

Chapter 15: The Qur'anic Theory of Knowledge as a Unified Epistemology

The Qur'anic worldview presents a comprehensive logic of knowing that harmonises faith (iman), knowledge ('ilm), and action ('amal) as interdependent dimensions of human consciousness and responsibility. Within this divine epistemic structure, knowledge is neither autonomous nor secularized; it originates from al-Haqq (الحقّ) - the Absolute Reality - and thus retains a sacred character grounded in truth, justice, and moral purpose (Q. 2:147; Q. 10:32). The Qur'an does not view the intellect ('aql) as an independent source of truth but as a divinely endowed faculty meant to engage with waḥy (revelation) through reflection (*tafakkur*) and discernment (*tadbūr*). This integration between revelation and rationality generates a unique epistemological cycle where understanding unfolds as both an act of cognition and of worship (Nasr, 1989).

Part IV explores this structure of Qur'anic logic and discovery, moving through the dynamic relationship between faith, knowledge, and action (Chapter 13), the hierarchy of certainty (yaqin) as the inner ascent of the knower (Chapter 14), and finally, the Qur'anic theory of knowledge as a unified epistemology (Chapter 15). Each of these components reflects an organic movement from divine origin to human realisation - from revelation to remembrance (*dhikr*), from reflection to transformation (*tahawwul*). Knowledge, in this structure, is not a static possession but a journey of becoming, a continuous unveiling of truth through engagement with the signs (*ayat*) of Allah in creation and revelation (Q. 41:53).

This part argues that Qur'anic logic represents not merely a religious framework but a methodological paradigm for inquiry and verification. Its principles of balance (*mizan*), justice ('*adl*), and trust (*amanah*) provide an ethical grammar for all knowledge production. Thus, epistemic discovery in Islam is inseparable from ethical accountability - a process through which knowing becomes a form of servitude ('*ubudiyyah*), and reflection becomes remembrance. The Qur'an commands, "Say: My Lord, increase me in knowledge" (Q. 20:114), situating the pursuit of knowledge within a continuous moral elevation.

Through this structure, the believer-scholar transcends the dichotomy between reason and revelation, science and faith, thought and devotion. The Qur'an reconstitutes knowledge as both illumination (*mur*) and trust (*amanah*) - a means of restoring the harmony between knowing, being, and doing. The chapters that follow uncover this structure in depth, showing how Qur'anic epistemology moves from intellectual inquiry to existential realisation, culminating in a unified vision of truth.

15.1 The Divine Origin and Ontology of Knowledge

The Qur'an presents an ontological vision of knowledge ('*ilm*) that situates all forms of understanding within the creative and sustaining reality of Allah. Knowledge, in this framework, is not an autonomous human construct but a divine emanation-a trust (*amanah*) bestowed upon humankind as part of their vicegerency (*khilafah*) on earth. The Qur'an makes this explicit when it states: "He taught Adam the

names-all of them” (Q. 2:31). This verse is not merely a reference to linguistic instruction; it symbolises the divine bestowal of the capacity to discern, categorise, and comprehend reality. Knowledge here is ontologically rooted in divine revelation (*wahy*) and existentially anchored in human consciousness as the faculty that enables recognition of truth (*haqq*).

15.1.1 The Source of All Knowledge: Allah as al-Alim

The Qur'an repeatedly affirms that the ultimate source of all knowledge is Allah, who is *al-Alim* (The All-Knowing). The verse “*And Allah is Knowing of all things*” (Q. 2:282) establishes a foundational epistemic principle: divine knowledge is absolute, perfect, and comprehensive, while human knowledge is relative and contingent. The divine attribute *al-Alim* occurs more than 150 times in the Qur'an, underscoring the absolute omniscience of God as the foundation of reality (Nasr, 2012).

In contrast to the modern secular epistemology that locates knowledge in empirical verification or rational inference, the Qur'anic perspective situates knowledge within a metaphysical order. Allah's knowledge precedes creation, encompasses it, and remains unaffected by temporal limitations. “*Indeed, with Him are the keys of the unseen; none knows them except Him*” (Q. 6:59). Here, knowledge is not a product of experience but the very principle through which existence itself becomes intelligible. The divine will (*iradah*) and knowledge (*ilm*) are thus coextensive-creation unfolds through divine command (*kun fa-yakun*; Q. 36:82).

15.1.2 Ontology of Knowledge: From the Divine to the Human

The ontological structure of knowledge in the Qur'an is hierarchical yet integrative. At its apex is divine knowledge-infinite, uncreated, and perfect. Beneath this level lies revelatory knowledge (*ilm al-wahy*), which is transmitted to prophets as guidance for humanity. The third level is acquired or reflective knowledge (*ilm al-kasbi*), accessible through human faculties such as reason (*aql*), perception (*basar*), and contemplation (*tafakkur*).

This tripartite model reveals a continuum rather than a dichotomy. Human knowledge is not detached from divine knowledge but derives its legitimacy and purpose from it. The Qur'an emphasises this when it states, “*He taught man what he did not know*” (Q. 96:5). The verb *allama* (to teach) signifies active divine involvement in the epistemic process. Knowledge, therefore, is a divine act of communication, and human learning is an act of reception and reflection upon that communication.

Al-Attas (1995) interprets this verse as indicating that knowledge is not constructed *ex nihilo* by human intellect; it is *unveiled* through divine signs (*ayat*), both within creation and revelation. The Qur'an itself is described as a “*clear proof and guidance*” (*bayyinat wa hudan*; Q. 2:185), establishing that revelation and empirical inquiry coexist as complementary pathways to truth.

