholarly activity in the Muslim world began to exhibit a gradual deceleration. Although

[1] Pervez hoodbhoy, *Islam And Science: Religious Orthodoxy and the Battle for Rationality* (London: Zed Books Ltd, 1999), p. ix.

[2] Eric Chaney, *Religion and the Rise and Fall of Islamic Science,* (May 2016), p. 36-39.

major empires such as the Ottoman Empire, Safavid Empire, and Mughal Empire continued to produce influential jurists, theologians, and Sufi scholars, the dominant orientation of intellectual activity shifted from the generation of original paradigms to the preservation, systematization, and elaboration of the classical heritage. Scholarly production increasingly took the form of *sharḥ* (commentaries), *mukhtaṣar* (abridgements), *ḥāshiyah* (marginal glosses), and *taqrīrāt* (supplementary explanations), emphasizing interpretation and pedagogical transmission rather than conceptual innovation. This transformation did not signify a complete intellectual stagnation; rather, it reflected a conservative and didactic mode of scholarship in which authority was increasingly associated with the ability to interpret and synthesize established texts by figures such as Al-Ghazali, Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, etc.[3]

Ahmed El Syamsy, in his book; *Rediscovering Islamic Classics*, mentions that one contributing factor to the declining of muslim golden age was the gradual displacement of Arabic as the universal language of scholarship by regional languages such as Ottoman Turkish, Persian, and Urdu. While this linguistic diversification broadened access to learning among local populations, it simultaneously reduced direct connectivity with the broader Arabic-based intellectual networks that had previously facilitated the circulation of ideas across vast geographic regions. Consequently, the exchange of scientific and philosophical knowledge became less integrated than during the classical period, when Arabic functioned as a shared transregional medium of scholarship.[4]

As a consequence of this long historical process, the Muslim world now faces a significant gap in comparison with the leading global centers of scientific production. It is found that OIC (The Organisation of Science islamic Cooperation (OIC) Countries as a group are lagging far behind the other country groups in terms of educational outcomes. Although great achievements have been observed in many OIC Countries in improving access to education, it appears that there is still a long road ahead to improve the teaching conditions and quality of education in order to realise more concrete achievements in the area of science and technology. [5]

UNESCO reported that in 2018 there were approximately 8.85 million full-time equivalent researchers worldwide,[6] with the overwhelming majority

[3] See Lukman Hakim, et.al., *Islamic Science and Intellectual Development in Medieval Islam: The Ottoman Empire's Role, Sci.Int. (Lahore), 37 (3)* (May 2025), p. 411.

[4] Ahmed El Syamsy, *Rediscovering Islamic Classics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), p. 65.

[5] https://www.sesric.org/publications-detail.php?id=395

[6] https://www.unesco.org/reports/science/2021/en/statistics

concentrated in countries such as China, the United States, Japan, Germany, and South Korea. The contrast becomes even more pronounced when measured by researcher density: South Korea has more than 8,000 researchers per million inhabitants, while Japan, Germany, and the United States each maintain more than 4,000 to 5,000 researchers per million people. Although countries such as Malaysia, Turkey, and Iran have demonstrated encouraging progress, the majority of Muslim-majority countries, including Indonesia, continue to display relatively low research capacity.[7] Collectively, these patterns suggest that the contemporary Muslim world has yet to fully revive the integrated epistemic tradition that once united revelation, rational inquiry, and scientific creativity into a dynamic and globally influential civilization.

B. Method

This study adopts a qualitative research design grounded in a library research approach, aiming to explore and reconstruct Qur'anic epistemology. Rather than collecting field data, the study relies on a critical analysis of primary and secondary sources, including the Qur'an, classical exegeses, and contemporary scholarly works, to construct a coherent epistemological model that integrates revelation, reason, and empirical observation. The conceptual-analytical nature of this research enables the identification of patterns, principles, and frameworks that have historically guided Islamic intellectual traditions and continue to offer relevance in addressing contemporary challenges in Muslim societies.

An interdisciplinary approach is employed, combining thematic Qur'anic exegesis (*tafsīr mauḍū ʿī*), epistemology, and the intellectual history of Islamic civilization. Qur'anic verses pertaining to reflection, reasoning, and remembrance are systematically collected, classified, and analyzed, with special attention to roots such as *tafakkur*, *taʿaqqul*, *tadhakkur*, *tadabbur*, *naẓar*, *tabaṣṣur*, *tafaqquh*, and *iʿtibār*. In identifying and tracing these Qur'anic terms, the study makes use of classical lexical and concordance references, particularly al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī's *Mufradāt Alfāẓ al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*[8] and Muḥammad Fu'ād ʿAbd al-Bāqī's *al-Muʿjam al-Mufahras li Alfāẓ al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*.[9] This method facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the internal coherence of Qur'anic epistemology and highlights the integration of ethical, spiritual, and rational dimensions of knowledge. Classical interpretations and

[7] https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.SCIE.RD.P6

[8] Al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī, *Mufradāt Alfāẓ al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, tahqiq Ṣafwān 'Adnān Dāwūdī, cet. IV (Beirut: Huquq Tab'ah Mahfudzah, 2009).

[9] Muhammad Fuad Abd al-Baqi, *Al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras li Alfādz al-Qur'an al-Karīm* (Kairo: Mathba'ah Dar al-Kutub al-Mishriyah, 1364).

modern analyses are juxtaposed to identify both historical practices and potential applications of Qur'anic principles in contemporary knowledge production.

Data collection involves a detailed document analysis, including the identification of relevant Qur'anic verses, extraction of key epistemological concepts, and compilation of classical and contemporary commentaries. Supplementary data on global scientific productivity and intellectual output are incorporated to contextualize the contemporary status of Muslim societies relative to their historical epistemic achievements. Analytical procedures combine thematic analysis to identify conceptual patterns, content analysis to examine scholarly discourse, and comparative analysis to contrast classical integrative paradigms with the fragmented knowledge structures of modernity. A critical-constructive approach is also applied, enabling the study to not only diagnose challenges but also propose a framework for the revitalization of Qur'anic epistemology as a foundation for ethical, rational, and socially responsible knowledge production.

C. Results and Discussion

The Qur'anic Concept of Knowledge

The Qur'an places knowledge at the very foundation of human civilization. From the first revelation—, which begins with the command *Iqraʾ bi-smi rabbika* ("Read in the name of your Lord")—the Qur'an emphasizes reading, learning, and inquiry as the gateway to knowledge. This first revelation received by the Prophet Muhammad PBUH indicates the centrality of knowledge, literacy, and learning within the Islamic worldview. In the socio-cultural context of pre-Islamic Arabia, where literacy rates were relatively low and intellectual traditions were predominantly oral, the Qur'anic emphasis on reading and knowledge represented a transformative and revolutionary shift. Beyond affirming the oneness of God (*tawḥīd*), the Qur'an elevated the status of knowledge and positioned the seeker of knowledge in a highly honorable rank within society, immediately below the prophets.[10]

Through reflection and critical thinking, human beings can assess knowledge when it is supported by reliable scientific evidence. Therefore, scientific truth is achieved through systematic and objective inquiry. Scientific culture is closely connected to various disciplines, data centers, educational literature, and the historical development of knowledge. For this reason, human beings should be encouraged to study and reflect on the elements that form life and the universe. The more scientific discoveries reveal the order of

[10] See A.L. Tibawi, *Islamic Education: Its Traditions and Modernization into the Arab National Systems*, (London: Luzac & Company Ltd, 1979), p. 23-24.

nature, the greater the opportunity for human beings to think critically and reflect on the greatness of Allah as the Creator. Thus, knowledge is not only rational understanding, but also a means of learning, reflection, and contemplation of the Creator and His creation.[11]

The Qur'an further elevates the status of those endowed with knowledge. God declares that He raises in rank those who believe and those who have been granted knowledge. This verse demonstrates that knowledge possesses not only instrumental value but also profound spiritual and existential significance. Knowledge serves as a means of drawing closer to God while simultaneously enhancing the quality of human life.[12] The term *'ilm* and its various derivations appear approximately 854 times in the Qur'an, reflecting the significant emphasis placed on knowledge acquisition and intellectual inquiry.[13] This recurring emphasis demonstrates that the Qur'an not only values knowledge instrumentally, but also regards it as a spiritual and civilizational necessity.

