

Part III: ETHICAL DIMENSIONS OF KNOWLEDGE

The Qur'anic conception of knowledge (*'ilm*, علم) is not a detached or morally neutral phenomenon; rather, it is intimately interwoven with ethical consciousness (*akhlaq*, أخلاق). In the epistemological cycle that begins with revelation (*wahy*, وحي) and culminates in remembrance (*dhikr*, ذكر), the ethical dimension serves as the bridge between knowing and being. This section, *Ethical Dimensions of Knowledge*, thus explores how the Qur'an integrates honesty (*sidq*, صدق), justice (*'adl*, عدل), and responsibility (*amanah*, أمانة) as inseparable foundations of true understanding.

Human inquiry, in the Qur'an, is not merely intellectual; it is a moral act that reflects one's inner *taqwa* (تقوى, God-consciousness) and humility before divine truth. The command: “*And do not pursue that of which you do not know*” (Q. 17:36) establishes a framework where epistemic restraint is a form of piety. Thus, ethics are not supplementary to knowledge—they constitute its very essence. Without justice and sincerity, information remains mere data; only when governed by *taqwa* and *'adl* does it become *'ilm* in the Qur'anic sense (Q. 2:283; 4:58).

This part contains two deeply interconnected chapters. Chapter 11, *Ethics of Knowing: Qur'anic Principles of Honesty, Justice, and Responsibility*, outlines the moral architecture that governs the act of knowing. It discusses *taqwa*, *amanah*, and *'adl* as the ethical roots of inquiry, examines the warning of Qur'an 17:36 against speculative speech, highlights the duty of the *ulu al-albab* (أولو الألباب, people of discernment), and condemns *zulm* (ظلم, injustice) and *kibr* (كبر, arrogance) as epistemic corruption.

Chapter 12, *Moral Methodology in Research: From Intention (niyyah, نية) to Impact ('amal, عمل)*, builds upon these foundations by linking moral intention to scholarly practice. It focuses on the purification of *niyyah*, the ethics of publication and discourse, and the notion of *'ilm amanah*—knowledge as a trust to be preserved and transmitted with integrity. It culminates in the synthesis of revelation (*al-wahy*) and rational reflection (*al-'aql*, عقل), reaffirming that Qur'anic knowledge embraces both divine guidance and human reason within a single, unified epistemic horizon.

Hence, *Part III* completes the transition from theoretical understanding to ethical realisation. It situates knowledge not merely as a possession, but as a moral vocation—a sacred responsibility to seek truth, to act with justice, and to transmit knowledge faithfully for the welfare of humanity and the glorification of the Creator.

Chapter 11: Ethics of Knowing: Qur'anic Principles of Honesty, Justice, and Responsibility

The Qur'an establishes an inseparable link between knowledge (علم - 'ilm) and ethics (أخلاق - akhlaq), asserting that the pursuit of truth must always be governed by moral consciousness (تقوى - taqwa), trust (أمانة - amanah), and justice (عدل - 'adl). Knowledge in the Qur'anic worldview is never value-neutral; it is an act of worship and responsibility before Allah (الله - Allah). The seeker of knowledge is morally accountable for how they acquire, interpret, and apply what they know. Thus, epistemology in Islam is simultaneously a spiritual and ethical enterprise (Nasr, 2007; Al-Attas, 1980).

The Qur'an repeatedly warns against the misuse or distortion of knowledge, condemning arrogance (كبر - kibr) and oppression (ظلم - zulm) as forms of epistemic corruption. True knowledge leads to humility and awareness of divine truth, whereas false knowledge fosters deception and injustice. As the Qur'an commands: *"And do not pursue that of which you do not know (la taqfu mā laysa laka bihi 'ilm; indeed, the hearing, the sight, and the heart - all of these shall be questioned.)"* (Q. 17:36)

This chapter examines the Qur'anic ethics of knowing as an essential dimension of the epistemological cycle from revelation (وحي - wahy) to remembrance (ذكر - dhikr). It explores how moral integrity safeguards truth, and how the Qur'an envisions the scholar (عالم - 'alim) and seeker (طالب - ṭalib al-'ilm) as trustees of divine knowledge, responsible for maintaining honesty, justice, and responsibility in all acts of inquiry and interpretation.