15.1.3 The Creation as Epistemic Field: Signs (Ayat) of Knowledge

In the Qur'anic worldview, the cosmos is not a closed system of matter but a living tapestry of divine signs (*ayat*). “*Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of the night and*

day, are signs for those of understanding” (Q. 3:190). The term *ayah* (plural: *ayat*) has a dual meaning-it refers both to the verses of the Qur'an and to the phenomena of creation. This semantic unity underscores the Qur'an's integrated epistemology: revelation and nature are two expressions of the same divine truth (Rahman, 1980).

The human intellect is thus called to decipher the language of these signs, to read the world as one reads the Qur'an. The verse continues: *“Those who remember Allah standing, sitting, and lying on their sides and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth”* (Q. 3:191). The act of reflection (*tafakkur*) transforms perception into cognition, and cognition into spiritual realisation. This triadic process-observation, reflection, and remembrance-forms the epistemic method of the Qur'an.

The Qur'an's emphasis on natural signs points to an epistemological principle: knowledge is relational. It arises from the interaction between divine communication and human contemplation. Hence, knowing is not merely a cognitive act but an existential engagement with the divine order. As Iqbal (1934) observed, the Qur'anic vision “does not divorce thought from life or speculation from action; it invites man to participate in the creative act of God.”

15.1.4 Human Faculties as Instruments of Knowledge

The Qur'an affirms that Allah has endowed humankind with the faculties necessary to pursue knowledge: hearing (*sam'*), sight (*baṣar*), and intellect (*Fu'ad*). *“And Allah brought you out of the wombs of your mothers not knowing a thing, and He made for you hearing, vision, and hearts that you might give thanks”* (Q. 16:78). Each of these faculties operates not in isolation but in harmony, forming the architecture of human epistemic capacity.

The intellect (*'aql*) is portrayed as a discerning faculty capable of drawing moral and existential conclusions from empirical observation. Yet, the Qur'an criticises those who *“have hearts with which they do not understand”* (Q. 7:179), indicating that cognition without moral consciousness is incomplete. Knowledge divorced from ethics becomes ignorance, while intellect guided by revelation becomes wisdom (*hikmah*).

The heart (*qalb*) occupies a central position in this epistemic structure. Unlike modern rationalism, which confines knowing to the intellect, the Qur'an views the heart as the seat of understanding and moral perception (Nasr, 2012). *“Have they not travelled through the earth so that they have hearts by which to reason?”* (Q. 22:46). This verse establishes that *qalb* integrates rational analysis with spiritual intuition, forming what may be termed holistic cognition. The Qur'an's ontology of knowledge thus transcends mere intellectualism, orienting human understanding toward divine awareness.

15.1.5 Revelation (Wahy) as Ontological Ground of Epistemic Truth

Revelation (*wahy*) functions as the ultimate criterion of truth and the grounding principle of epistemology in the Qur'an. While reason (*'aql*) and perception (*ḥiss*) are valuable instruments, their judgments must be measured against divine revelation to ensure alignment with the ultimate reality. *“Falsehood cannot*

approach it, neither from before it nor from behind it; it is a revelation from the Wise, the Praiseworthy” (Q. 41:42).

This divine protection of revelation from corruption guarantees epistemic certainty (*yaqin*). Revelation, therefore, does not negate reason; it calibrates it. The Qur'an encourages rational engagement- *“Will they not ponder upon the Qur'an?”* (Q. 4:82)-but warns against intellect detached from divine guidance. The relationship between *'aql* and *wahy* is synergistic: reason deciphers the signs, while revelation provides the key to their meaning.

Sardar (2011) emphasises that this symbiosis establishes a distinct Islamic epistemology in which knowledge is both rational and transcendental. Revelation acts as a metaphysical compass, orienting all inquiries toward moral and existential truth. Hence, knowledge becomes an act of submission (*Islam*)-the alignment of the intellect and the will with the divine order.

15.1.6 The Ethical Ontology of Knowledge

In the Qur'an, knowledge is inseparable from ethics. The verse *“Only those fear Allah, from among His servants, who know”* (Q. 35:28) indicates that true knowledge engenders humility and reverence. Knowledge, therefore, has an ontological function: it transforms the knower into a moral being. The ethical dimension of knowledge distinguishes the Qur'anic view from secular epistemologies that treat knowing as value-neutral.

The Qur'an's integration of knowledge and morality implies that epistemic error is not merely cognitive but ethical, a deviation from truth and justice. To misuse knowledge is to betray the divine trust (*amanah*). Hence, the Qur'an repeatedly warns against concealing or distorting knowledge: *“Do not mix truth with falsehood or conceal the truth while you know [it]”* (Q. 2:42).

Al-Attas (1995) identifies this fusion of ethics and epistemology as the foundation of *adab* -the discipline of knowledge. In this sense, the Qur'an envisions knowledge not only as a means of understanding but also as a mode of being. The knower's moral integrity becomes part of the epistemic process, linking ontology, ethics, and cognition in an inseparable unity.

15.1.7 Knowledge as a Manifestation of Divine Light (Mur al-`Ilm)

The Qur'an describes guidance (*huda*) and knowledge as forms of divine light: *“Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth”* (Q. 24:35). This verse conveys that all forms of truth and illumination emanate from the divine source. Just as physical light makes vision possible, divine light makes comprehension possible. Knowledge, therefore, is not self-generated but a reflection of the *mur* that emanates from God.

Nasr (2012) interprets this metaphor as the metaphysical foundation of Qur'anic epistemology: all authentic knowledge participates in divine illumination. The human mind, like a polished mirror, reflects this light to the extent that it is purified of ego and heedlessness. Thus, epistemology becomes an act of spiritual purification as much as an intellectual pursuit.