Numerous Qur'anic verses explicitly encourage the pursuit of knowledge and distinguish between those who possess knowledge and those who do not. Similarly, Q.S. al-Zumar: 9 emphasizes the distinction between the knowledgeable and the ignorant, while Q.S. al-Mujādilah: 11 affirms that Allah elevates believers who possess knowledge to higher degrees.[14] Classical Muslim exegetes interpreted these verses as evidence of the elevated status of scholars and intellectuals within Islam. Ibn Masud viewed these verses as divine praise for knowledgeable believers over those lacking knowledge,[15] while Al-Tabari explained that Allah raises the ranks of knowledgeable believers due to their knowledge and righteous action.[16] Fakhr al-Din al-Razi further argued that scholars occupy a distinguished spiritual and intellectual position because of their faith, understanding, humility, and consciousness of God.[17]

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[11] Abdul Wahid Hamid al-Kubaisy, *al-Tafkir al-Mandzumi: Taudzifuhu al-Ta'allumi wa al-Ta'lim Istinbatuh min al-Qur'an al-Karim* (Amman: Dar Dibunu, 2009), p. 161-162.

[12] Abdul Wahid Hamid al-Kubaisy, *al-Tafkir al-Mandzumi*, p. 161-162.

[13] M. Quraisy Shihab, *Wawasan al-Qur'an*, (Bandung: Mizan, 2000), p. 436.

[14] According to Ibn Ashur, this verse relates to the virtue of honorable and meritorious individuals. When the Prophet Muhammad PBUH was in the *Ṣuffah* area of the Prophet's Mosque, the Companions were instructed to stand in respect for the arrival of the veterans of the Battle of Badr. See Ibn Asyur, *Tafsir al-Tahrir wa al-Tanzil*, Juz 28, (Tunisia: Dār Sahnūn li al-Nasyr wa al-Tawzī', 1997), p. 37.

[15] Ali al-Shobuni, *Shofwat al-Tafasir*, Juz 3, (Beirut: Dar al-Qur'an al-Karim, 1981) p. 305.

[16] Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl Āy al-Qur'ān*, vol. 15 (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 2000), p. 305.

[17] There are four groups whose ranks are elevated by Allah سبحانه وتعالى: first, the believers who participated in the Battle of Badr; second, the mujāhidūn (those who strive in the path of Allah); third, the righteous believers; and fourth, the scholars ('ulamā'). Allah elevates the

The Qur'an also associates knowledge with justice and divine testimony. In Q.S. Āli Imrān: 18, Allah places "those endowed with knowledge" alongside angels as witnesses to divine unity. According to Al-Ghazali, this verse illustrates the honor and dignity granted to scholars in Islam. Similarly, reports attributed to Ibn Abbas describe scholars as occupying exalted ranks above ordinary believers. The prophetic tradition further reinforces this intellectual ethos through numerous narrations concerning the obligation of seeking knowledge, the virtues of scholars, and the spiritual rewards granted to seekers of knowledge.[18]

This emphasis on literacy and intellectual cultivation was also reflected in the practices of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH himself. Following the Battle of Badr, several Quraysh prisoners were instructed to teach literacy to Muslim children as part of their ransom, demonstrating the practical importance attached to education in early Islamic society.[19] Among those who benefited from this initiative was Zayd ibn Thabit, who later became one of the most prominent scribes of revelation.[20]

Contemporary Muslim thinker Ismail Raji al-Faruqi argues that the Qur'anic and prophetic encouragement toward knowledge, rational inquiry, and intellectual openness historically transformed Muslim civilization into a dynamic center of learning and scientific development. Islam encourages humanity to utilize reason and liberate itself from dogmatism, superstition, and irrationality. Consequently, the Islamic intellectual tradition fundamentally promotes critical thinking, openness toward knowledge and wisdom regardless of its source, and a continuous commitment to intellectual and civilizational advancement.[21]

The significance of knowledge is further reflected in its role as a means of reading the signs of God in creation. Natural phenomena such as the alternation of day and night, the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the

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veterans of Badr above other believers (Q.S. al-Anfāl: 2–4), raises the mujāhidūn above those who remain behind (Q.S. al-Nisā': 95), honors the righteous above others (Q.S. Ṭāhā: 75), and elevates the scholars above others (Q.S. al-Mujādilah: 11). Scholars are regarded as the most honored people, as indicated in Q.S. Fāṭir: 28. Meanwhile, the scholars possess five principal virtues: (1) faith (*īmān*) in Q.S. Āli 'Imrān: 7; (2) tawḥīd and testimony (*shahādah*) in Q.S. Āli 'Imrān: 18; (3) weeping (*al-bukā'*) in Q.S. al-Isrā': 109; (4) humility (*al-khushū'*) in Q.S. al-Isrā': 107; and (5) reverential fear of Allah (*al-khashyah*) in Q.S. Fāṭir: 28. See Fakhruddin al-Razi, *Mafatih al-Ghayb*, (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1981), p. 195-196.

[18] Al-Ghazali, *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*, (Beirut: Dar Ibn Hazm, 2005), p. 11.

[19] Shofiyyurrahman al-Mubarakfury, *al-Rahiq al-Makhtum*, (Qatar: Wazarah al-Wuquf wa al-Syu'un al-Islamiyah, 2007), p. 230.

[20] Ibn Sa'ad, *Kitab Thabaqat al-Kabir,* Vol. 2 (Kairo: Maktabah al-Khanji, 2001), p. 20

[21] Ismail R. Al-Faruqi, *Islam dan Kebudayaan*, (Bandung: Mizan, 1984), p. 31-32.

diversity of living beings are described as āyāt (signs) that invite investigation and reflection. In , people of understanding (*ulū al-albāb*) are portrayed as those who remember God while contemplating the creation of the heavens and the earth. This demonstrates that scientific inquiry in Islam does not terminate in empirical observation; rather, it culminates in theological consciousness and spiritual insight.

The Qur'an consistently presents knowledge as an integrated whole, without separating what is commonly labeled "religious" and "rational" sciences. In the Qur'anic worldview, all knowledge—whether derived from revelation (*āyāt qawliyyah*) or from the created universe (*āyāt kawniyyah*)—originates from the same Divine Source and therefore cannot be intrinsically contradictory. When disciplines such as philosophy and its various branches began to be studied intensively by Muslims, scholars subsequently emphasized a clearer classification of knowledge into two categories: *farḍ 'ayn* and *farḍ kifāyah*. According to Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, *farḍ 'ayn* refers to knowledge concerning the fundamental principles of Islam, whereas *farḍ kifāyah* denotes a collective obligation to pursue certain fields of knowledge, an obligation that is considered fulfilled when at least some members of the Muslim community undertake it. This category includes disciplines such as medicine, mathematics, agriculture, tailoring, politics, and other practical sciences. These religious and intellectual imperatives contributed significantly to the flourishing of knowledge in the Islamic world. [22] For instance, specialists emerged in arithmetic and geometry, whose expertise was instrumental in facilitating the calculation of inheritance shares and determining the times of prayer.[23]

This integrative paradigm was powerfully embodied in the classical Islamic intellectual tradition. Scholars such as al-Ghazālī sought to synthesize religious and rational sciences within a spiritual framework. In , knowledge is presented as a path to maʿrifah (gnosis), while logic and philosophical reasoning are recognized as legitimate tools of inquiry. Likewise, it integrates Qur'anic exegesis with philosophical and scientific analysis, illustrating the compatibility of revelation and rational inquiry. further demonstrated how empirical observation could serve as a means of understanding the divine signs embedded in nature.

