AN AXIOLOGICAL DIMENSION OF QUR'ĀNIC EPISTEMOLOGY

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Abstract
This study inquires into the value system associated with two epistemological conceptual schemes of the Qur'ān, namely, āyah (sign) and ḥikmah (wisdom). In many respects, the rapid accumulation of all types of knowledge and the progress in the predominantly secular science and technology of modern times have marginalised values from scientific inquiry, leading to intellectual crisis, epistemological confusion and social disorientation. Thus, there is a clarion call to revisit the place of values in epistemological discourse. In an attempt to broaden the human horizon, the Qur'ān propounds a unified system of knowledge and value whereby it draws attention to several natural phenomena seen as āyāt (signs) of Allah which should be explored through a ḥikmah-based framework of value judgment. Guided by axiological concern, this study examines the place of value in Qur'ānic epistemology.
Keywords: Axiology; *āyah* (sign); epistemology; *ḥikmah* (wisdom); Qur'ān.

Introduction

Epistemology is a philosophical enquiry into the nature and scope of knowledge. Questions such as "what is knowledge?", "what can we know?", and "how can we know?" are central to epistemological enquiry. Axiology is another branch of philosophy that studies the nature, types, and criteria of values and of value judgments, especially in ethics. Compared to epistemology, axiological inquiry investigates whether an object is good and right or whether it is bad and wrong. Value judgment has been marginalized or indeed displaced from scientific inquiry, leading to an asymmetric progress of sorts in science and ethics and generating a situation in which human valuation fails to match or cope with his scientific discoveries. Admittedly, scientific knowledge has transformed our knowledge of this world. However, it has also generated many social and environmental problems that it alone could not properly solve. This has led many concerned researchers to challenge the modern scientific paradigm and its philosophy of science and to search for alternative paths for pursuing science and scientific enquiries.[1]

In working within the predominant Western scientific conceptual schemes in our contemporary time, Muslim scientists face the challenge of harmonising the asymmetry between the epistemological approach adopted in

scientific enquiry and axiology in general. Sardar expressed his concern over this asymmetry thus "How to get science and technology to solve the compelling needs and monumental problems of Muslim society without dislocating the values and cultures which essentially make these societies Muslim?"[2] In other words, how can one pursue scientific enquiry and benefit from scientific discoveries without compromising Islamic values? In an attempt to address this dilemma, many Muslim scientists and organizations worked hard to identify key Islamic axiological conceptual schemes having potential to guide scientific enquiries.[3] Among others, the *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences, MAAS Journal of Islamic Science,* and *Islam and Science* (now known as *Islamic Science*) were all founded to promote such value-based scientific enquiries.[4]

Islamic conceptual schemes of value that could embrace the nature of scientific enquiry have been identified and debated in many international seminars. Ten values were identified in the first seminar on "Knowledge and Values" of the joint six-seminar study of the International Federation of the Institute of Advance Study, held in Stockholm in September 1981. They are: *tawḥīd* (unity of Allah), *khilāfah* (trusteeship), *ʿibādah* (worship), *ʿilm* (knowledge), *ḥalāl* (lawful) and *ḥarām* (unlawful), *ʿadl* (justice) and *ẓulm* (tyranny), and *istiṣlāḥ* (public interest) and *ḍiyā'* (waste). Aligned with such an axiological epistemological inquiry based on an Islamic framework, the current study adds two value-laden epistemological concepts of the Qur'ān, i.e., *āyah* (sign) and *ḥikmah* (wisdom). These two terms have been previously dealt with by Raziul Islam Nadvi and Hikmet Yaman in their respective studies with different objectives. Raziul Islam Nadvi dwells on the lexical meaning and usage of *āyāt* (signs) in the Qur'ān[5] while Hikmet Yaman explores the meaning of *ḥikmah* as used in the Qur'ān, Prophetic *ḥadīth* and early Islamic thought.[6] The current study explores the centrality of value in Qur'ānic epistemological discourse.

Elements of Qur'ānic Epistemology

ʿIlm (knowledge) is a central conceptual term that has drawn the attention of Muslim thinkers of diverse orientations. It has generated more than 1,200 definitions in the history of Islamic epistemological discourse.[7] In Islam, the Qur'ān, seconded by the authentic Prophetic tradition, is the highest level of authority and the primary source of knowledge. *ʿIlm*, its derivatives and other synonymous terms, is a key Qur'ānic epistemology that occurs in the Qur'ān with great frequency. The Qur'ān praises *ulū al-ʿilm* (3:18), *ulū al-albāb* (2:269; 13:19; 14:52; 38:29; 39:9, 18)*, ulū al-nuhā* (20:54, 128), which collectively refer to those endowed with knowledge and sound understanding. It equally draws a sharp distinction between knowledge and ignorance: "Are those who know equal with those who know not?" (39:9) or "Are the blind equal with those who see? Or the depths of darkness equal with light?" (13:16). In addition, the Qur'ān encourages recourse to authorities, expert in their respective fields, when one is

at a loss (16:43; 21:7). It corrects those who may begin to feel a sense of pride in their knowledge by explaining that above every knowledgeable person is another one who is more knowledgeable (12:76). On that ground, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was taught to pray for advancement in knowledge, "and say: O my Lord! increase me in knowledge" (20:114).