15.1.8 Summary: The Ontological Unity of Knowing and Being

The Qur'anic ontology of knowledge reveals a unity of metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics. Knowledge originates in divine omniscience, is mediated through revelation, realised through reason and perception, and completed through moral transformation. It is not merely about *knowing* but about *becoming*-a journey from awareness to wisdom, from intellect to submission.

In this unified vision, every act of knowing is an act of worship, every discovery a form of remembrance, and every insight a reaffirmation of divine unity (*tawhid*). The Qur'an's epistemic structure thus provides a profound corrective to the fragmentation of modern thought, reuniting science, faith, and ethics within a single ontology of truth.

15.2 Human Faculties and the Structure of Knowing in the Qur'an

The Qur'an establishes a profound anthropology of knowledge that integrates perception, reflection, and spiritual consciousness into a single epistemic framework. Unlike secular epistemology, which divides cognition into sensory and rational domains, the Qur'an conceives of human knowing as a unified process involving the hearing (السَّمْعُ, *al-sam*'), sight (الْبَصَرُ, *al-baṣar*), intellect (العقل, *al-'aql*), and heart (القلب, *al-qalb*). These faculties are not isolated instruments but interdependent dimensions of human awareness through which divine signs (*ayat*) are apprehended and interpreted.

This holistic model of knowing underscores the Qur'anic view that human cognition is both a divine gift and a moral responsibility. The human being (*insan*) is not a passive observer of reality but an active interpreter (*mufasssir*) of divine meaning. Each faculty corresponds to a level of engagement with the world-perceptual, rational, and spiritual-together forming a complete epistemological architecture that reflects divine wisdom (*hikmah*).

15.2.1 Hearing and Sight: The Sensory Foundations of Awareness

The Qur'an repeatedly reminds humanity that their journey of knowledge begins with sensory perception, bestowed by Allah as a divine endowment: “*And Allah brought you out of the wombs of your mothers not knowing a thing, and He made for you hearing (السَّمْعُ) and vision (الأبصار) and hearts (الأفئدة) that you might give thanks.*” (Q. 16:78)

This verse identifies the first ontological state of the human being as *not knowing* (*la ta'lamuna shay'an*). The faculties of hearing and sight thus form the primary gateways of epistemic development. They enable empirical awareness of the external world and provide the raw material for reflection and understanding. However, the Qur'an warns that sensory perception alone is insufficient without proper reflection and remembrance (*dhikr*).

The Qur'an frequently pairs *sam*' and *baṣar* to emphasise their dual role in perception and comprehension. “*Indeed, the hearing, the sight, and the heart-about all those one will be questioned*” (Q. 17:36). This verse establishes an ethical accountability (*mas'uliyah*) for the use of human faculties, implying that knowledge is not neutral but morally charged. What one chooses to perceive, listen to, or ignore shapes the moral quality of one's knowledge.

Al-Attas (1995) interprets this Qur'anic structure as a call to epistemic discipline: the sensory faculties must be purified and guided by divine remembrance to become trustworthy instruments of truth. Without *taqwa* (God-consciousness), the senses can deceive, leading to arrogance and error. Thus, the Qur'an's ontology of the senses integrates empirical observation within a sacred moral framework.

15.2.2 The Intellect (‘Aql): The Faculty of Discernment and Understanding

In the Qur'an, the term ‘*aql* (عقل) never appears as a noun but always as a verb, such as *ya ‘qilun* (“they understand”) or *ta ‘qilun* (“you reflect”). This grammatical feature reflects the Qur'an's dynamic conception of reason, not as a static possession but as an active process of engagement with divine signs. Reason (‘*aql*) in the Qur'an is not an autonomous faculty that constructs truth but a discerning instrument that recognises truth already manifested in creation and revelation.

“Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of night and day are signs for those who use reason (يَعْقِلُونَ, *ya ‘qilun*)” (Q. 2:164). Here, ‘*aql* is linked to reflection upon the natural order, suggesting that reason functions properly when directed toward recognising divine design (*nizam ilahi*). The Qur'an does not reject rational inquiry; rather, it situates it within the teleological framework of recognition of divine unity (*tawhid*).

According to Rahman (1980), ‘*aql* in the Qur'an is not speculative abstraction but moral intelligence—the capacity to discern good from evil and truth from falsehood. The verse “*Do they not reflect within themselves? Allah did not create the heavens and the earth and what is between them except in truth and for a specified term*” (Q. 30:8) links rational contemplation with ethical awareness, implying that cognition divorced from morality is incomplete.

The Qur'an also criticises intellectual arrogance: “*They have hearts with which they do not understand*” (Q. 7:179). Here, ‘*aql* is not functioning because it has been severed from *qalb*, the heart. Thus, reason's perfection depends on its union with the heart's moral and spiritual insight.

Nasr (2012) observes that in the Qur'anic paradigm, the intellect (‘*aql*) is a light within the soul, reflecting divine knowledge rather than generating it. Rationality, therefore, is not an end in itself but a mirror of revelation. When purified through remembrance, ‘*aql* becomes an instrument of *hikmah*—wisdom that integrates thought, ethics, and faith.

15.2.3 The Heart (Qalb): The Centre of Consciousness and Faith

Among all faculties, the heart (*qalb*) occupies the highest epistemological rank in the Qur'an. It is the organ of both knowledge and moral discernment, integrating sensory input and rational reflection into spiritual insight. “*Do they not travel through the land so that they have hearts by which to reason, or ears by which to hear? For indeed, it is not the eyes that are blinded, but blinded are the hearts within the breasts*” (Q. 22:46).