11.1 Ethical Foundations of Inquiry (عدل - 'Adl, أمانة - Amanah, تقوى - Taqwa)

The Qur'anic epistemological framework situates all knowledge (علم - 'ilm) within a moral order governed by *taqwa* (تقوى), *amanah* (أمانة), and *'adl* (عدل). These three ethical principles define the legitimate boundaries of inquiry and ensure that the pursuit of truth remains aligned with divine justice and human responsibility. Unlike secular epistemologies that detach ethics from cognition, the Qur'an envisions every act of knowing as a moral event—an engagement between the human intellect (عقل - 'aql) and divine guidance (وحي - wahy) (Al-Attas, 1980; Nasr, 2007).

11.1.1 Taqwa (تقوى) - Conscious Awareness of God in Knowledge

Taqwa, often translated as "God-consciousness" or "piety," serves as the spiritual compass for epistemic activity. The Qur'an proclaims: *"O you who believe, if you fear Allah (ittaqu Allaha - اتقوا الله), He will grant you a criterion (furqan - فرقان)." (Q. 8:29)*

Here, taqwa is directly linked to *furqan* (فرقان)—the capacity to discern truth from falsehood. It implies that genuine understanding emerges not merely from intellect but from purity of intention and moral vigilance (Izutsu, 2002). Knowledge, in this sense, is not granted to the corrupt heart but to the mindful soul. The Qur'anic researcher must therefore cultivate taqwa as a methodological principle—ensuring that inquiry is guided by sincerity (إخلاص - ikhlaṣ) and humility before the divine.

Taqwa also prevents intellectual arrogance (kibr - كبر) and the manipulation of knowledge for personal or political gain. The Qur'an condemns those who *"know the truth but conceal it"* (Q. 2:42), a warning against epistemic corruption. Thus, taqwa safeguards the ethical integrity of the knowledge process by maintaining a constant awareness that knowledge is a trust (amanah) from Allah.

11.1.2 Amanah (أمانة) - The Trust of Knowledge

The Qur'an describes knowledge as a divine amanah (أمانة), a sacred trust bestowed upon humankind. Allah declares: *"Indeed, We offered the trust (amanah) to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they declined to bear it and feared it; yet man undertook it. Indeed, he was unjust and ignorant."* (Q. 33:72)

This verse reveals the weight of epistemic responsibility. Human beings are entrusted not only with moral choice but also with the responsibility to seek and convey truth faithfully. Knowledge, therefore, is not property to be owned, but a trust to be safeguarded. The ethical duty of the scholar ('alim - عالم) is to uphold this trust with sincerity and justice, never distorting facts or manipulating truth for self-interest (Al-Ghazali, 1998).

In the Qur'anic worldview, every seeker (talib al-'ilm - طالب العلم) becomes a trustee of divine signs (ayat - آيات). To betray this trust by spreading falsehood, misinterpretation, or ignorance is to violate the amanah of knowledge. The moral discipline of inquiry thus requires intellectual honesty, verification (taḥqiq - تحقيق), and humility.

11.1.3 'Adl (عدل) - Justice in Knowledge

The principle of 'adl (عدل)-justice-represents the equilibrium between knowing and acting rightly. The Qur'an commands: *"O you who believe! Be persistently standing firm in justice (qawwamina bil-'adl - قوامين بالقسط), witnesses for Allah, even if it be against yourselves or your parents or relatives."* (Q. 4:135)

Here, 'adl transcends social or legal fairness; it becomes a moral criterion for epistemic action. Justice in knowledge demands that conclusions be proportionate to evidence, that interpretation respects context, and that inquiry avoids bias and prejudice (Nasr, 2007). The scholar must balance reason and revelation, avoiding the extremities of literalism or rationalism.