The Qur'ān further establishes a positive link between faith and knowledge, making knowledge an integral part of sound faith. It states, "it is those who are endowed with knowledge that stand truly in awe of God" (35:28). The Qur'ān also praises *al-rāsikhūn fī al-'ilm* (those who are firmly grounded in knowledge) for their sound belief which is rooted in knowledge (3:7). Those who believe and (those who) have knowledge are ranked higher among God's creatures (58:11). In other words, those who combine knowledge with faith are ranked higher above those who have knowledge alone or faith alone.

A bearer of divine knowledge, the Qur'ān was sent to lead humankind out of the narrowness, short-sightedness and darkness of *taqlīd* (blind imitation) and *jahl* (ignorance) to the vast ambit of enlightenment where everything is ultimately and cosmically united in exhibiting the truth.[8] The first verse of sūrat Ibrāhīm (14:1) states that the Qur'ān was revealed to bring humankind from *al-ẓulumāt* (the darkness) to *al-nūr* (the light). According to many *mufassirūn* (exegetes), *al-ẓulumāt* here refers to the darkness of disbelief, ignorance and misguidance while *al-nūr* refers to the light of belief, knowledge and guidance.[9] Such function of leading from darkness to light attributed to the Qur'ān (14:1; 57:9; 65:11) is equally assigned to other scriptures of God, such as Tawrāh (Torah) and Injīl (Gospel), as mentioned in the Qur'ān (5:15-16, 44-46; 14:5).

Among the prominent classifications of knowledge in Islam, as indicated in some writings of Imam al-Ghazālī, is the one that divides knowledge into that which is obtained by human acquisition (*al-ta'allum al-insānī*) and that which is taught to human by way of divine bestowal (*al-ta'līm al-rabbānī*).[10] While such division is based on the modes of knowing, it, nevertheless, draws on the strength of faith as a frame of classification; the former is attainable to anyone who acquires it while the latter is bestowed only upon those chosen by God. Such classification gives space for revelation as a source of knowledge and reflects Qur'ānic verses that talk about *al-'Ilm al-Ladunnī* (heavenly knowledge) or associate knowledge with *taqwā* (piety) (2:282; 18:65).

Conversely, ignorance can hardly be considered in the Qur'ān. Reducing the reality to what transpires to the human mind or prioritising the *ẓann* (conjecture) over the *ḥaqq* (truth) due to marginalisation or complete displacement of divine guidance is construed in the Qur'ān as the ignorant's highest point of "knowledge" (*dhālika mablaghuhum min al-'ilm*) (53:28-30). Such trajectories have been decried in the Qur'ānic vocabulary as *ḍalāl* (misguidance), a term synonymous with or will lead to *shirk*(idolatry or polytheism) and *kufr*(disbelief) (4:116, 136, 167; 14:18; 22:12).

As for the sources of knowledge or ways of knowing, the Qur'ān recognises and indeed appreciates experimental knowledge and its thinking processes on issues that can be proven practically. How God will resurrect the dead in the Hereafter was demonstrated to an unnamed voyager and Prophet Ibrāhīm (2:259-260), and how He cannot be seen with human naked eyes, at least in this worldly life, was proven to Prophet Musa (7:143).

Historical knowledge is another prominent feature of Qur'ānic epistemology. The Qur'ān urges men to explore history in order to develop *qulūb ya'qilūna bi-hā* (reasoning hearts) (22:46), capable of discovering *sunnatullāh* (the pathway of Allah) that governs and sustains the functioning system in the course of successive human generations. In its historical accounts, the Qur'ān recounts the stories of the messages and messengers of God along with their nations, and narrates their trials and tribulations. There are stories of heroes and there are narratives of villains. These stories are told and retold, not for simple amusement but for a higher value referred to in the Qur'ān as *'ibrah*, which literally means admonition. Ethically, *'ibrah* implies appreciating virtues and identifying vices so that one may emulate the virtuous and shun the vicious among the people narrated. Epistemologically, *'ibrah* requires historical reasoning that leads one to investigate the postulates of the predecessors, to correct their mistakes, to appreciate and (re)search their findings, to carry forward the best of their edifices, and to transcend their horizons; in short, to learn from history.