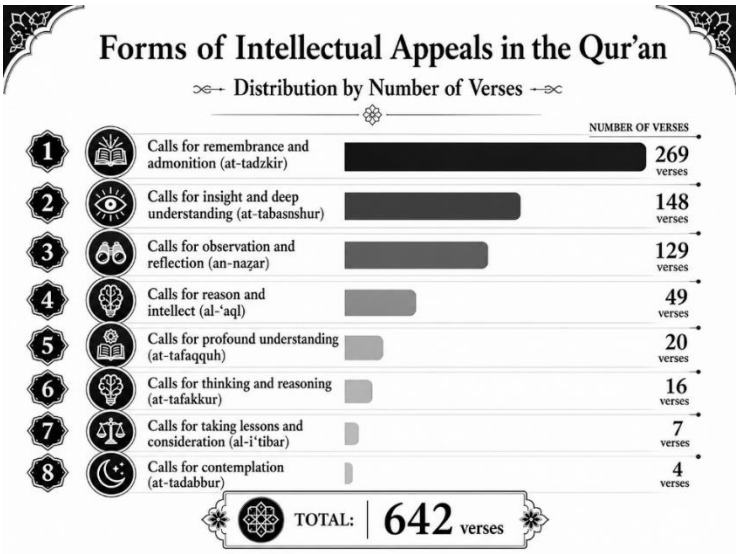
c.1. Qur'anic Epistemological Terms

Building upon the discussion of *'ilm* as the foundational concept of knowledge in Islam, it becomes essential to examine its epistemological

[22] Al-Ghazali, *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*, p. 21-24.

[23] Toby E. Huff, *The of Early Modern Science: Islam, China and the West*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 52.

underpinnings. Knowledge in the Qur'anic framework is not merely the accumulation of facts or information; rather, it embodies a holistic and integrative process that encompasses rational inquiry, reflective contemplation, and moral-spiritual internalization. This perspective naturally leads to the consideration of **Qur'anic epistemology**—the study of the principles, methods, and sources through which knowledge is acquired, validated, and applied in accordance with divine guidance.



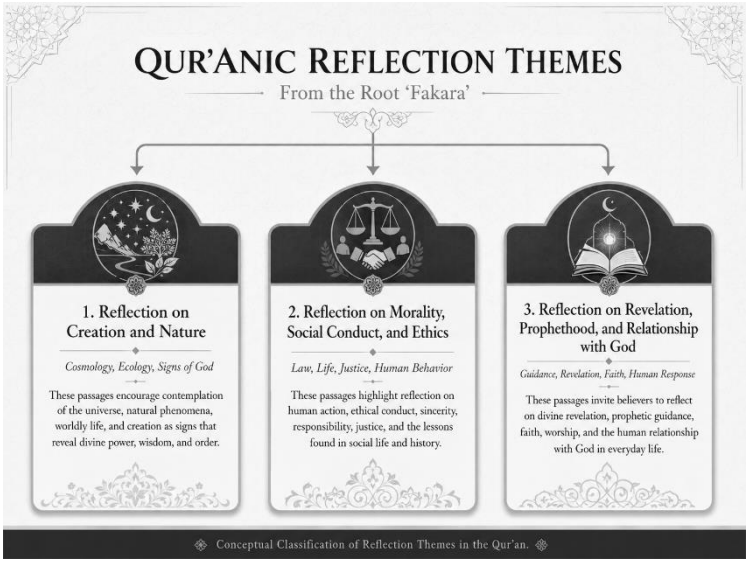
Sholah Sholeh Makmar, *'Ilm al-Tafkir*, (Nablus: Mizan, 2000)

The Qur'an contains a remarkably rich vocabulary related to human cognition, reflection, and the pursuit of knowledge. Across its verses, numerous terms are employed to describe intellectual activity. In aggregate, seven major cognitive terms and their morphological derivatives—*tafakkur* (reflective contemplation), *ta'aqqul* (rational reasoning), *tadhakkur* (recollection and moral remembrance), *tabaṣṣur* (insightful perception), *naẓar* (analytical observation), *tadabbur* (deep contemplative reflection), *al-I'tibar* (consideration or taking a lesson) and *tafaqquh* (profound comprehension)—occur a total of 642 verses. This figure approaches approximately ten percent of the total number of Qur'anic verses, indicating that intellectual engagement is not a marginal motif but rather one of the principal conceptual structures underpinning Qur'anic discourse. Such a remarkable frequency demonstrates that the Qur'an systematically constructs a comprehensive epistemological

framework in which the pursuit of knowledge is rooted in the harmonious interaction of reason, reflection, observation, memory, and spiritual insight.[24]

1. *At-Tafakkur*

The lexical root ف ك ر (f-k-r), from which the concept of tafakkur (contemplative reflection) is derived, appears eighteen times in the Qur'an. Seventeen of these occurrences are found in verbal forms that explicitly exhort human beings to engage in reflective thought—most commonly through expressions such as *yatafakkarūn* ("they reflect") and *tatafakkarūn* ("you may reflect"). One additional occurrence appears in the form *fakkara* ("he thought and devised") in The Qur'an, where the term is used negatively to describe deliberate scheming rather than constructive contemplation. This distribution indicates that the Qur'an consistently associates the faculty of thinking with purposeful reflection upon divine signs rather than with abstract speculation alone.



Note:

- **Group 1** → Focuses on nature and the signs of God
- **Group 2** → Focuses on human morality, social conduct, and ethics
- **Group 3** → Focuses on revelation, prophethood, and divine guidance

The Prophet Muhammad PBUH said, "Reflective contemplation (*tafakkur*) for one hour is better than sixty years of worship." Fakhr al-Din al-Razi explains that there are two reasons for the superiority of tafakkur. First,

[24] Sholah Sholeh Makmar, *'Ilm al-Tafkir*, (Nablus: Mizan, 2000), p. 27

tafakkur leads a person to Allah *Ta'ala* whereas acts of worship lead a person to the reward of Allah. That which leads one directly to Allah is nobler than that which leads merely to something other than Him. Second, *tafakkur* is an act of the heart, whereas ritual obedience is an act of the bodily limbs. Since the heart is nobler than the bodily organs, the actions of the heart are therefore nobler than the actions of the limbs. This view is reinforced by the verse: "And establish prayer for My remembrance" (Q.S. Ṭāhā: 14). Allah made prayer a means toward the remembrance of the heart, while the goal is nobler than the means. This indicates that knowledge is nobler than other things. [25]

Fakhr al-Din al-Razi further states that when a person engages in *tafakkur* in seeking *ma'rifah* (knowledge of God) through evidence and rational proof, it is as though he is sitting upon the ship of contemplation and reflection. Meanwhile, the waves of darkness and misguidance rise like mountains and tower toward lofty peaks. When the ship of thought and reflection begins to move, one must rely upon Allah *Ta'ala*, humble oneself before Him, and with the tongue of the heart and the vision of the intellect proclaim: "In the name of Allah be its course and its anchorage," until the ship of thought reaches the shore of salvation and escapes the waves of misguidance.[26]

Al-Tabari explains, concerning wine and gambling, that the expression *la'allakum tatafakkarūn* ("so that you may reflect") calls believers to engage in deep contemplation regarding the consequences of worldly actions. Through such reflection, one comes to realize the transient and deceptive nature of worldly life, which is ultimately characterized by trial and destruction, in contrast to the Hereafter, which is the realm of recompense and eternal permanence. According to al-Ṭabarī, genuine *tafakkur* leads a person to prioritize the eternal interests of the Hereafter over temporary worldly desires and pleasures.[27]

In interpreting Q.S. Yūnus: 24 — "The example of worldly life is like water which We send down from the sky, and the vegetation of the earth mingles with it, from which people and cattle eat, until, when the earth has taken on its adornment and beautified itself, and its people think they have power over it, Our command comes to it by night or by day, and We make it as if it had been harvested, as though it had not flourished yesterday. Thus do We explain the signs for a people who reflect (*yatafakkarūn*)*"* — Al-Tabari explains that

[25] Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, Vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1420 H), p. 407

[26] Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, Vol. 17 (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1420 H), p. 350

[27] Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl Āy al-Qur'ān*, vol. 4 (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 2000), p. 349.