Epistemic 'adl also requires that truth not be suppressed or distorted for worldly gain. The Qur'an equates false testimony with injustice and warns against the concealment of knowledge (Q. 2:159). Thus, every act of learning or teaching becomes an act of moral judgment, weighed in the divine scale of 'adl.

11.1.4 Synthesis of the Three Principles

Together, taqwa, amanah, and 'adl form the moral architecture of Qur'anic inquiry. Taqwa provides inner discipline; amanah establishes responsibility; and 'adl governs the fair application of truth. Without these, epistemology collapses into manipulation and arrogance. The ethical foundations of inquiry are, therefore, not supplementary but essential to the Qur'anic methodology of knowledge. They ensure that the journey from observation (nazar - نظر) to remembrance (dhikr - ذكر) remains guided by moral consciousness, fulfilling the Qur'anic command: *"And say: My Lord, increase me in knowledge."* (Q. 20:114)

11.2 Verse Analysis: “La taqfu mā laysa laka bihi ‘ilm” (Al-Isra’ 17:36)

The verse “La taqfu ma laysa laka bihi ‘ilm - لا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ” stands as one of the most profound ethical injunctions in the Qur’an regarding human epistemology. It states: “*And do not pursue that of which you do not know; indeed, the hearing, the sight, and the heart - all of these shall be questioned.*” (Q. 17:36)

This verse encapsulates the moral boundary of human inquiry. It prohibits speculative assumptions, false testimony, and unverified claims. In essence, it establishes accountability (mas’uliyah - مسؤولية) as the governing law of knowledge. Every cognitive faculty-hearing (sam‘ - سمع), sight (baṣar - بصر), and heart (Fu’ad - فؤاد)-is a divine trust that must be used responsibly (Al-Razi, 1999).

11.2.1 Epistemic Restraint and Verification

The command “do not pursue” (*la taqfu* - لا تَقْفُ) sets a limit to intellectual speculation. It reminds the seeker that knowledge without verification (*taḥqiq* - تحقيق) leads to moral and social corruption. In the age of information overload, this Qur’anic principle demands epistemic humility-recognising the limits of one’s perception and the necessity of evidence. The Qur’an consistently condemns conjecture (*ẓann* - ظنّ) when it replaces verified truth: “*Indeed, conjecture avails nothing against the truth.*” (Q. 10:36)

Thus, the ethical responsibility of the scholar is to differentiate between ‘ilm (certain knowledge) and *ẓann* (assumption). The pursuit of truth must always be grounded in verification, empirical observation, and revelation.

11.2.2 Accountability of the Cognitive Faculties

The verse also introduces a triadic model of human cognition-hearing, sight, and heart-that parallels the Qur’anic epistemological cycle. Each of these faculties represents a dimension of knowing:

- Sam‘ (سَمْع) - transmission and reception of knowledge (learning through others and revelation).
- Baṣar (بَصَر) - observation of the external world (empirical knowledge).
- Fu’ad (فُؤَاد) - internal reflection and moral reasoning (spiritual knowledge).

By declaring that all three “shall be questioned,” the Qur’an establishes that misuse of knowledge-whether by false speech, blind imitation, or moral negligence-has ethical consequences. Knowledge, therefore, is inseparable from moral accountability (Al-Ghazali, 1998).

11.2.3 Ethical Implications for Scholars (Ulu al-Albab - أولو الألباب)

The Qur’an repeatedly praises ulu al-albab (أولو الألباب)-those “endowed with intellect.” Their defining trait is not mere intelligence but moral insight. They remember Allah, reflect on creation, and uphold justice (Q. 3:190-191). For them, knowledge becomes an act of worship (‘ibadah - عبادة).

In contrast, those who speak without knowledge, who speculate, misinform, or manipulate truth, are condemned as spreading *zulm* (ظلم), oppression. The ethical scholar is thus called to uphold integrity, verify sources, and maintain humility before divine truth (Nasr, 2007; Al-Attas, 1993).