There are a number of concepts that are epistemologically significant in the Qur'ān. Based on major contrasts and comparisons that the Qur'ān draws between key general epistemological concepts, Syed Muhammad Dawilah al-Edrus enlists the following concepts under six categories:

1. *Tashābuh* (ambiguity/similarity), *shakk* (doubt), *rayb* (fantasy), *ẓann* (conjecture), *'ilm* (knowledge), *yaqīn* (certainty);
2. *'Aql* (reason/intellect), *fikr* (reflection), *dhikr* (contemplation), *ghaflah* (negligence/unconsciousness), *nisyān* (forgetfulness)
3. *Ḥaqq* (reality/truth), *bāṭil* (falsehood), *furqān* (criterion);
4. *Waḥy* (revelation), *hawā* (desire), *hudā* (guidance), *tanzīl* (revelation/descent), *kitāb* (book), *sulṭān* (authority), *bayyināt* (evidences), *naba'* (news), *ḥikmah* (wisdom), *īmān* (faith);
5. *Āyāt* (signs), *amthāl* (parables/examples), *asmā'* (names);
6. *Muḥkamāt* (categorical verses), *mutashābihāt* (allegorical verses), *ta'wīl* (allegorical interpretation).[11]

The first division rests on the stages of thought in ascending path towards the highest level of knowledge. The second division identifies *'aql* and other related terms as instruments of knowledge. The third division considers *ḥaqq* as the ultimate goal and end of the rational enquiry. *Ḥaqq* is sharply distinguished from

bāṭil by way of *furqān*. The fourth division refers to revelation as the means of knowledge. The fifth division identifies *āyāt*, *amthāl* and *asmā'* as a special conceptual framework of revelation. The sixth division is based on the classification of *āyāt* into *muḥkamāt* and *mutashābihāt*.[12] These concepts are obviously not exhaustive. There are other concepts which are epistemologically relevant but which do not appear in the list. It is possible to question how *burhān* (apodeixis, demonstrative proof) was dropped while other similar terms, such as *sulṭān* and *bayyināt,* were included. It is also not clear how *hawā* (contrasted with *waḥy* in verse 53:3-4) was incorporated while *jahl* (ignorance) (contrasted with *'ilm* in verse 11:46) was not.

Through such words and many more, the Qur'ān establishes an essential episteme for knowledge enquiry. It recognises human sensory and rational faculties as true sources or instruments of knowledge. Phrases such as "*afalam yanẓurū*" (do they not look at), "*awalam yaraw*" (do they not see*)," afalā yasma'ūn"* (do they not hear), *afalam yasīrū"* (do they not travel) "*awalam ya'lamū*" (do they not know) and the like, call man to look beyond and transcend day-to-day trivialities to the realm of an ever expending world fully decked with *āyāt* of God (15:16-23; 50:6-11; 51:47-49). One of these verses states, "Have they not observed the dominion of the heavens and the earth, and all that God created, and that the end of their time might be near? What [other revelation] will they believe in if they do not believe in this?" (7:185).

Nevertheless, knowledge is not confined to what transpires to human sensory or rational faculties. There is knowledge of *al-shahādah* (the seen) and knowledge of *al-ghayb* (the unseen). The former is the domain of human intellectual pursuits while the latter is far beyond human reach. God is described in the Qur'ān as *'Ālim al-ghayb wa-al-shahādah* (the Knower of the unseen and the seen). That Allah is the Omniscient, the Knower of the unseen and the seen, is thoroughly and persuasively maintained in the Qur'ān (2:255; 6:59; 10:61; 34:3; 13:8-11). As a Word of God, incorporating the *shahādah-ghayb* divide, the Qur'ān is posited to be both the highest source of knowledge and the knowledge itself par excellence, even though human perceptual faculties, operating within given socio-historical constraints of the physical world, may get closer to or fall short in obtaining the true knowledge of the Qur'ān. Far from being antagonistic to human rational or sensory faculties, revelation is meant to be *hudan* (guidance) to humankind by way of confirming what man can know independently, guiding in what man may err, and informing on what transcends human horizons altogether.[13]

Episteme of *Āyah* (Sign)

In the Qur'ānic vocabulary, the word *āyah* ((plural: *āyāt*)) stands for God's words and actions and everything created by God and recognized to be sources of knowledge leading to His existence and unity. Etymologically, *āyah* means "sign". It is used in the Qur'ān broadly in two senses. First, it refers to the

smallest unit of the sūrah of the Qur'ān, commonly translated into English as "verse" (10:1; 11:1; 12:1; 13:1). Second, it is used to refer to Allah's creatures in nature and actions in human history (3:190; 11:103). This gives us a vast array where knowledge can be acquired, searched, and researched. From the *āyāt* of the Qur'ān, we develop religious disciplines and from the *āyāt* of nature and history we develop acquired knowledge.