This verse establishes that true blindness is spiritual, not physical. The *qalb* is the locus of perception that transcends empirical data, functioning as the centre of awareness where truth (*ḥaqq*) is internalised. The Qur'an presents the heart as both cognitive and volitional-it knows, loves, and submits.

The dynamic nature of the *qalb* is reflected in its etymology; *qalaba* means "to turn" or "to change." The Qur'an acknowledges this volatility: the heart can incline toward truth or deviation. Hence, it must be constantly purified (*tazkiyah*). "On the Day when neither wealth nor children will benefit, except one who comes to Allah with a sound heart (قلب سليم, *qalb Salim*)" (Q. 26:88-89).

In Qur'anic epistemology, a sound heart is the foundation of sound knowledge. The heart that remembers Allah is illuminated by divine light (*mur*), while a heedless heart becomes veiled (*ghaflah*). "Whoever Allah wills to guide-He expands his breast to Islam; and whoever He wills to misguide-He makes his breast tight and constricted" (Q. 6:125). Thus, *qalb* mediates between the divine and human realms, transforming cognition into spiritual realisation.

Al-Attas (1995) argues that in Islamic epistemology, the heart is not a metaphor but a real organ of cognition- 'aql resides in the heart, not the brain. The integration of *qalb* and 'aql produces what he terms 'ilm al-yaqin (knowledge of certainty), the foundation of spiritual and intellectual balance.

15.2.4 The Integration of Faculties: From Perception to Realisation

The Qur'an envisions knowledge as a process of integration, wherein hearing, sight, intellect, and heart operate harmoniously. This integration transforms 'ilm (knowledge) from mere information into realisation (*taḥqiq*). The verse "We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth" (Q. 41:53) encapsulates this process: sensory experience (*afaq*), introspection (*anfus*), and divine recognition converge in epistemic certainty (*yaqin*). The Qur'anic epistemic model thus follows a triadic progression:

- Perception (*idrak*) - gathering data through *sam'* and *baṣar*.
- Reflection (*tafakkur* / *ta'aqqul*) - interpreting the signs through 'aql.
- Realisation (*tadhakkur* / *yaqin*) - internalising truth through *qalb*.

Each faculty perfects the next, creating a cyclical structure of knowing. This process is dynamic and moral; failure in one faculty disrupts the whole. The Qur'an warns against epistemic fragmentation: "They have hearts with which they do not understand, eyes with which they do not see, and ears with which they do not hear. Those are like cattle; rather, they are more astray" (Q. 7:179).

Sardar (2011) emphasises that this verse reflects the Qur'an's rejection of purely materialist cognition. Knowledge without spiritual awareness leads to dehumanisation. The human being becomes a *consumer of data* rather than a *knower of truth*. The Qur'anic model, by contrast, sanctifies knowledge by rooting it in *tawḥid*-the recognition of divine unity across all forms of knowing.

15.2.5 The Spiritual Intelligence (Furqan) as Divine Discrimination

The culmination of integrated knowing in the Qur'an is the emergence of *furqan*, the capacity to distinguish truth from falsehood. “O you who believe! If you fear Allah (تتقوا الله, *tattaqu Allah*), He will grant you a criterion (فرقاناً, *furqanan*)” (Q. 8:29). This verse reveals that true discernment arises not merely from intellectual capacity but from spiritual purity. *Furqan* represents divine illumination within the heart that enables accurate moral and epistemic judgment.

Al-Attas (1995) interprets *furqan* as the inner light that results from *taqwa*, a state of moral vigilance before God. When the heart is purified, it becomes a mirror of divine truth, capable of perceiving reality as it is (*haqq al-yaqin*). This inner discrimination surpasses rational deduction, integrating intuition, revelation, and moral consciousness.

In this way, *Furqan* represents the synthesis of all human faculties under divine guidance. It is the epistemic manifestation of faith (*iman*) in action, enabling the believer to act justly, think clearly, and know truly.

15.2.6 Ethical Accountability of Knowledge: The Questioning of the Faculties

The Qur'an concludes its epistemic anthropology with a striking assertion of moral accountability: “Indeed, the hearing, the sight, and the heart—about all those one will be questioned” (Q. 17:36). This verse reappears here as a reminder that knowledge in the Qur'an is never value-neutral. The misuse of cognitive faculties constitutes a moral failure.

Knowledge thus entails responsibility (*mas'uliyah al-'ilm*). To know is to be accountable for what one does with that knowledge. Concealment of truth (*kitman al-haqq*), distortion (*tahrif*), and arrogance (*kibr*) are condemned because they betray the purpose of knowing: to bear witness to divine reality (*shahadah*). “And do not mix the truth with falsehood or conceal the truth while you know [it]” (Q. 2:42).

The ethical dimension of knowledge transforms epistemology into a form of worship (*'ibadah*). Every act of learning, reflection, and discovery becomes part of the human vocation as Allah's vicegerent (*khali'ah*) on earth. As Nasr (2012) notes, the Qur'anic structure of knowing culminates not in domination of nature but in harmony with divine order.

15.2.7 Summary: The Qur'anic Architecture of Knowing

The Qur'an presents a comprehensive model of knowledge grounded in divine unity (*tawhid*) and human responsibility. The faculties of hearing, sight, intellect, and heart form a seamless epistemic network linking perception, reason, and revelation. Their integration transforms knowledge from empirical accumulation into moral illumination. The Qur'anic anthropology of cognition establishes that:

- Knowledge originates as divine light (*mur al-'ilm*).
- Human faculties are its mirrors and mediators.
- Ethics and remembrance safeguard its integrity.