11.2.4 Avoiding Arrogance (*Kibr* - كبر) and Concealment of Truth (*Zulm* - ظلم)

The verse also warns indirectly against *kibr* and *zulm*, the twin vices that corrupt knowledge. Arrogance leads one to assume authority without understanding, while *zulm* distorts truth for power. The Qur'an condemns such attitudes: “*And do not mix the truth with falsehood or conceal the truth while you know it.*” (Q. 2:42)

Thus, *la taqfu ma laysa laka bihi 'ilm* is both a cognitive and ethical command-it demands intellectual honesty, moral restraint, and constant verification. The seeker must remain aware that all knowledge is ultimately a reflection of divine truth, and every misuse of it is an act of injustice.

11.2.5 From Revelation to Responsibility

Within the Qur'anic epistemological cycle-from *wahy* (وحي) to *dhikr* (ذكر)-this verse functions as a moral checkpoint. It reminds the believer that knowledge is not an end in itself but a means to righteousness (*birr* - بر). The ethical use of knowledge fulfils the divine trust (*amanah*) and ensures that revelation is preserved through truthful remembrance and just application.

In a world increasingly dominated by misinformation and ideological manipulation, the Qur'anic command “*la taqfu ma laysa laka bihi 'ilm*” remains timeless. It demands that every scholar, student, and believer uphold the ethics of knowing, guided by *taqwa*, safeguarded by *amanah*, and balanced by *'adl*.

11.3 Responsibility of Scholars and Seekers (*Ulu al-Albab* - أولو الألباب)

In the Qur'anic worldview, the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge are sacred responsibilities entrusted to a select group known as *Ulu al-Albab* (أولو الألباب)-literally, “those endowed with sound intellects.” The term occurs frequently throughout the Qur'an to designate people who combine intellectual insight (*'aql* - عقل) with moral awareness (*taqwa* - تقوى) and spiritual humility (*tawadu'* - تواضع). These are the true scholars (*'ulama'* - علماء) and seekers (*talibu al-'ilm* - طالبو العلم) who integrate knowledge, faith, and ethical responsibility.

The Qur'an's emphasis on the *Ulu al-Albab* establishes a distinctive epistemic hierarchy in which knowledge entails moral accountability. Knowledge (*'ilm* - علم) is not a neutral possession but a divine trust (*amanah* - أمانة) that requires stewardship, sincerity, and justice (*'adl* - عدل) (Nasr, 2007; Izutsu, 2002).

11.3.1 The Qur'anic Portrayal of *Ulu al-Albab*

The Qur'an repeatedly honours the *Ulu al-Albab* as the model of reflective believers who contemplate the signs (*ayat* - آيات) of Allah both in creation and in revelation. Allah says: “*Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day are signs for those endowed with intellect (Ulu al-Albab).*” (Q. 3:190)

This verse situates knowledge within cosmic contemplation. The *Ulu al-Albab* are not passive observers; they are active interpreters of the universe, recognising divine wisdom (*hikmah* - حكمة) in natural patterns and moral order. Their epistemic process combines *nazar* (نظر)-empirical observation-with *tafakkur* (تفكير)-deep reflection, and *dhikr* (ذكر)-constant remembrance of Allah.

Such integration of sense and spirit distinguishes Qur'anic scholarship from secular intellectualism. For the Ulu al-Albab, the ultimate aim of inquiry is ma'rifah (معرفة)-experiential recognition of divine truth, not mere accumulation of data.

11.3.2 Moral Accountability of Scholars

The Qur'an warns that knowledge brings with it greater moral responsibility. Those who possess knowledge are held to a higher ethical standard because their awareness of truth increases their accountability before Allah. As Allah declares: *“Only those who truly fear Allah among His servants are the scholars.”* (Q. 35:28)

This verse indicates that genuine scholarship (*ilm*) is inseparable from *khashyah* (خشية)-reverential awe of Allah. True scholars are not arrogant but humble; their knowledge deepens their consciousness of divine majesty and their compassion toward creation.