The *āyāt* of God are fields and objects of knowledge upon which many sciences have been drawn. The strong bond between the religious sciences and the Qur'ān is without question. In its quest for legitimacy and recognition, every religious discipline attributes its source to the Qur'ān and Prophetic Sunnah. It is within the so-called secular or natural sciences that the link has been reiterated.

In essence, the Qur'ān regards the natural world and its constituents and inhabitants as *āyāt* of God. Everything God created stands to be His *āyah*.[14] In this sense, the word is identical with another Qur'ānic term, *al-'ālam* (the world). This all-inclusive sense of *āyah* is reiterated in sūrat al-Rūm (30:2-25) and the early parts of sūrah al-Ra'd (13:2-4) and sūrah al-Jāthiyah (45:35). In these passages, reference is made to the creation and design of the heaven and earth; the sun and moon; the creation of human and nonhuman species in pairs; and the alternation of night and day as well as water sent to revitalize the earth and the change of the winds. These *āyāt* of biotic and abiotic constituents of nature are summed up as follows, "These are the *āyāt* (signs) of Allah that We recite to you in truth. In what other statement, if not in God and His *āyāt*, will they, then, believe? (45:6). God is believed to be the Author of the Qur'ān and the Creator of nature. His speech and creations are the vast terrain of knowledge acquisitions and knowledge disseminations. In his exposition of Islamic cosmology, Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas opined that:

> The world of nature as depicted in the Qur'ān is composed of symbolic forms (*āyāt*), like words in a book. Indeed, the world of nature is another form of the Divine Revelation analogous to the Holy Qur'ān itself, only that the great, open book of nature is something created… Now a word as it really is, is a symbol, and to know it as it really is, is to know what it stands for, what it symbolizes, what it means. If we were to regard a word as if it has an independent reality of its own, then it would no longer be a sign or a symbol as it is being made to point to itself, which is not what it really is.[15]

The connection between the signifier/word and its signified/meaning is not always straightforward. Some word-meanings are clearly and easily understood while others are not. Thus, the *āyāt* of the Qur'ān are classified into *muḥkamāt* (plural of *muḥkam*, meaning "clear" and "established") and *mutashābihāt* (plural of *mutashābih*, meaning "unclear"). Of all classifications of

the Qur'ān which Muslim scholars of Qur'ānic sciences have advanced, the division into *muḥkam* and *mutashābih* is perhaps the only in-built classification mentioned in the Qur'ān itself (3:7) and thus central to Qur'ānic epistemological discourse. The verse is translated as follows:

> He it is Who has sent down to thee the Book: In it are *muḥkamāt* verses (basic or fundamental); they are the foundation of the Book: others are *mutashābāt* (allegorical). But those in whose hearts is perversity follow the part thereof that is allegorical, seeking discord, and searching for its hidden meanings, but no one knows its hidden meanings except Allah. And those who are firmly grounded in knowledge say: "We believe in the Book; the whole of it is from our Lord:" and none will grasp the Message except men of understanding (3:7).

Muslim theologians, jurists, Sufis as well as philosophers have engaged in an intense debate in an attempt to identify that which constitutes the *muḥkam* and that which constitutes the *mutashābih* of the Qur'ān and whether or not man can apprehend the *mutashābihāt*. Al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) mentions at least five opinions of the early Muslim scholars in interpreting the two concepts. First, the *muḥkamāt* are the abrogating verses which should be believed in and acted upon, whereas *mutashābihāt* are the abrogated verses which require belief but no action. Second, the *muḥkamāt* are the verses pronouncing *ḥalāl* and *ḥarām* (lawful and unlawful things) while *mutashābihāt* verses relate to other matters.Third, the *muḥkamāt* are the verses which have only one meaning whereas *mutashābihāt* verses that afford multiple meanings. Fourth, the *muḥkamāt* are the verses narrating the stories of the previous prophets while the *mutashābihāt* are those verses containing similar stories repeated in other surahs of the Qur'ān using either similar words with different meanings or different words with similar meanings. Fifth, the *muḥkamāt* are verses whose meanings can be understood by *'ulamā'* whereas the *mutashābihāt* verses are known to God alone.[16]

A right interpretation of *muḥkamāt* will yield a right meaning and thus good knowledge. Indulging in the *mutashābihāt* will result in the wrong meaning of the Qur'ān and thus bad knowledge of the Qur'ān. In other words, bad knowledge could be generated, particularly when these *mutashābihāt* are collated and regrouped in isolation from the *muḥkamāt*. The Qur'ān warns against such inclination and considers it a *fitnah* (discord or dissension) (3:7). Only those who are intellectually perverse, spiritually sick, and morally depraved (*alladhīna fī qulūbihim maraḍ*) will capitalise on the *mutashābihāt*.