Allah specifically mentions "people who reflect" because they are the ones capable of distinguishing between matters, investigating the realities of things, and examining the various doubts that arise within human hearts. [28]

In a breaf, The Qur'anic concept of *tafakkur* can be summarized into five categories; first, involves the heart's careful deliberation over reality until it attains clarity, stability, and reassurance. Second, Significantly, the Qur'an presents *tafakkur* primarily in verbal forms, emphasizing that reflection is an active and continuous process rather than a passive mental state. Third, Its frequent association with cosmic signs further demonstrates the Qur'an's concern with directing human attention to creation and natural phenomena as pathways to recognizing divine wisdom. Fourth, *tafakkur* operates not only as an intellectual exercise, but also as a spiritual discipline governed by divine guidance. Fifth, it leads to *i'mār al-arḍ*—the constructive and civilizational cultivation of the earth—which becomes a form of worship when guided by sincere intention, ethical responsibility, and obedience to God. [29]

2. *Al-Ta'aqqul*

This epistemological architecture becomes even more evident when these quantitative findings are examined in light of the semantic meanings of the key Qur'anic terms. The concept of *al-'aql*, from the root meaning "to bind" or "to restrain," denotes the faculty that prevents human beings from falling into error and deviation. The intellect, therefore, is not merely an instrument of abstract reasoning, but a normative and ethical capacity that disciplines thought and guides it toward truth. This meaning corresponds directly to the Qur'anic emphasis on *ta'aqqul*, which appears forty-nine times, underscoring the indispensable role of rational deliberation in attaining sound judgment and moral discernment.[30] all in verbal forms that portray reason as a dynamic act rather than a passive attribute.

The triliteral root ع ق ل ('a-q-l), from which the concept of *ta'aqqul* (rational understanding and the active use of intellect) is derived, occupies a central place in the Qur'anic epistemology of knowledge. Unlike many philosophical traditions that treat reason as an autonomous faculty detached from revelation, the Qur'an presents the intellect (*'aql*) as a divinely entrusted capacity through which human beings discern truth, evaluate evidence, and

[28] Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl Āy al-Qur'ān*, vol. 15 (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 2000), p. 57

[29] Abdul Karim Belil, *al-Mafahim al-Miftahiyah Linadzariyati al-Makrifah fi al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, (Amman: AL-Ma'had al''Alamy li al-Fikr al-Islamy, 1981) p. 270.

[30] Ibn Manẓūr, Muḥammad ibn Mukarram ibn 'Alī. *Lisān al-'Arab*. Vol 11 (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1414 H). p. 458

arrive at sound judgment. Significantly, the noun *ʻaql* itself does not occur in the Qur'an; instead, the scripture consistently employs verbal forms such as *yaʻqilūn* ("they reason"), *taʻqilūn* ("you use your intellect"), and *naʻqilu* ("we understand"). This linguistic pattern suggests that the Qur'an conceptualizes reason not as a static possession but as an active process that must be exercised continuously.

In its various verbal forms, derivatives of the root ع ق ل appear 49 times in the Qur'an. This frequency underscores the importance of rational activity as a recurring theme throughout the text. The Qur'an repeatedly criticizes those who fail to employ their intellect, using rhetorical questions such as "Will you not reason?" (*afalā taʻqilūn*), thereby portraying the neglect of reason as both an intellectual and moral deficiency. The repeated imperative to think rationally indicates that the Qur'an regards sound reasoning as an indispensable condition for recognizing divine signs, understanding revelation, and making ethical decisions.

Al-ʻaql (Reason) is so named because it enables a person to discern what is beneficial and what is harmful. It motivates its possessor to act first in performing what is commanded and to abstain first from what is prohibited. Therefore, if someone directs others toward good but fails to implement it themselves, or forbids evil but does not refrain from it, this demonstrates a deficiency in reason and ignorance, particularly if they are aware of the expectation, as accountability is thereby established.[31]

Several verses illustrate the epistemological role of *taʻaqqul* with particular clarity. In , after outlining legal and social injunctions, the Qur'an concludes, "Thus does Allah make clear to you His signs so that you may use your intellect" (*laʻallakum taʻqilūn*). asks, "Will you not then reason?" (*afalā taʻqilūn*), inviting listeners to examine the Prophet's credibility and the coherence of revelation. portrays the inhabitants of Hell admitting, "Had we listened or used our intellect, we would not have been among the companions of the Blaze." These verses collectively demonstrate that rational understanding is not peripheral, but essential to salvation, accountability, and moral responsibility. Allah said in al-Hujurat: 43:

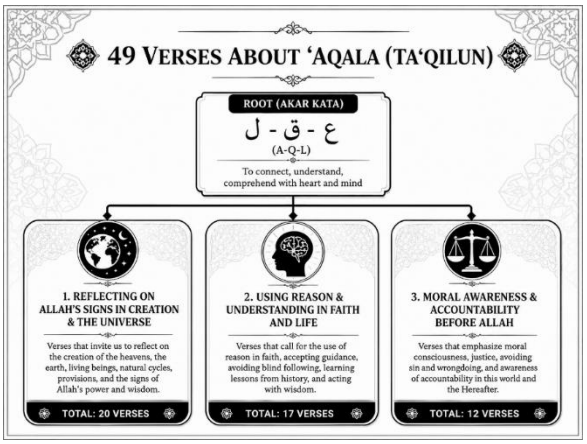
وَتِلْكَ الْأَمْثَالُ نَضْرِبُهَا لِلنَّاسِ وَمَا يَعْقِلُهَا إِلَّا الْعَالِمُونَ

Allah explains that the parables presented in the Qur'an are intended to enable human beings to comprehend the essence of truth through processes of deep reflection and contemplation. The disbelievers questioned why Allah

[31] Abdul Karim Belil, *al-Mafahim al-Miftahiyah ...,* p. 270.

employed seemingly insignificant creatures such as mosquitoes, flies, and spiders as examples in His parables. However, these parables were revealed so that human beings (not cattle devoid of understanding) may grasp meanings that lead them away from misguidance and immoral conduct. For instance, when a wise person says to one who engages in backbiting, "By committing ghibah, it is as though you are eating the flesh of a corpse," the analogy conveys a profound moral lesson. The person being backbitten is absent, unable to hear what is being said or defend himself, just as a dead body is incapable of defending itself. [32]

Furthermore, Fakhr al-Din al-Razi argues that the deepest realities and meanings contained within these Qur'anic parables cannot be fully comprehended except by those who possess knowledge concerning the falsity of everything besides Allah and the corruption inherent in worshipping other than Him. According to al-Rāzī, this verse also carries important philosophical and epistemological implications. Intuitive and straightforward forms of knowledge may be understood by a rational person (*al-ʻāqil*), whereas profound, subtle, and complex knowledge can only be fully grasped by a learned scholar (*al-ʻālim*). When a rational individual encounters something evident and manifest, he can understand it directly without requiring extensive prior knowledge. However, matters that are subtle and intellectually complex require previous learning and deeper intellectual preparation. Consequently, only those endowed with extensive knowledge are capable of fully comprehending their true nature. In this sense, Allah presents parables for all humanity, yet the deeper realities, wisdom, and epistemological meanings