- Accountability ensures its righteous use.

Thus, the human being is not merely a knower (*'alim*) but a trustee of divine knowledge (*amin al-'ilm*). When these faculties function in harmony, they reflect the divine name *al-Alim* within creation, fulfilling the purpose of human existence: to know, to remember, and to act in truth.

15.3 The Qur'anic Logic of Discovery and Verification

15.3.1 Discovery and Verification as Twin Dimensions of Qur'anic Epistemology

In the Qur'an, the pursuit of truth is a process of *kashf* (unveiling) and *tahqiq* (verification). Both processes are inseparable dimensions of divine epistemology: discovery (*istidlal*) reveals the signs (*ayat*) of Allah in creation, while verification ensures that human interpretation remains aligned with divine truth. Knowledge (*'ilm*) in the Qur'an is not simply gathered but *witnessed* through disciplined perception (*baṣirah*), reflection (*tafakkur*), and sincere intention (*niyyah*). These epistemic processes form the Qur'anic logic of discovery and verification, where *truth* is not self-derived but divinely anchored.

The Qur'an repeatedly calls human beings to engage in both discovery and confirmation of reality. In Surah Fuṣṣilat (Q. 41:53), Allah declares: “*We shall show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the Truth.*” This verse defines the essential epistemic trajectory: discovery through *signs* (*ayat*) and verification through *clarity* (*tabayyun*). Thus, Qur'anic knowledge operates within a dual structure - exploration of phenomena and confirmation through divine correspondence.

15.3.2 Discovery (*Kashf*) as Epistemic Unveiling

The Qur'an positions *kashf* - unveiling or discovery - as an act of divine permission rather than human autonomy. Knowledge is uncovered through the engagement of human faculties, but the depth of its reality is granted by Allah: “*And He taught you what you did not know, and ever has the favour of Allah been great upon you*” (Q. 4:113).

Here, knowledge emerges not from human self-sufficiency but from divine teaching (*'allama*), emphasising that discovery is a form of *divine unveiling* (*tajalli*). This epistemic act requires spiritual humility and moral readiness. The Qur'an warns that those who approach knowledge arrogantly are veiled from truth, as in Surah al-Muṭaffifin (Q. 83:14): “*No! Rather, the stain has covered their hearts because of what they used to earn.*”

This *rān* (rust) symbolises epistemic obstruction - the moral corruption that blinds one's inner vision. Therefore, true discovery in the Qur'anic paradigm requires purification (*tazkiyah*) of the soul, aligning cognition with faith (*iman*).

The Qur'an presents *kashf* as a process of unveiling divine signs within the layered structure of existence - in the cosmos (*afaq*), within the human self (*anfus*), and in revelation (*wahy*). This triadic unveiling establishes the unity of natural, moral, and revealed knowledge.

15.3.3 Verification (*Tahqiq*) as the Principle of Certainty

Discovery without verification can lead to illusion or conjecture (*ẓann*), which the Qur’an repeatedly cautions against: “*And do not pursue that of which you do not know (‘ilm). Indeed, the hearing, the sight, and the heart-about all those [one] will be questioned*” (Q. 17:36).

This verse situates verification within the ethical accountability of human faculties. Hearing, seeing, and understanding must all be disciplined by truth. Verification (*tahqiq*) thus becomes both an intellectual and moral act - testing, confirming, and aligning knowledge with divine reality.

The Qur’an rejects epistemologies based on assumption (*ẓann*) and urges rational and experiential verification. Surah al-Najm (Q. 53:28) states: “*They do not know of it; they follow nothing but conjecture, and indeed conjecture avails nothing against the truth.*”

Hence, *tahqiq* safeguards human reasoning (*‘aql*) from falling into unverified claims. It is an epistemological filter that demands evidence (*bayyinah*), coherence (*ḥaqq*), and moral intention (*niyyah ṣaliḥah*).

In the Qur’an, verification also means *establishing truth in action* (*‘amal*). Knowledge becomes real when it manifests ethically - a verification through practice. Thus, Qur’anic verification is not only cognitive but performative, uniting epistemology and ethics.

15.3.4 The Qur’anic Method of Verification: From Signs (*Ayat*) to Certainty (*Yaqin*)

The Qur’anic method moves from signs (*ayat*) to knowledge (*‘ilm*), then to certainty (*yaqin*). Each stage involves both discovery and verification. The observation of signs demands *tafakkur* (reflection) and *tadabbur* (deep consideration), which transform sensory perception into intellectual and spiritual understanding.

Surah Al ‘Imran (Q. 3:190-191) declares: “*Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and day are signs for those of understanding - those who remember Allah while standing, sitting, and lying on their sides, and reflect upon the creation of the heavens and the earth.*”

The term *yatadabbarun* signifies a reflective process that leads from external observation to internal realisation. The ultimate verification (*tahqiq al-ḥaqq*) occurs when reflection culminates in recognition of divine order and purpose.

Qur’anic epistemology thus integrates empiricism (*naẓar*), rationality (*‘aql*), and spirituality (*iman*). Each epistemic operation must correspond with divine reality to ensure that *discovery* leads to *certainty*.