Since the coverage of *āyāt* is extended to the wider natural world, the *muḥkam* and the *mutashābih* distinction could also be found in nature, as shown in Figure 1. The natural world is a book with knowledge, but that knowledge is not evident merely from the physical phenomena; they are nothing but signs, the

meaning of which can be understood by those who are equipped with proper knowledge, wisdom and spiritual discernment. According to al-Attas, the *mutashābihāt*is deciphered by means of *ta'wīl* (allegorical interpretation) which must be based upon the *tafsīr* (interpretation) of the *muḥkamāt:* He explains further:

> Thus in the same manner that the interpretation of the obscure and ambiguous texts is to be based upon those that are clear and established, so the interpretation or the study and explanation of the obscure and ambiguous aspects of the things of the empirical world must be grounded upon what is already known and established.[17]

The *muḥkamāt* and *mutashābihāt* verses and their subsequent operationalisation into good and bad knowledge is equally applicable in *āyāt* of nature.Nature could be deciphered at different levels for different ends and could be used to generate things that are beneficial or detrimental to human and environment as demonstrated in Figure 1.

ABCDE FGHIJ KLMNO PQRST UVWXW ZABCD EFGHI JKLMN OPQRS TUVWX YZ
ABCDE FGHIJ KLMNO PQRST UVWXW ZABCD EFGHI JKLMN OPQRS TUVWX YZ
ABCDE FGHIJ KLMNO PQRST UVWXW ZABCD EFGHI JKLMN OPQRS TUVWX YZ
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ABCDE FGHIJ KLMNO PQRST UVWXW ZABCD EFGHI JKLMN OPQRS TUVWX YZ

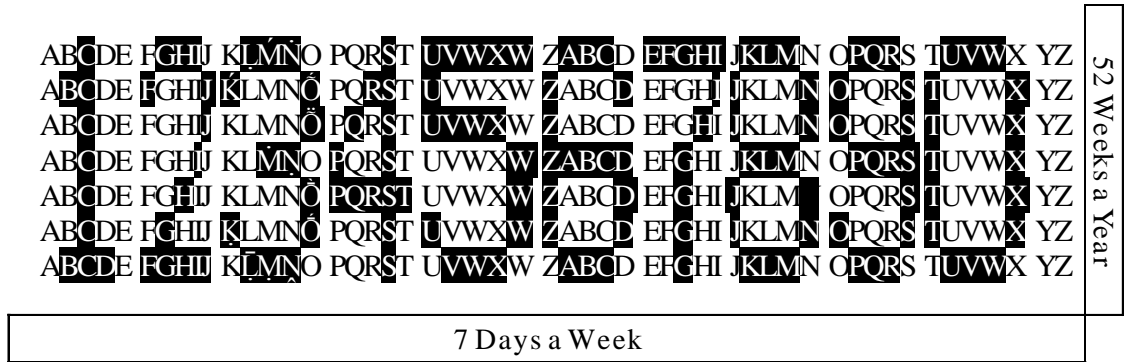52 Weeks a Year

7 Days a Week

Figure. 1: A-Z letters representing objects of knowledge in different natural phenomena;
1-0 numbers representing constructed knowledge.

In this figure (Figure 1), letters A-Z represent different objects of knowledge in the natural world while numbers 1-0 represent the knowledge that could be construed therefrom. Letters A-Z are repeated twice in a row (equivalent to 52 full weeks a year) multiplied by seven rows (equivalent to 7 days a week): 52x7= 364 characters. A few letters do not look like other standard letters, i.e., Ḱ-Ḳ-Ĺ-Ḻ-Ḿ-Ṁ-Ṃ-Ṅ-Ṇ-Ṉ-Ȯ-Ö-Ȍ-Ő. They are not easily observable or identifiable except by experts. These letters are visible at both the horizontal and vertical lines of the figure. They are few (14 out of 364 letters = 3.8%), yet they are part of the entire system and without them the system will be wanting. They are coherent in their own terms, making No. 3, and they form their own cluster by being letters with diacritical marks under the "Latin Extended Additional" font subset category. Nevertheless, these letters must be seen as "extended" and "additional" to the standard "Basic Latin" font subset, which forms the greater part of the system, and the former must be understood in the light of the latter. In like manner, the *mutashābihāt* of nature's *āyāt* must be understood in the light of its *muḥkamāt*. In this construct, "Basic Latin", with a great number in quality and quantity, stands for *muḥkamāt* while "Latin Extended Additional" stands for *mutashābihāt.* All numbers, with the exception of No. 3, represents good knowledge while No. 3 represents bad knowledge that could be construed. This suggests that the system is overwhelmingly good even when it ontologically accommodates bad or harmful knowledge. In fact, the very fact that bad or harmful knowledge can be construed therefrom is partly what makes the system good, as has been advanced elsewhere.[18]