Accordingly, the Qur'an censures those who manipulate knowledge for worldly status or power. The misuse of religious, or intellectual authority constitutes *zulm* (ظلم), a grave injustice. Allah warns against scholars who *“conceal what Allah has revealed”* (Q. 2:159) or distort divine words from their rightful meanings (Q. 4:46). Such behaviour corrupts the moral foundation of epistemology and transforms knowledge into a tool of domination.

11.3.3 Teaching and Transmission as Sacred Duty

For the Ulu al-Albab, teaching (*talim* - تعليم) and transmission (*Tabligh* - تبليغ) of knowledge are acts of worship (*ibadah* - عيادة). The Qur'an frames the conveyance of truth as a divine command: *“Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful exhortation.”* (Q. 16:125)

The ethical teacher embodies *hikmah* (حكمة) and *'adl* (عدل)-balancing reason, evidence, and compassion. Teaching is not a means of intellectual superiority but a continuation of divine communication. Hence, scholars are custodians of knowledge, not its owners.

The Qur'an condemns the hoarding of knowledge or using it to mislead. *Amanah* (أمانة) demands that scholars preserve and communicate truth without distortion. When knowledge is concealed, society collapses into ignorance and injustice. Thus, the Ulu al-Albab serve as mediators between revelation and community, ensuring that knowledge remains a source of guidance, not division.

11.3.4 The Spiritual Character of the Scholar

The Ulu al-Albab are characterised by several spiritual virtues that sustain the ethical practice of knowledge:

- *Tawaḍu'* (تواضع) - Humility before Allah and truth.
- *Ikhlaṣ* (إخلاص) - Sincerity of intention.
- *Ṣabr* (صبر) - Patience in learning and teaching.
- *Adl* (عدل) - Justice in reasoning and judgment.

- Taqwa (تقوى) - God-consciousness as an epistemic discipline.

These traits ensure that scholarship remains aligned with divine purpose. The Qur'an affirms that guidance is accessible only to those who approach knowledge with humility: *“And Allah does not love any arrogant boaster.”* (Q. 31:18)

Therefore, the Qur'anic scholar is both thinker and servant-engaged in the intellectual struggle (jihad al-'ilm - جهاد العلم) to transform knowledge into moral action ('amal - عمل) and social justice ('adl - عدل).

11.3.5 Epistemic Stewardship and the Modern Context

In the contemporary age of digital information, the responsibility of scholars and seekers has multiplied. The Qur'anic model of the Ulu al-Albab demands rigorous verification (tahqiq - تحقيق) and ethical discernment amid misinformation and ideological manipulation.

Modern Muslim scholarship must reclaim its Qur'anic ethos, uniting empirical investigation with spiritual ethics. Scholars must not merely transmit data but embody wisdom. The Qur'an's call to reflection (tafakkur) and justice ('adl) provides a timeless framework for resisting the commodification of knowledge and the arrogance of technocracy (Nasr, 2007).

The scholar, therefore, becomes a guardian of the moral order, defending truth, preserving justice, and nurturing human dignity through knowledge. In doing so, they fulfil the Qur'anic command: *“You are the best community raised for mankind-you enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong.”* (Q. 3:110)

11.3.6 The Scholar as Moral Agent

The Ulu al-Albab represent the Qur'anic ideal of the scholar as moral agent and servant of truth. Their knowledge is not an instrument of control but a vehicle of compassion and justice. Their intellectual humility protects them from kibr (arrogance), while their faith anchors them in amanah (trust). In embodying these principles, they realise the prophetic mission of knowledge: to know Allah, to serve humanity, and to uphold justice.

11.4 Avoiding Arrogance and Manipulation of Truth (Zulm - ظلم, Kibr - كبر)

The Qur'an identifies two of the gravest moral diseases that corrupt human knowledge and civilisation-Zulm (ظلم), injustice or oppression, and Kibr (كبر), arrogance or pride. Both are epistemic vices that distort perception, hinder truth, and destroy the ethical foundation of inquiry. In Qur'anic epistemology, the search for truth demands humility (tawadu' - تواضع) and justice ('adl - عدل); without them, knowledge becomes an instrument of deceit.