15.3.5 Rational Verification (*Tahqiq al-‘Aqli*) and Moral Discernment

The Qur’an appeals to human reason (*‘aql*) as a faculty of verification rather than speculation. Rational verification functions within divine parameters - reason must confirm, not replace, revelation. In Surah al-Baqarah (2:269): “*He gives wisdom (ḥikmah) to whom He wills, and whoever has been given wisdom has certainly been given much good.*”

Here, *hikmah* represents reason guided by revelation - rational verification infused with moral consciousness. The Qur'an also challenges blind imitation (*taqlid*), commanding humans to investigate truth independently: “*When it is said to them, ‘Follow what Allah has revealed,’ they say, ‘Rather, we follow that which we found our fathers upon.’ Even though their fathers understood nothing, nor were they guided?’*” (Q. 2:170).

Thus, Qur'anic verification is rationally active but revelation-centred. *Aql* becomes the instrument of discerning divine truth through inquiry and reflection, while revelation (*wahy*) remains the final arbiter of validity.

15.3.6 Empirical and Reflective Discovery: Signs in the Horizons and the Self

The Qur'an employs empirical discovery not as secular science but as *sign-based cognition*. Observing nature and history is encouraged as a path to divine awareness. Surah al-Ghāshiyah (Q. 88:17-20) commands: “*Do they not look at the camels-how they are created? And in the sky, how is it raised? And at the mountains, how are they set up? And on the earth, how is it spread out?’*”

Here, empirical discovery becomes an act of worship. Observation (*nazar*) leads to remembrance (*dhikr*), and remembrance leads to verification of faith. Thus, Qur'anic discovery integrates external evidence with internal realisation.

Similarly, the Qur'an situates *historical inquiry* as a form of epistemic discovery: “*Travel through the earth and see how He began creation*” (Q. 29:20). The act of “seeing” (*anzuru*) extends beyond the sensory to intellectual perception - a journey toward uncovering divine order within the flux of history.

13.3.7 Verification through Revelation (*Wahy*) and Consistency (*Tawfiq*)

While human inquiry discovers, revelation verifies. Revelation (*wahy*) provides the divine framework that confirms what reason and observation uncover. In Surah al-Haqqah (Q. 69:51), the Qur'an declares: “*And indeed, it is the truth of certainty (haqq al-yaqin).*”

This verse signifies the ultimate stage of verification - divine correspondence between human understanding and revealed truth. Revelation thus ensures *tawfiq* - harmony between mind, matter, and meaning.

Revelation corrects the errors of conjecture, limits the arrogance of intellect, and sanctifies the purpose of inquiry. The Qur'an thus positions *wahy* as both the *beginning* and *culmination* of epistemic verification.

13.3.8 The Ethics of Verification: Integrity, Justice, and Responsibility

Verification in the Qur'an is not merely intellectual but moral. Truth must be established with justice (*‘adl*) and honesty (*ṣidq*). Surah al-Hujurat (Q. 49:6) provides a foundational epistemic principle: “*O you who believe, if a wrongdoer comes to you with information, verify it (fatabayyanu), lest you harm people in ignorance and become regretful for what you have done.*”

This *fatabayyun* (verification) verse establishes an ethical methodology - critical evaluation, cautious judgment, and fairness in knowledge transmission. It parallels modern principles of peer review and data validation, but with a moral-spiritual foundation.

Knowledge, in the Qur'anic sense, becomes a trust (*amanah*), requiring responsibility in discovery, accuracy in verification, and humility in communication. Ethical integrity is the guarantor of epistemic validity.

15.3.9 Qur'anic Verification and the Contemporary Epistemic Crisis

The modern world often separates discovery (science) from verification (ethics). The Qur'an, however, fuses them, ensuring that every cognitive act has moral and spiritual dimensions. It rejects knowledge divorced from responsibility, echoing Surah al-Qaṣaṣ (Q. 28:77): “*Seek through what Allah has given you the home of the Hereafter, and do not forget your share of the world; and do good as Allah has done good to you.*”

Here, epistemic balance (*tawazun*) is commanded - knowledge must serve both worldly and eternal good. The Qur'an thus redefines verification as *ethical coherence* between understanding and application.

15.3.10 Conclusion: From Discovery to Certainty through Verification

The Qur'anic logic of discovery and verification completes the cycle of epistemology: faith (*iman*) initiates inquiry, discovery (*kashf*) reveals the signs, verification (*taḥqiq*) confirms the truth, and certainty (*yaqin*) seals the process. Each stage transforms the seeker morally and intellectually, grounding knowledge in divine coherence.

This logic ensures that epistemology remains holistic - balancing intellect and revelation, reason and spirituality, exploration and humility. The Qur'an, as the eternal guide, provides not only the map of discovery but also the criterion of verification, leading humankind toward *ḥaqq al-yaqin* - the Truth of Certainty.

15.4 Integration of Faith, Reason, and Revelation in Qur'anic Epistemology

15.4.1 The Need for Epistemic Integration

The Qur'an envisions knowledge (*ʿilm*) as a unified, divinely grounded system in which faith (*iman*), reason (*ʿaql*), and revelation (*wahy*) operate in harmony. This integration is the essence of Qur'anic epistemology: it dissolves the artificial dichotomy between the sacred and the rational, and between the spiritual and the empirical. Modern epistemologies often separate cognition from morality, or reason from faith. The Qur'an, however, reconstitutes them as complementary dimensions of the same divine reality (*ḥaqq*).

Allah declares: “*Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth*” (Q. 24:35).

This *mur* symbolises both ontological and epistemological illumination: truth itself is divine light, and all forms of knowledge participate in it. Faith, reason, and revelation are not competing sources of truth but interdependent lights converging upon the same reality. The Qur'anic worldview thus embodies what scholars call *tawhīd al-ma'rifah*-the unity of knowledge (Nasr, 2007).