There is another sense in which nature and its constituents are integrated into the Qur'ānic epistemology. Here nature is considered not as a separate *āyāt* or a counterpart of the Qur'ān but as an integral part, organically linked with the meaning of relevant words of the Qur'ān. While argument for and against scientific exegesis of the Qur'ān have been advanced,[19] there certainly are several allusions to various natural phenomena in the Qur'ān, the applied meaning of which can only be understood through the natural world itself. Here the Qur'ānic words stand as the signifier while their referents in the natural world are the signified. To understand the signifier is to understand the signified.

While not all Qur'ānic verses made reference to nature, a good number do allude to several natural phenomena. According to S. Waqar Ahmad Husaini, nearly 900 verses out of the total 6226 verses in the Qur'ān deal with various aspects of water resources science and engineering alone, including water law and management.[20] In his *Jawāhir al-Qur'ān*, (*The Jewels of the Qur'ān*), al-Ghazālī recognized the importance of the referent of the Qur'ān. Having classified the science of *tafsīr* (exegesis) based on narrations as one of the ancillary sciences, and having recognized the *mufassir* (exegete) as a bearer and conveyer of the Qur'ān, not its interpreter,[21] al-Ghazālī then classified mathematics and natural sciences as part of collective duty (*farḍ kifāyah*), which are not indispensable for the spiritual and physical wellbeing of man.

Nevertheless, he recognized the subject matter of these natural sciences as part of *Af'āl Allāh* (the works of God), the knowledge of which is indispensable for a proper understanding of related Qur'ānic verses. For example, the real meaning of verses mentioning the movements, behaviours and attributes of some celestial bodies (Qur'ān, 55:5; 10:5; 75:8-9; 35:13; 36:38-40) can only be known by someone who knows the manner of the composition of the heaven and the earth,[22] which today falls under the scope of aerospace engineering. In this sense, the physical world stands as the *ta'wīl* (referent) of those related Qur'ānic verses.

Whether we regard nature as distinct (and created) *āyah* of God, which is independent from the Qur'ān or as signified/referent of the relevant Qur'ānic *āyāt*, the natural world is epistemologically a significant source of knowledge and worthy of serious exploration within the Islamic mandate.

Episteme of *Ḥikmah* (Wisdom)

When knowledge is fused with values, it could lead to what is meticulously called in the Qur'ān as *ḥikmah*. Thus, an exposition of the knowledge in the Qur'ān will be wanting without a reference to *ḥikmah*. Compared with '*ilm-jahl* and *muḥkamāt-mutashābihāt* divides, *ḥikmah*is one of the few epistemological terms mentioned in the Qur'ān without juxtaposing it with any opposing term. Mentioned alone and paired with some key epistemological terms such as *'ilm* (knowledge) and *kitāb* (book), the word appears in different contexts of the Qur'ān and has generated different interpretations.

Ḥikmah (and *ḥukman*) is mentioned in the Qur'ān as part of what is bestowed upon the messengers and prophets of God as well as upon some distinguished individuals. It is given to Prophet Lūṭ (21:74), Prophet Yūsuf (12:22), Prophet Mūsā (26:21; 28:14), Prophet Dāwūd (2:251; 21:79 38:20), Prophet Sulaymān (21:79), Prophet Yaḥyā (19:12), Prophet, 'Īsā (3:48; 5:110; 43:63; 62:2), Prophet Ibrāhīm and his progeny who were prophets (4:54; 6:89; 26:83) and Prophet Muhammad (2:151; 3:164; 4:113; 33:34), the Banū Isrā'īl (Children of Israel) prophets (45:16) and indeed the prophets of God in general (3:79, 81). Besides the prophets, Luqmān, after whom a sūrah is named, is said to have been given *al-ḥikmah* (31:12). When referring to the prophets, *ḥikmah* is often mentioned next to al-*Kitāb*(the Book/God's revelation), suggesting that the prophets were taught the Book and *ḥikmah* or they were charged with the duty of teaching them to their people.