[32] Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, Vol. 25 (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1420 H), p. 58

embedded within them can only be comprehended completely by scholars and people of knowledge. [33]

3. *At-Tadzakkur*

The triliteral root ذ ك ر (dh-k-r), from which the concept of *tadhakkur* (reflective remembrance and moral recollection) is derived, is one of the most frequently occurring roots in the Qur'an. In all of its morphological forms, this root appears approximately 292 times throughout the Qur'anic text. These occurrences include a wide range of derivatives, such as *dhikr* (remembrance or divine reminder), *dhakara* (to remind), *tadhkirah* (admonition or instructive reminder), *dhākirīn* (those who remember), and *yatadhakkarūn* (those who take heed). The prominence of this root indicates that remembrance and recollection constitute central themes in the Qur'anic worldview and occupy a foundational position in its epistemological and spiritual architecture.

When the analysis is narrowed specifically to those forms that directly express the epistemological process of tadhakkur—that is, the act of taking heed, recalling truth, and internalizing knowledge into moral consciousness—the number of occurrences is more precise. Verbal forms such as *yatadhakkarūn* (يتذكّرون), *tadhakkarūn* (تذّكّرون), *liyatadhakkara* (ليتذكّر), along with related assimilated forms such as *muddakir* (مُدَّكِر) and *yaddakkaru* (يذّكّر), occur approximately 44 times in the Qur'an. These forms are particularly significant because they denote not mere retention of information, but a transformative process through which knowledge becomes ethical awareness and spiritual insight.

Several verses illustrate this function with particular clarity. The Qur'an states that the Qur'an was revealed "so that they may reflect upon its verses and so that those endowed with understanding may take heed" (*liyatadhakkara ulū al-albāb*). The Qur'an repeatedly asks, "Is there anyone who will take heed?" (*fahal min muddakir*). The Qur'an explains that when the God-conscious are touched by Satan, "they remember, and immediately they gain insight." Likewise, The Qur'an concludes the description of creation with the phrase "so that you may take heed" (*la'allakum tadhakkarūn*). Together, these verses demonstrate that remembrance is the means by which revelation is translated into enduring awareness and practical guidance.

It may therefore be concluded that the root ذ ك ر (dh-k-r) occurs approximately 292 times in the Qur'an as a whole, while the specific derivatives that directly express the process of tadhakkur appear around 44 times.

[33] Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, Vol. 25, p. 58

4. *At-Tafaqquh*

The notion of *al-fiqh* (الفقه), which signifies profound understanding and deep comprehension, represents the higher culmination of the cognitive process. While commonly associated with jurisprudence in later Islamic scholarship, its broader semantic field refers to penetrating insight into the nature and implications of knowledge. This conceptual meaning parallels the Qur'anic category of *tafaqquh*, which occurs twenty times in twenty verses and points to the attainment of systematic and mature understanding. In this sense, the Qur'an presents thinking not as an end in itself, but as a path toward fiqh, or deep understanding that combines careful reasoning with practical wisdom.[34]

In the era of the Salaf, *al-fiqh* referred to the knowledge of the path toward the Hereafter, the recognition of the corruptors of the heart, a profound understanding of the transience of worldly life, and an intense longing for the afterlife, accompanied by a deep sense of awe and fear in the heart. *Fiqh* was not limited to the memorization of the definitions of legal rulings (*fatwas*). The Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) asked, "Who among the people of Madinah is the most learned (*afqahu*)?" He answered, "The one who fears Allah Most High the most." In this way, he seemingly indicated the fruits of inward knowledge rather than mere legal rulings and judgments. Furthermore, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said, "Shall I inform you who is a *faqih*?" They replied, "Yes." He said, "One who does not cause people to despair of the mercy of Allah, does not lead them to feel secure from His decree, does not cause them to lose hope in His aid, and does not abandon the Qur'an for other pursuits." It is narrated from Anas ibn Malik that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) said, "Sitting in the company of those who remember Allah Almighty from morning until dawn is more beloved to me than freeing four slaves." [35]

5. *At- Tadabbur*

Similarly, *tadabbur* (التدبر) denotes reflection on the consequences and ultimate outcomes of matters. The term implies a contemplative process that moves beyond superficial reading to uncover deeper structures of meaning and their ethical implications. Although it appears only four times in the Qur'an, each occurrence is explicitly associated with the command to ponder the

[34] Al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī, *Mufradāt Alfāẓ al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, tahqiq Ṣafwān 'Adnān Dāwūdī, cet. IV (Beirut: Huquq Tab'ah Mahfudzah, 2009), hlm. 642–643.

[35] Thanthawi Jauhari, *al-Jawahir fi Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Karim*, Vol. 5-6 (Beirut: al-Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, 2015), p. 203-204.

Qur'anic text itself. This indicates that *tadabbur* functions as a hermeneutical method, enabling believers to engage revelation critically and spiritually in order to derive transformative understanding. [36]

From the root د ب ر (d-b-r): The origin of this chapter is that most of it is based on a single meaning: the end of something, its rear, and the opposite of its front. A few words deviate from this. Most of the chapter means that دبر (d-b-r) is the opposite of قبل (qabala), and تدبير (tadbir) means that a person manages his affairs, considering their outcome and end. This is دبر (d-b-r). تدبير (tadbir) also means (1) a man freeing his slave, male or female, on the Day of Judgment. (2) تدبر (tadbir) is considering the outcome of a matter, and (3) reflecting upon it.[37]

Tadabbur (contemplation) is the reflection upon the consequences of events and their outcomes. To contemplate a matter involves examining it carefully, considering its repercussions, and assessing what it ultimately leads to. According to Abdel Karim Belil, *tadabbur* applies to every act of reflection; thus, the *tadabbur* of the Qur'an signifies the contemplation of its meanings. In the Qur'an, *tadabbur* appears in two forms: *yatadabbarun* and *yatadabbaru*, referring to reflection upon the Qur'an, its speech, and its verses (Al-Mu'minun: 68). *Tadabbur* is a more specific and elevated form of *tafakkur* (thought), as it focuses on the consequences of matters rather than merely their beginnings or processes, alerting one to outcomes and accompanying effects. This represents the highest degree of reflective cognition. Moreover, in all its contexts, *tadabbur* involves discernment and consideration of details and final results. It constitutes an exercise of the heart in contemplating the evidence. As Sadiq Khan remarked, "*Tadabbur* (Reflection) on the Qur'an can only occur with the presence of the heart and concentration of effort during its recitation." *Tadabbur* is employed in the consideration of the essence of a matter or its components, its antecedents or causes, and its consequences. It is among the intellectual processes by which the heart apprehends wisdom and directs action.[38]

Scholars define *tadabbur* as a form of reflective contemplation directed toward the consequences, outcomes, and ultimate implications of a matter. In relation to the Qur'an, *tadabbur* refers to the effort to understand the divine text by engaging the intellect, reflecting deeply upon its meanings, and considering the guidance and consequences embedded within its verses. Abū Ḥayyān explains that *tadabbur* is a form of *tafakkur* upon the Qur'anic verses

[36] Al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī, *Mufradāt Alfāẓ al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, p. 642.

[37] Abdul Karim Belil, *al-Mafāhim al-Miftāhiyah Linadzariyati al-Makrifah fi al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, (Amman: AL-Ma'had al''Alamy li al-Fikr al-Islamy, 1981) p. 271.