15.4.2 Faith (Iman) as Epistemic Grounding

Faith (*iman*) in the Qur'an is not blind belief; it is a cognitive assent to truth rooted in awareness of Allah. It represents the heart's receptivity to divine knowledge. The Qur'an states: "*Those who believe and whose hearts find rest in the remembrance of Allah-verily, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest*" (Q. 13:28).

Faith is the first epistemic response to revelation. It transforms knowledge from external data into internal conviction. Without *iman*, the intellect (*'aql*) operates without purpose or guidance, producing speculation (*zann*) instead of certainty (*yaqin*).

The Qur'an warns against knowledge that is detached from faith: "*They know the outward of the worldly life, but they are heedless of the Hereafter*" (Q. 30:7). Here, the Qur'an distinguishes between *informational knowledge* (data, technique) and *transformational knowledge* (wisdom, *ḥikmah*). Faith converts cognition into meaning, situating knowledge within moral responsibility and divine purpose.

Thus, *Iman* functions as an epistemic orientation-a compass directing human inquiry toward divine truth. It ensures that knowledge is not merely the accumulation of facts but the recognition of ultimate reality (*al-ḥaqq*).

15.4.3 Reason ('Aql) as the Faculty of Discernment

The Qur'an repeatedly calls upon humankind to use *'aql*-intellect and discernment. This faculty is portrayed not as an autonomous source of truth but as a divinely entrusted instrument for understanding *ayat* (signs). "*Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of the night and day, are signs for those of understanding (ulu al-albab)*" (Q. 3:190).

Reason in the Qur'an is both empirical and metaphysical. It discerns divine patterns in the natural world while acknowledging that all understanding depends upon divine permission: "*And they will never encompass anything of His knowledge except what He wills*" (Q. 2:255).

Thus, reason operates within the bounds of revelation. The Qur'an criticises those who rely solely on rational speculation: "*They do not know of it; they follow only conjecture, and conjecture avails nothing against the truth*" (Q. 53:28).

True reasoning (*ta'aqqul*) is reflective, not speculative. It engages with divine revelation and the empirical world simultaneously, seeking coherence between the two. Reason becomes an act of worship when it functions in submission (*Islam*) to Allah's order. In this way, *'aql* is the epistemic bridge between *iman* and *wahy*-the faculty that translates belief into understanding and perception into conviction.

15.4.4 Revelation (Wahy) as the Source and Standard of Knowledge

Revelation (*wahy*) is the divine communication that gives knowledge its ultimate foundation. In the Qur’an, revelation is not merely a historical event but an ongoing epistemological principle-it defines the boundary between divine truth and human conjecture. “*And He taught Adam the names-all of them*” (Q. 2:31).

This verse establishes revelation as the *ontological origin* of human knowledge. The act of divine teaching (*‘allama*) signifies that knowledge is not constructed ex nihilo by human intellect but received as *amanah* (trust).

Revelation corrects human misjudgment and safeguards reason from distortion. It provides *furqan*-the criterion by which truth is distinguished from falsehood: “*Blessed is He who sent down the Criterion upon His servant, that he may be to the worlds a warner*” (Q. 25:1).

The Qur’an thus functions as the metacognitive framework of all valid knowledge: it interprets reality, defines epistemic boundaries, and reorients human discovery toward divine purpose. Without revelation, both reason and faith risk falling into imbalance-reason into arrogance, and faith into sentimentality. Therefore, *wahy* is the supreme verification (*tahqiq al-haqq*) that ensures the unity of knowledge remains divine-centred, not ego-centred (Izutsu, 2002).

15.4.5 The Triadic Integration: Iman-‘Aql-Wahy as a Unified Epistemic Cycle

The Qur’an constructs an integrated epistemic cycle where *iman* initiates, *‘aql* mediates, and *wahy* validates the pursuit of knowledge. Each element functions as a mode of perceiving truth, and together they create *yaqin* (certainty).

- Iman (Faith): the inner recognition of divine truth - the beginning of understanding.
- Aql (Reason): the rational engagement with creation and revelation - the process of discernment.
- Wahy (Revelation): the divine confirmation - the completion of certainty.

This triadic logic reflects the Qur’anic command for holistic knowing: “*So give good news to My servants - those who listen to the word, then follow the best of it; those are the ones whom Allah has guided, and those are the people of understanding*” (Q. 39:17-18).

The *listening* represents faith’s receptivity, *following the best* represents reason’s discernment, and *guidance* represents revelation’s verification. Together, they yield *yaqin* - certainty born of harmony between belief, intellect, and divine instruction.

This triadic unity underpins what al-Attas (1989) calls *adab al-‘ilm* - the proper integration of ethical, intellectual, and spiritual dimensions of knowing. Knowledge is not neutral; it must embody humility, justice, and gratitude.

15.4.6 Integrative Reasoning: Between Empirical Inquiry and Divine Meaning

In the Qur'an, reason and revelation coexist in dynamic tension, not opposition. The Qur'an repeatedly challenges humankind to observe, reflect, and infer from creation - while reminding them that true meaning lies beyond the empirical. *"Do they not look into the dominion of the heavens and the earth, and all things that Allah has created?"* (Q. 7:185).

This verse links empirical observation (*nazar*) to metaphysical contemplation (*tafakkur*). The Qur'an legitimises empirical discovery but situates it within the metaphysical horizon of divine unity (*tawhid*).

Therefore, the Qur'anic method does not reject scientific inquiry; rather, it demands its moral and theological grounding. Every act of discovery becomes an act of *dhikr* (remembrance), transforming the pursuit of knowledge into worship.