Etymologically, *ḥikmah* is derived from *ḥakama*, meaning *mana'a* (to restrain or prevent). *Ḥikmah* is that which restrains one from foolishness.[23] According to al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī (502/1108 or 9), *ḥikmah* refers to that which restrains for the sake of reformation.[24] Al-Ṭabarī also mentions that the word could be a derivative of *al-ḥukm* (which refers to something that distinguishes the truth from the falsehood.[25] There are diverse explanations of the word *ḥikmah*, depending on the context in which it is used. As used in verse 2:269, it generates

more interpretations than anywhere else.[26] Ibn 'Abbās defines it as knowledge of the Qur'ān regarding its abrogating and abrogated verses, its clear and ambiguous passages, its early and later revealed verses, its passages pertaining to the lawful and unlawful and its parables.[27] Qatādah and Mujāhid explain it as the Qur'ān itself and its understanding.[28] Al-Zajjāj reports that Ibn Mas'ūd defined *ḥikmah* as the Qur'ān and said:

> The Qur'ān is sufficient as *ḥikmah*, because by means of the Qur'ān the nation [of Muhammad] became knowledgeable after [a time of] ignorance (*jahl*). The Qur'ān is a link (*ṣilah*) to every knowledge that brings one close to God and [makes one] a medium of His mercy. For this reason God says, "Whoever is given *ḥikmah*, has been given much good." i.e., complete knowledge and that which leads to His mercy.[29]

Al-Ṭabarī lists several interpretations of *al-ḥikmah* as mentioned in 2:269 which he considers to be complementary in nature.[30] He finally settles on the notion that *al-ḥikmah* is the correctness in speech and acts (*iṣābat al-ṣawāb fī al-qawl wa-al-fi'l*).[31] Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī considers it as the attainment and realization of that which is true by means of knowledge and rationality.[32] Al-Māwardī (d. 450/1058) adds that *al-ḥikmah* could also mean worldly and other-worldly goodness (*ṣalāḥ al-dīn wa-iṣlāḥ al-dunyā*).[33]

Al-Ḥakīm refers to the possessor of *ḥikmah*.[34] It is one of the attributive Names of Allah. Allah is described as *al-'Alīm al-Ḥakīm* (2:32; 12:83, 100; 66:2); *al-Ḥakīm al-'Alīm* (43:84; 51:30); *al-Ḥakīm al-Khabīr* (6:18, 73; 34:1); and *al-'Azīz al-Ḥakīm* (2:129; 3:6, 18, 62, 126, 5:118; 14:4; 16:60; 27:9; 29:26, 42; 30:27; 31:9; 34:27; 35:2; 39:1; 40:8; 42:3; 45:2, 37; 46:2; 57:1; 59:1, 24; 60:5, 61:1; 62:1, 3; 64:18). Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī makes a distinction between its application to God and to human beings. God's *ḥikmah* means the knowledge of things and bringing them into existence in perfection and supreme excellence. Human *ḥikmah* means the knowledge of the existents and doing the good deeds.[35] In reference to *al-Ḥakīm* where it was first mentioned in sūrat al-Baqarah (2:32), al-Ṭabarī attributes to Ibn 'Abbās that "al-'Alīm is the one who is perfect in his knowledge (*'ilmihī*) and al-Ḥakīm is the one who is perfect in his judgment (*ḥukmihī*).[36]

Al-Ḥakīm is also one of the attributes of the Qur'ān. The Qur'ān is called *al-Kitāb al-Ḥakīm* (10:1; 31:2); *al-Dhikr al-Ḥakīm* (3:58); and *al-Qur'ān al-Ḥakīm* (36:2) in that it is perfected with or full of *ḥikmah*. When *ḥikmah* is used to refer to particular portion of the Qur'ān, it brings to mind the *muḥkam-mutashābih* contrast, since *muḥkam* could be a passive participle of *ḥikmah*. There is a long passage containing several precepts and the do's and don'ts which, at the end of the passage, the Qur'ān regards as part of *ḥikmah* (17:22-39). "These are among the (precepts of) *ḥikmah* (wisdom), which thy Lord has revealed to thee. Take not, with Allah, another object of worship, lest thou

shouldst be thrown into Hell, blameworthy and rejected" (17:39). Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210) lists 25 religious duties outlined in this passage which are well established (*muḥkamah*) and are instructed to be observed in all true religions. They are words of *ḥikmah* (wisdom) and thus are not susceptible to abrogation.[37] Al-Rāzī adds that a book that invites to such *ḥikmah*-based Sharī'ah will not invite to the Devil's religion or path (*dīn al-Shayṭān*); rather man's primordial nature would testify that such a book invites to the religion of the All-Gracious God (*dīn al-Raḥmān*).[38] It is instructive to note that the passage is introduced and concluded with the same phrase "Do not associate with Allah any other god" (*Lā tajʿal maʿa Allāh ilāhan ākhar*) (17:22, 39), suggesting the *ḥikmah* starts with God's name and ultimately leads to Him.