[38] Abdul Karim Belil, *al-Mafāhim al-Miftāhiyah* ... p. 272.

that leads the reflective reader to consider the final outcomes and deeper implications of things.[39]

In this sense, *tadabbur* may be understood as a more focused and specialized form of reflection than general *tafakkur*. While *tafakkur* is often associated with contemplation of cosmic signs and natural phenomena (*al-āyāt al-kawniyyah*), *tadabbur* is primarily directed toward the recited verses of revelation (*al-āyāt al-matlūwah*). It is therefore not merely an intellectual activity, but also a hermeneutical and spiritual discipline. Genuine *tadabbur* requires the presence of the heart, attentiveness of the mind, and full concentration during recitation, so that the Qur'an is not only read textually, but also understood, internalized, and translated into ethical and spiritual transformation.[40]

6. *At-Tabassur*

The term *tabaṣṣur* (التبصر) introduces another essential dimension of the Qur'anic epistemology: perceptive insight and inner clarity. Derived from the notion of *baṣīrah* (inner vision), it signifies reflective observation accompanied by illumination and discernment.[41] The high frequency of its derivatives—148 times—demonstrates that the Qur'an values not only empirical observation but also the capacity to perceive the deeper significance of phenomena.[42]

In the semantic study of the Qur'an, the terms *baṣar* and *baṣīrah* represent two dimensions of vision that are interrelated but not identical. *Baṣar* initially refers to sensory vision, namely the ability of the eye as a physical organ to perceive visual objects. This meaning is evident in the word of Allah:

كَلَمْحِ الْبَصَرِ

"Like the blink of an eye." (QS. al-Naḥl [16]: 77)

In this verse, *al-baṣar* denotes the extremely rapid movement of sight. A similar meaning appears in His word:

وَإِذْ زَاغَتِ الْأَبْصَارُ

"When the eyes became unsettled." (QS. al-Aḥzāb [33]: 10)

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[39] Ahmad Fathi al-Bukairi, *Zadu ahl al-Qur'an Liyaumi Liqa' al-Rahman* (Manshurah: Dar al-Lu'lu'ah, 2020), p. 109.

[40] Abdul Karim Belil, *al-Mafahim al-Miftahiyah* ... p. 273.

[41] Al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī, *Mufradāt Alfāẓ al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, p. 127.

[42] See also Lilik Ummi Kalsum, Al-Qur'an dan Epistemologi Pengetahuan: Makna Semantik kata ra'a, nazar, dan basar dalam al-Qur'an, in Jurnal *Wawasan: Jurnal Ilmiah Agama dan Sosial Budaya 3, 1 (Juni 2018),* p. 41-42.

The word *al-abṣār* in this verse refers to the outward vision of human beings as it becomes disturbed in a state of fear. However, the semantic field of *baṣar* in the Qur'an does not stop at the physiological level. The term also develops toward an epistemological dimension, namely the human capacity to perceive, become aware of, and understand reality more deeply.

From this semantic development emerges the concept of *baṣīrah*, that is, inner vision related to awareness, knowledge, certainty, and spiritual-intellectual insight. Allah says:

فَكَشَفْنَا عَنْكَ غِطَاءَكَ فَبَصَرُكَ الْيَوْمَ حَدِيدٌ

"We have removed from you your covering, so your sight today is sharp." (QS. Qāf [50]: 22)

This verse indicates that vision is not merely understood as a visual activity, but also as an awareness of a reality that had previously been concealed. In another context, Allah says:

قُلْ هَٰذِهِ سَبِيلِي أَدْعُو إِلَى اللَّهِ عَلَىٰ بَصِيرَةٍ

"Say: This is my way; I call to Allah upon *baṣīrah*." (QS. Yūsuf [12]: 108)

Thus, *baṣar* may be understood as outward vision, whereas *baṣīrah* refers to inner vision involving knowledge, reflection, and certainty. This distinction confirms that the Qur'an does not merely position vision as a biological function, but also as an epistemological instrument for understanding truth and reading the signs of the Divine. [43]

7. *An-Nadzar*

The term *nadzar* (النظر) denotes the act of seeing, observing, examining, and reflecting upon something attentively. In the Qur'an, derivatives of the root *nadzara* occur in thirty different lexical forms. [44] *Nadzara* establishes observation and analytical inquiry as legitimate and indispensable methods of knowledge acquisition.[45] Al-Aṣfahānī explains that the meaning of the word *naẓara* does not always refer to physical seeing with the eyes. Rather, the term carries a broader semantic range, including directing one's gaze, paying attention, contemplating, examining, and attaining a deeper understanding of something. The word *naẓara* may therefore be understood in two principal senses. *First*, it denotes physical seeing, namely directing the eye toward an object. For instance, when someone says, "I looked at something," the meaning is that he directed his gaze toward it. *Second*, it signifies seeing with the intellect and the heart, that is, observing something consciously and

[43] Al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī, *Mufradāt Alfāẓ al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, p. 127.

[44] Muhammad Fuad Abd al-Baqi, *Al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras...,* p. 705-707.

[45] Al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī, *Mufradāt Alfāẓ al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, p. 812.

reflectively until one arrives at understanding. This second meaning is frequently employed in Qur'anic contexts that invite human beings to think and reflect. Allah says:

قُلِ انْظُرُوا مَاذَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ

"Say: Observe what is in the heavens." (QS. Yūnus [10]: 101)

This verse is not merely a command to look at the heavens with the physical eye, but also an instruction to contemplate the signs of Allah's power manifested in the heavens and the universe. Similarly, Allah says:

أَفَلَا يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَى الْإِبِلِ كَيْفَ خُلِقَتْ

"Do they not then observe the camel, how it was created?" (QS. al-Ghāshiyah [88]: 17)

This verse does not simply call for a superficial observation of the camel's outward form. Rather, it calls for reflection upon the wonder of its creation, the structure of its body, its benefits for human life, and the signs of Allah's greatness contained within it. Therefore, the expression "you see, yet you do not see" means that a person may indeed see with the eyes, but fails to take lessons, reflect, or understand the deeper meaning behind what is seen.

Thus, the word *naẓara* often implies a form of seeing accompanied by contemplation; it is not merely ordinary visual perception. While common usage tends to understand the term as physical sight, scholars and people of deeper insight understand it as inner vision, intellectual reflection, and contemplative awareness.[46] *Naẓar* appears 129 times.

8. *Al-I'tibar*

The word ʿ*abara* (عَبَرَ) appears in several derivative forms in the Qur'an, including *ta*ʿ*burūn*, *i*ʿ*tabirū*, ʿ*ābirī*, and ʿ*ibrah*.[47] ʿ*Abara* basically means to move, cross, or pass from one side to another. This original meaning subsequently developed into various usages, both physical and conceptual. From this basic sense emerged several derivative meanings: crossing a river, the flowing of tears, a passerby, speech that moves from the speaker to the listener, a lesson derived from an event, and the interpretation of dreams that uncovers the inner meaning behind their outward form.[48]

The meaning of ʿ*abara* thus developed from physical crossing into semantic or intellectual crossing. For example, the word ʿibrah means a lesson or reflection. It is called ʿ*ibrah* because a person does not stop at what is

[46] Al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī, *Mufradāt Alfāẓ al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, p. 812.