Modern epistemologies often fragment knowledge into isolated domains - scientific, philosophical, ethical - leading to disconnection between truth and meaning. The Qur'an re-unifies them under *tawhid*, where knowledge is both rational and sacred, empirical and revelatory, intellectual and moral (Nasr, 2007).

15.4.7 Faith and Reason in Dialogical Harmony

Qur'anic discourse portrays faith and reason not as hierarchical but as dialogical partners. Faith gives direction to reason, while reason gives depth to faith. Both are guided by revelation. *"And those who strive for Us, We will surely guide them to Our ways. Indeed, Allah is with those who do good"* (Q. 29:69).

The verb *jahadu* ("strive") in this verse implies cognitive struggle - the intellectual *jihad* toward understanding divine truth. Guidance (*huda*) follows this striving, indicating that divine assistance perfects rational effort.

Thus, the Qur'an encourages reasoning within the framework of faith - a dynamic interplay of reflection (*tafakkur*), remembrance (*tadhakkur*), and verification (*tahqiq*).

This synthesis creates what Izutsu (2013) calls the "semantic unity of the Qur'anic worldview," where faith and intellect are expressions of a single divine consciousness manifesting through human cognition.

15.4.8 Revelation as the Criterion of Integration

While faith and reason serve as epistemic instruments, revelation remains the *criterion* (*mi'yār*) ensuring their coherence. It prevents faith from degenerating into superstition and reason from sliding into materialism. *"And those who disbelieve say, 'Why has the Qur'an not been revealed to him all at once?' Thus [it is] that We may strengthen thereby your heart; and We have spaced it distinctly"* (Q. 25:32).

The gradual revelation (*tanzil*) illustrates divine pedagogy - knowledge unfolds through time to guide, test, and transform human understanding. Revelation thus acts as a continuous corrective to both intellectual arrogance and spiritual complacency.

The Qur'an also provides an epistemic law of verification: *"If it had been from [any] other than Allah, they would have found within it much contradiction"* (Q. 4:82). This verse elevates internal coherence

(*tawafuq*) as a divine criterion of truth. Revelation thus becomes both epistemic foundation and logical framework, validating human inquiry through its harmony with divine order.

15.4.9 Ethical Integration: Knowledge as Responsibility

The synthesis of *iman*, *'aql*, and *wahy* culminates in *'amal* (action). Knowledge that does not translate into ethical responsibility is incomplete. The Qur'an repeatedly equates knowledge with accountability: "*Indeed, those who conceal what We sent down of clear proofs and guidance after We made it clear for the people in the Scripture - those are cursed by Allah*" (Q. 2:159).

Knowledge, therefore, carries *amanah* (trust). The integration of faith, reason, and revelation ensures that this trust is preserved through sincerity (*ikhlas*), justice (*'adl*), and humility (*tawadu*).

Epistemic ethics demand that every discovery be weighed against revelation's moral compass. Rational or scientific pursuits must align with divine justice, compassion, and truth. This integration transforms epistemology into *'ibadah* (worship): a continuous act of realising truth through obedience.

15.4.10 Toward a Qur'anic Paradigm of Unified Knowing

The integration of faith, reason, and revelation represents the core of Qur'anic epistemology. Faith anchors the heart, reason refines the intellect, and revelation illuminates both. Together, they form an epistemic unity (*tawhid al-ma'rifah*) that transcends dualism between the sacred and the rational.

This integrated model provides a paradigm for contemporary scholarship, offering an ethical and spiritual foundation for knowledge in an age of fragmentation. The Qur'an redefines epistemology as a journey from belief to understanding, from reflection to verification, and from knowing to being. "*And say, 'My Lord, increase me in knowledge'*" (Q. 20:114). This prayer encapsulates the Qur'anic logic of epistemic growth - humility before divine truth and perpetual striving toward unity of understanding.

Through the harmony of *iman*, *'aql*, and *wahy*, the Qur'an establishes a timeless epistemology that integrates mind, soul, and revelation - restoring knowledge to its divine origin and ethical purpose.

The journey through Part IV has illuminated how the Qur'an constructs an integrated logic of discovery rooted in the unity of faith, knowledge, and action. The cycle of *iman*-*'ilm*-*'amal* in Chapter 13 established the foundation: that knowledge without faith is directionless, and faith without action is incomplete. Chapter 14 advanced this understanding through the three stages of *yaqin* - *'ilm al-yaqin* (knowing through reflection), *'ayn al-yaqin* (seeing through realisation), and *haqq al-yaqin* (being through truth) - demonstrating that certainty in the Qur'an is both epistemic and ontological, a progression from knowing about truth to embodying it (Q. 69:51; Q. 102:7-8). Finally, Chapter 15 synthesised these insights into a unified epistemology, where revelation (*wahy*), reason (*'aql*), and sensory experience (*hiss*) converge in a holistic framework of understanding.

At the heart of this Qur'anic logic lies the conviction that knowledge is a divine trust (*'ilm amanah*) and that human inquiry must be guided by humility, justice, and sincerity. Discovery, therefore, is not the

conquest of nature but participation in the signs of God. Verification (*tahqiq*) in this sense is both intellectual and moral: to verify truth is to align oneself with it in action and intention. The Qur'an's epistemic vision redefines progress as proximity to truth and excellence as moral responsibility.

This synthesis prepares the way for Part V: Reconstruction of Islamic Epistemology in Contemporary Context, where the insights of Qur'anic logic are translated into the language of modern intellectual challenges. The next part will explore how Qur'anic epistemology can reconstruct contemporary paradigms of science, philosophy, and ethics - offering a model of knowledge that is spiritually rooted, rationally rigorous, and ethically transformative.