11.4.1 Zulm (ظلم) - The Injustice of Knowledge Misuse

The term zulm literally means “placing something out of its proper place.” In epistemic terms, it signifies using knowledge for corruption, manipulation, or concealment of truth. The Qur'an condemns such distortion as one of humanity's greatest moral failures: *“And who is more unjust than one who conceals a testimony that he has from Allah?”* (Q. 2:140)

Here, *zulm* arises not from ignorance but from deliberate moral corruption-the refusal to acknowledge or reveal truth. When scholars distort facts, misuse knowledge, or silence justice, they betray their amanah (أمانة) and violate divine trust. In contrast, the Qur'an links justice ('adl) with true faith and piety: "*Indeed, Allah commands justice and excellence.*" (Q. 16:90)

Thus, epistemic justice requires that every claim be grounded in evidence and every conclusion guided by fairness. To commit *zulm* in knowledge is to turn illumination into darkness (*zulmah* - ظلمة) and to obscure divine signs for worldly interest.

11.4.2 Kibr (كِبْر) - The Arrogance That Blinds Truth

Arrogance (*kibr*) is the root of epistemic blindness. The Qur'an portrays Iblis (Satan) as the archetype of arrogance when he refused to bow before Adam, declaring: "*I am better than him; You created me from fire and created him from clay.*" (Q. 7:12)

This narrative exposes the epistemic dimension of arrogance-an inflated sense of self that blinds one from divine truth. Arrogance prevents recognition of reality and transforms knowledge into ideology. As Allah warns: "*I will turn away from My signs those who are arrogant upon the earth without right.*" (Q. 7:146)

Thus, *kibr* not only corrupts morality but also disables cognition-it severs the link between perception (*baṣar* - بصر) and reflection (*tafakkur* - تفكر). The arrogant cannot learn because they refuse to acknowledge ignorance.

11.4.3 The Interrelation of *Zulm* and *Kibr*

The Qur'an presents *zulm* and *kibr* as mutually reinforcing: arrogance leads to injustice, and injustice deepens arrogance. Both sever the seeker from divine guidance (*huda* - هدى) and from the humility necessary for learning.

Epistemically, *zulm* manifests as suppression of evidence, bias, or distortion, while *kibr* manifests as intellectual pride or refusal to accept correction. Together they produce false knowledge-what the Qur'an calls *baṭil* (باطل), meaning vanity or falsehood. Allah contrasts this falsehood with truth (*ḥaqq* - حق) in His command: "*Say, the truth has come, and falsehood has perished; indeed, falsehood is bound to perish.*" (Q. 17:81) Hence, the antidote to *zulm* and *kibr* is moral humility, self-purification (*tazkiyah* - تزكية), and alignment with *ḥaqq*.

11.4.4 The Humble Scholar as a Model of Justice

The Qur'an celebrates humility as the epistemic virtue par excellence. The true scholar is humble because he recognises that all knowledge belongs to Allah: "*Above every possessor of knowledge is One more Knowing.*" (Q. 12:76)

This acknowledgement eliminates arrogance and reorients scholarship toward servanthood. The ethical scholar does not claim mastery over knowledge but stewardship under divine authority. Such humility allows continuous learning and protects against *ta'aṣṣub* (تعصب)-dogmatic rigidity. Moreover, avoiding

kibr ensures that dialogue and disagreement remain constructive. The Qur’an commands believers to “*argue in the best manner*” (Q. 16:125), affirming intellectual humility as an essential mode of discourse.

11.4.5 Knowledge and Power: The Modern Challenge

In modern times, *zulm* and *kibr* often manifest through the politicisation and commercialisation of knowledge. When education becomes a means of domination rather than enlightenment, or when scientific discovery serves greed instead of justice, the Qur’anic warning against epistemic arrogance becomes strikingly relevant (Nasr, 2007).