[47] Muhammad Fuad Abd al-Baqi, *Al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras...,* p. 445

[48] Al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī, *Mufradāt Alfāẓ al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, p. 543.

outwardly visible, but "crosses over" from the external appearance to a deeper inner meaning. In other words, one observes an event and then derives a lesson from it. Therefore, *iʿtibār* refers to the process of reflecting, observing, and drawing lessons from what is visible in order to arrive at an understanding of what is not visible. Allah says:

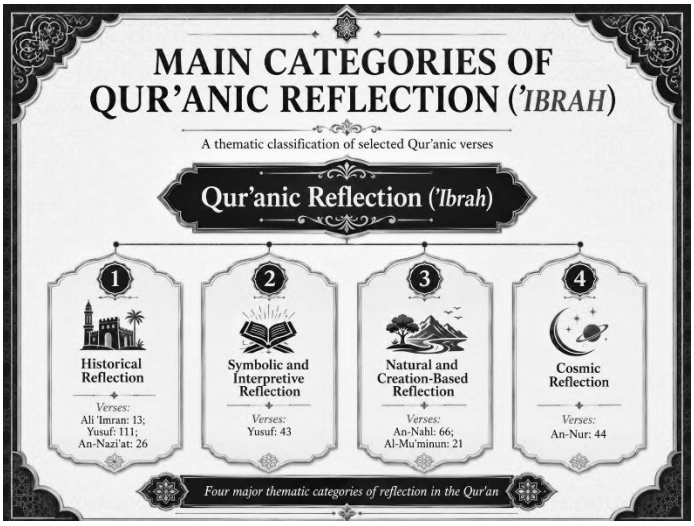
إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَعِبْرَةً

"Indeed, in that there is surely a lesson." (QS. Āl ʿImrān [3]: 13)
Allah also says:

فَاعْتَبِرُوا يَا أُولِي الْأَبْصَارِ

"So take lesson, O people of insight." (QS. al-Ḥashr [59]: 2)

Thus, *ʿibrah* is not merely the act of seeing an event, but the ability to go beyond what is outwardly apparent toward its deeper meaning. A person who takes ʿibrah is one who is able to cross from external perception to inner understanding.[49]



c.2. The contribution of Qur'anic Epistemology to classical Islamic civilization

The idea of the contribution of Qur'anic epistemology, as reflected in the eight categories of intellectual activity discussed above, can be widely traced in classical Islamic works. One of the most striking indications is the distinctive character of knowledge that emerged in the Islamic world, namely its ability to

[49] Al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī, p. 543.

preserve religious values amid the massive influx of translated concepts and methodologies from Greek, Syriac, Persian, Indian, and Chinese intellectual traditions into Arabic. These translations covered various fields, including philosophy, logic, astronomy, medicine, mathematics, and other sciences.

Among the figures who exemplify this intellectual synthesis is al-Kindī. He is widely regarded as the first Muslim philosopher and is also known as the "Arab philosopher" because of his descent from the Arab tribe of Kindah. His full name is Abū Yūsuf Yaʻqūb ibn Isḥāq ibn al-Ṣabbāḥ ibn ʻImrān ibn Ismāʻīl ibn al-Ashʻath ibn Qays al-Kindī.[50] He descended from al-Ashʻath ibn Qays, a Companion of the Prophet who settled in Kufa. His father, Isḥāq ibn al-Ṣabbāḥ, served as governor of Kufa during the reign of the Abbasid caliph al-Mahdī. Kufa, where al-Kindī spent his formative years, was one of the major intellectual centers of the eighth and ninth centuries and was known for its rationalist scholarly atmosphere. There he studied the Qur'an, Arabic grammar, literature, arithmetic, and other foundational sciences. He later continued his study of science and philosophy in Baghdad, the intellectual center of the Abbasid dynasty. Al-Kindī lived during the flourishing of the translation movement, when Greek and Syriac works were rendered into Arabic. He was also associated with the scholarly activities of Bayt al-Ḥikmah during the reigns of al-Ma'mūn and al-Muʻtaṣim. His thought was influenced by Peripatetic philosophy and showed affinities with Muʻtazilite rationalism. For al-Kindī, philosophy was the highest science because it sought to understand the First Truth as the cause of all truths.[51] Nevertheless, he placed philosophy under the authority of religion. Although he accepted Aristotelian logic, al-Kindī maintained that when philosophy appeared to conflict with revelation, philosophy had to submit to religion.[52]

Another important figure was al-Fārābī, who is known as a thinker who sought to reconcile religion and philosophy, or science. He was born in Farab, in the region of Transoxiana, around 260 AH and died in 339 AH.[53] He initially studied several languages, including Turkish, and later deepened his knowledge of Arabic in Baghdad. In Baghdad, he studied Aristotelian philosophy under Abū Bishr Mattā, a renowned logician, before continuing his intellectual journey to Harran, where he studied with the Christian philosopher

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[50] M. M. Syarif (Ed), *A History of Muslim Philosophy,* (Germany: Otto Harrassowitz, 1963), p. 421. See also Musthafa Abd Razzaq, *Failasuf al-'Arāb wa al-Muallim al-Tsāni,* (Kairo: Hindawi, 2014), p. 7.

[51] Al-Kindi, *Rasāil al-Kindi al-Falsafy*, Muhammad Abd Hadi Abu Rida (Ed), (Misr: Dar al-Fikr al-'Arabi, 1950), p. 97-98.

[52] David Deming, *Science and Technology in World History,* Vol 2 (Jefferson: McFarland & Company Inc. Publishers, 2010), p. 92.

[53] Footnote in Al-Ghazali, *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*, (Mesir: Dar al-Ma'arif, 1966), p. 76.

Abū Yuḥannā ibn Ḥaylān.[54] In his thought, particularly as reflected in *Taḥṣīl al-Sa'ādah*, al-Fārābī argued that religion and philosophy share the same source and aim: both originate from God and seek to guide human beings toward happiness.[55] Their difference lies in their methods of communication. Philosophy employs rational demonstration or *burhān yaqīnī*, whereas religion uses persuasive and imaginative modes of expression that are more accessible to the broader public. Thus, for al-Fārābī, religion and philosophy do not contradict one another in essence; rather, they complement each other. Philosophy explains truth in a rational-theoretical manner, while religion presents the same truth in symbolic, practical, and communicative forms.[56]

Following al-Fārābī's philosophical legacy, Ibn Sīnā appeared as a major figure who further developed the intellectual synthesis between religion, philosophy, and science. Ibn Sīnā, known by the title *Shaykh al-Ra'īs,* was a Persian Muslim philosopher who sought to formulate the relationship between religion, philosophy, and knowledge. He was born in the region of present-day Uzbekistan in 370 AH and died in 428 AH.[57] In his intellectual system, Ibn Sīnā divided wisdom or philosophy into two main branches: theoretical philosophy (*al-ḥikmah al-naẓariyyah*) and practical philosophy (*al-ḥikmah al-'amaliyyah*).[58] Theoretical philosophy aims to attain truth through knowledge of realities whose existence does not depend on human action, such as theology, natural science, mathematics, and astronomy. This branch is arranged hierarchically, beginning with natural science as the lowest level, mathematics as the intermediate level, and divine science as the highest level.[59] Practical philosophy, by contrast, aims at the attainment of the good through knowledge that directs human action. According to Ibn Sīnā, practical philosophy includes three main domains: personal ethics, household management, and political or social governance. Thus, philosophy does not merely function to explain truth rationally, but also guides human beings toward a good, orderly, and happy life, both in this world and in the hereafter.[60]

The next important figure is al-Ghazālī, who is often portrayed as an opponent of philosophy. However, his thought on philosophy and science

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[54] S. Khuda Bukhsh, *Contribution to The History of Islamic Civilization* (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink & Co, 1905), p. 280-281.

[55] Al-Farabi, *Kitāb Tahsil al-Sa'ādah li Abi Nasr al-Farābi,* (Beirut: Dar wa Maktabah al-Hilal, 1995), p. 88-89. See also in Madzkur, Ibrahim., *Fi al-Falsafah al-Islāmiyah: manhajin wa tadbiqihi,* (Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Kutub al-Arabiyah, 1947), p. 82.