When *ḥikmah* is mentioned as a separate item revealed to or taught by Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), many commentators interpret it as the Prophetic Sunnah. Imam al-Shafiʿī (d. 204/820) is among the early Muslim scholars who persuasively considered *ḥikmah* as Prophetic Sunnah, particularly in places where it is mentioned alongside the Qur'ān.[39] For example, in reference to *āyah* 2:231, al-Ṭabarī explains that *ḥikmah* refers to the practices (*sunan*) that the Prophet taught and established for the believers;[40] and 2) that which is revealed to the Prophet regarding the religious matters (*aḥkām dīn Allāh*) which are not mentioned in the Qur'ān.[41]

Drawing on these multiple interpretations, Abū al-Barakāt al-Nasafī (d. 710/1310) concludes that *ḥikmah* is the knowledge of the Qur'ān and Sunnah or the beneficial knowledge accompanied with deed that leads one to God's pleasure. Thus, *al-ḥakīm* in the sight of Allah is a person who combined the good knowledge with the right actions (*al-ʿĀlim al-ʿĀmil*).[42] Hikmet Yaman concludes that the Qur'ānic sense of *ḥikmah*, particularly as mentioned in 2:269, is highly inclusive which cannot be simply defined with just one word. The meanings being offered are complementary to each other, yet he prefers to render it as "the rationale or underlying reason of Qur'ānic regulations in a general sense."[43]

This analysis makes it clear that *ḥikmah* occupies a higher level of knowledge, being the apex and sum total of knowledge guided by value. In our quest for Islamic science, the centrality of *ḥikmah* needs to be reiterated. Although *ʿilm* is given more treatment and is mentioned more often than *ḥikmah* in the Qur'ān, *ḥikmah* is not relegated to the back seat, contrary to Franz Rosenthal's conclusion.[44] It should be noted that while there are some sorts of *ʿilm* which could practically mislead (45:23; 28:78; 30:7),[45] or which the Qur'ān considers to be *fitnah* (trial) (39:49), no such vulnerability is associated with *ḥikmah*. On the contrary, it is improbable for a possessor of *ḥikmah* to violate the Qur'ānic values. The Qur'ān states, "It is not (possible) for any human being unto whom Allah had given the Book and wisdom [*al-ḥukma*] and the prophethood that he should afterwards have said unto mankind: "Be ye my worshippers rather than Allah's": on the contrary (He would say) "Be ye worshippers of Him Who is truly the Cherisher of all: For ye have taught the

Book and ye have studied it earnestly" (3:79)". In this contemporary time where variants *āyāt* of God in nature are being misused or abused generating misfortune and advancing weapons of mass destruction that threaten our collective sustainability, *ḥikmah*, which guides to and embodies good and useful knowledge, needs to be prioritized.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated the confluence between knowledge and value in Qur'ānic epistemology. It suggests that the Word of God and the Work of God as revealed in the Qur'ān and manifested in nature respectively are the rich and broad spectrum of knowledge enquiry. The knowledge of God's *āyāt* in nature and in the Qur'ān with their *muḥkam* and *mutashābihāt* stratifications should be pursued and applied with due *ḥikmah*. The knowledge recognized and promoted in the Qur'ān is one that recognizes truth as truth and falsehood as falsehood. Because the pursuit of knowledge has a divine mandate in Islamic epistemology, knowledge acquired and knowledge disseminated and indeed the very process of acquisition and dissemination are all intractably linked with the Islamic axiological frame of reference.

As humans, we are endowed with vast capacity to act virtuously as well as the capacities to dwell in vice. It is part of God's duo-path design ingrained in human nature which the Qur'ān calls *'al-najdayn'* (the dual path) (90:10) and which is explained elsewhere to be *taqwā* (path to righteousness) and *fujūr* (path to wrongness) (91:8). In scientific inquiry, it is possible to pursue a course leading to *taqwā* as well as that leading to *fujūr.* As implied in this study, *taqwā* can possibly be obtained when one draws on the *muḥkamāt* of nature's *āyāt* and is guided by *ḥikmah*–based value judgment in dealing with the *mutashābihāt*, in establishing the truth, and in generating beneficial knowledge. *Fujūr*, by contrast, could be a process of capitalising on the *mutashābihāt* or twisting the *muḥkamāt* for some objectionable end.

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