Islamic epistemology thus calls for a reform of knowledge production-relinking science, scholarship, and spirituality. Knowledge must return to its ethical roots in *taqwa*, *‘adl*, and *amanah*. The Qur’an reminds humanity that arrogance leads to downfall: “*And do not walk upon the earth exultantly; you will never pierce the earth nor reach the mountains in height.*” (Q. 17:37) The verse encapsulates epistemic humility: all knowledge and power are bounded by divine will.

11.4.6 Restoring Ethical Balance

To avoid *zulm* and *kibr* is to restore the balance between intellect and morality. The Qur’an envisions knowledge as a path toward justice, compassion, and self-realisation as a tool of pride. Scholars and seekers must therefore practice constant self-evaluation (*muḥasabah* - محاسبة) and remembrance (*dhikr* - ذكر) to purify their intentions.

Ultimately, the Qur’anic ethos teaches that true knowledge leads to humility, not arrogance; to justice, not oppression; to light, not darkness. “*Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth.*” (Q. 24:35) The one who knows truly is the one who walks in that light.

11.5 Ethics of Knowing

The ethical dimension of knowledge in the Qur’an represents the culmination of its epistemological vision—an integration of *taqwa* (تقوى, God-consciousness), *amanah* (أمانة, trust), and *‘adl* (عدل, justice) into the very fabric of human inquiry. In the Qur’anic worldview, knowledge (*‘ilm*, علم) is never an autonomous or value-neutral pursuit; rather, it is an act of moral responsibility before Allah (الله). Every act of observation, reflection, and reasoning finds its legitimacy only when governed by ethical consciousness. This moral orientation ensures that the pursuit of truth does not become an instrument of *zulm* (ظلم, injustice) or *kibr* (كبر, arrogance), but a pathway toward divine harmony and human flourishing.

The Qur’an repeatedly emphasises that knowledge must lead to humility and service, not pride and domination. “*It is only those who know His servants that fear Allah*” (Q. 35:28). Here, the possession of *‘ilm* is directly linked to *taqwa*—the awareness of divine accountability that restrains the self from corruption and conceit. Knowledge, in this sense, is both epistemic and ethical: it illuminates the intellect and purifies the soul. The moral failure of *kibr* lies in its distortion of truth; it transforms understanding into self-exaltation, thereby obstructing access to divine guidance. Similarly, *zulm*—the deliberate misuse or concealment of truth—undermines the justice (*‘adl*) that the Qur’an demands of every believer.

Within this framework, the role of the *ulu al-albab* (أولو الألباب)-those endowed with deep understanding-becomes central. The Qur'an entrusts them with the sacred duty of safeguarding truth, ensuring intellectual honesty, and guiding the community with wisdom (*hikmah*, حكمة) and compassion. Their authority is not derived from social status or power but from moral integrity and sincere devotion to the truth of revelation. The Qur'an commands, "*Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even if it be against yourselves or your kin*" (Q. 4:135). This verse establishes the unbreakable link between knowledge and justice, between epistemology and ethics.

The verse "*La taqfu ma laysa laka bihi 'ilm*" "*Do not pursue that of which you do not know,*" Qur'an 17:36) serves as the ethical boundary of human inquiry. It restrains intellectual arrogance and calls for methodological humility-an awareness of the limits of human perception in the face of divine omniscience. This command transforms the act of knowing into an act of moral discipline, reminding humankind that true knowledge must correspond with truth, justice, and sincerity.

In conclusion, the ethics of knowing in the Qur'an does not merely supplement epistemology-it defines it. Without *taqwa*, *amanah*, and *'adl*, knowledge becomes fragmented and corruptible. The Qur'anic model restores knowledge to its sacred function: as a trust from Allah to be pursued with honesty, applied with justice, and preserved with humility. Through this synthesis, the Qur'an establishes an enduring epistemic order where knowing is inseparable from being righteous, and understanding is an act of worship. In this moral-epistemic unity lies the true spirit of Islamic knowledge wisdom (*hikmah*) that harmonises intellect, ethics, and revelation.