[56] Al-Farabi, *Kitab Tahsil al-Sa'adah*, p. 88-89.

[57] Footnote in Al-Ghazali, *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*, p. 76.

[58] Ibn Sina, *Tis'a Rasāil fi al-Hikmah wa al-Thabiat, 2 Ed.* (Kairo: Dar al-Arab, tt), p. 105.

[59] Ibn SIna, *Tis'a Rasāil…*, p. 106.

[60] Ibn SIna, *Tis'a Rasāil…*, p. 107.

shows that he did not reject the integration of knowledge as such. Al-Ghazālī paid serious attention to the classification and value of knowledge. In *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, he divided philosophy into several branches, including geometry, arithmetic, logic, metaphysics, and natural science.[61] In *al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl*, he identified six branches of philosophy: mathematics, logic, natural science, theology, politics, and ethics. According to al-Ghazālī, most branches of philosophy do not conflict with religion. His criticism was directed primarily at metaphysics or philosophical theology, for it was in this field that he believed the philosophers had committed serious errors. Of the twenty philosophical issues he criticized, seventeen were categorized as heresy, while three were regarded as deviations from fundamental religious principles.[62] Therefore, al-Ghazālī's critique was not aimed at science or the natural sciences, but at particular metaphysical doctrines. In *Jawāhir al-Qur'ān*, al-Ghazālī even argued that various branches of knowledge find inspiration in the Qur'an, such as medicine through its discussion of illness and healing, and astronomy through its references to the sun, the moon, and celestial bodies.[63] This indicates that al-Ghazālī essentially supported the development of science as long as it remained within the framework of faith.

After al-Ghazālī, Ibn Rushd emerged as one of the Muslim thinkers who sought to affirm the harmony between religion and philosophy. His full name is Abū al-Walīd Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Rushd.[64] He is known as a defender of the Aristotelian philosophical tradition previously developed by al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā, especially through his work *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*, written in response to al-Ghazālī's critique in *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*. In *Faṣl al-Maqāl*, Ibn Rushd argued that Islamic law and philosophy cannot be in genuine contradiction, since both aim to guide human beings toward truth. If a religious text appears to conflict with rational demonstration (*burhān*), it must be interpreted by qualified scholars who possess sufficient intellectual capacity.[65] For Ibn Rushd, Islamic law not only does not reject philosophy; it actually encourages the use of reason.[66] This position demonstrates that religion and philosophy can coexist within a shared framework of truth-seeking.

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[61] Al-Ghazali, *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*, (Beirutr: Dar Ibn Hazm, 2005), p. 31.

[62] See Al-Ghazali, *Al-Munqidh min al-Dhalāl wa al-Muwassil ilā dzi al-'Izzati wa al-Jalāl*, (Washington: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2001), p. 193-212. See also Al-Ghazali, *Tahafut al-Falasifah*, p. 86.

[63] Al-Ghazali, *Jawāhir al-Qur'an,* (Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Ulum, 1990), p. 45-46.

[64] M. M. Syarif (Ed), *A History of Muslim Philosophy,* p. 540.

[65] Ibn Rusyd, *Fashlul Maqāl*, p. 31.

[66] Ibn Rusyd, *Fashlul Maqāl*, p. 31.

In the context of classical Islamic civilization, the relationship between religion and philosophy, as well as between reason and revelation, emerged as a central intellectual discourse among Muslim scholars, philosophers, and scientists. The idea of reconciling religion and philosophy or science occupies a central position in the classical Islamic intellectual tradition. Muslim philosophers proceeded from the conviction that truth is essentially one. Therefore, truth obtained through revelation cannot substantially contradict truth reached through reason. Within this framework, Islamic knowledge positioned rationality as an instrument for understanding, explaining, and strengthening religious teachings, rather than as an autonomous force standing in opposition to revelation.

The distinctive feature of Islamic knowledge lies in its effort to integrate religion into a broader rational framework that includes discussions of God, the universe, human beings, ethics, and happiness. Muslim philosophers did not view philosophy as a threat to religion, but as a means of reinforcing the foundations of faith through rational argumentation. Reason was therefore regarded as essential for explaining Qur'anic verses and Prophetic traditions that require intellectual interpretation, while revelation remained the highest authoritative source guiding the direction and limits of reason.

In the classical Islamic tradition, various rational disciplines were still included within the domain of philosophy, including natural science, mathematics, metaphysics, ethics, and politics. However, when philosophy engaged with religious themes such as divinity and prophethood, it became necessary to define the boundaries between reason and revelation. Most Muslim philosophers accepted the concept of prophethood and placed the Prophet above the philosopher, since the Prophet receives knowledge through revelation and divine intuition, which ordinary reason cannot attain. Thus, knowledge in Islam underwent a process of adaptation to religious principles. It did not develop as a philosophy entirely detached from revelation, but as a rational tradition that sought to explain reality within an Islamic theological framework. This reconciliation became one of the defining characteristics of classical Islamic philosophy.

D. Conclusion

Qur'anic epistemology presents knowledge not merely as the accumulation of information, but as a holistic and transformative process that integrates reflection, reason, observation, remembrance, and ethical responsibility. The Qur'an employs a rich vocabulary of intellectual appeals, including *tafakkur*, *ta'aqqul*, *tadhakkur*, *tadabbur*, *naẓār*, *tabaṣṣur*, *tafaqquh*, and *i'tibār*. These concepts demonstrate that the Qur'an does not separate

intellectual activity from spiritual consciousness and moral action. Rather, it constructs an integrated epistemological paradigm in which human beings are invited to read the signs of God in revelation, nature, history, and the human self. Thus, the ultimate aim of knowledge in the Qur'an is not simply to know, but to transform the human being intellectually, ethically, and spiritually. Knowledge becomes meaningful only when it leads to truth, wisdom, responsibility, and righteous action.

From the perspective of Qur'anic epistemology, the reconciliation between religion and philosophy or science should not be understood merely as a compromise between revelation and reason, but as a consequence of the Qur'anic paradigm of the unity of truth. The Qur'an places knowledge at the foundation of human civilization, as reflected in the first revelation, *iqra'*, which signifies not only the command to read in a textual sense, but also the importance of literacy, research, reflection, and the formation of ethical consciousness. Knowledge in the Qur'an is therefore not partial or fragmented, but integrative: it connects revelation, reason, empirical experience, and spiritual awareness.

Within this framework, classical Islamic scholarship may be understood as a historical articulation of Qur'anic epistemology. Muslim philosophers such as al-Kindī, al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, al-Ghazālī, and Ibn Rushd sought to demonstrate that reason does not stand as an opponent of revelation, but functions as an instrument for understanding the signs of God, both in the sacred text and in the natural world. Their efforts to reconcile religion and philosophy were rooted in the belief that valid truth cannot contradict itself, since all truth ultimately originates from God.

It may therefore be concluded that classical Islamic philosophy constitutes a rational expression of Qur'anic epistemology. It did not develop as a philosophical tradition entirely free from revelation, but as an intellectual tradition that sought to explain reality within the framework of tawḥīd. Accordingly, the integration of religion, philosophy, and science in the Islamic tradition is not a foreign project, but an inherent part of the Qur'an's way of building a civilization of knowledge: through the integration of reflection, rationality, observation, and spiritual orientation. From this civilization of knowledge emerged a great civilization, namely Islamic civilization, whose existence contributed significantly to the rise of modern civilization.

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Lukman Hakim, *PTIQ University Jakarta Indonesia*, Email: lukmanhakim@ptiq.ac.id
Salina Khalid, *Universiti Sultan Azlan Shah (USAS)* Perak Malaysia, Email: salina.khalid@usas.edu.my