

CLASSIFICATION OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION: FROM AL-GHAZĀLĪ TO AL-FAṬĀNĪ

(Klasifikasi Ilmu dalam Peradaban Islam: Dari al-Ghazālī Sehingga al-Faṭānī)

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ABSTRACT

Intellectual discourse on classification of knowledge is a sub-topic in epistemology. In Islamic tradition, the philosophy of epistemology has its own uniqueness, besides being a distinguishing landmark in historical perspective between the Islamic and other civilizations. This study attempts to understand the concept of knowledge classification based on the perspectives of Abu Ḥāmid Muḥammad (hereafter mentioned as al-Ghazālī) (d. 1111CE) and Aḥmad bin Muḥammad Zayn (hereafter mentioned as al-Faṭānī) (d. 1908CE). In order to relate the purpose and objectives of knowledge to the Islamic Civilization, this study will identify the continuation of the idea on classification of knowledge in historical perspective. In addition, the comparison is to understand the connection between the classical knowledge classification in the Middle East to contemporary classification in the Malay World. Understanding al-Ghazālī's perspective based on primary and secondary resources

found that the general classification divided knowledge into two major categories, namely, *'ilm mu'āmalah* (knowledge/science of transactions/proper conduct) and *'ilm mukāshafah* (knowledge/science of unveiling). al-Faṭānī's concept of classification was understood through his work entitled *Fatāwā al-Faṭāniyyah* which discussed 107 fatwas. Early content analysis of al-Faṭānī's works showed that he indirectly followed the classification of knowledge conceived by al-Ghazali. This study is important to understand the role of knowledge as an essential foundation of the Islamic Civilization and its relevance to Islamization of contemporary knowledge.

Keywords: *'ilm*; classification of knowledge; Islamic Civilization; al-Ghazālī; al-Faṭānī; education

ABSTRAK

Wacana ilmiah berkenaan klasifikasi ilmu adalah sebuah sub-topik dalam bidang epistemologi. Dalam tradisi Islam, falsafah epistemologinya mempunyai keunikan tersendiri di samping menjadi mercu tanda bagi membezakan ketamadunan Islam dengan tamadun lain dalam perspektif sejarah. Kajian ini cuba untuk memahami konsep klasifikasi ilmu berdasarkan kepada perspektif Abu Hāmid Muḥammad (kemudian disebut sebagai al-Ghazālī) (m. 1111M) dan Aḥmad bin Muḥammad Zayn (kemudian disebut sebagai al-Faṭānī) (m. 1908M). Bagi mengaitkan tujuan serta matlamat ilmu di dalam Peradaban Islam, kajian ini akan mengenal pasti kelangsungan gagasan mengenai klasifikasi ilmu dalam perspektif sejarah. Selain itu, perbandingannya adalah bertujuan untuk memahami hubungan antara pemahaman klasik di Timur Tengah dengan kontemporari di Alam Melayu. Pemahaman terhadap perspektif al-Ghazālī berdasarkan sumber primer dan sekunder telah mendapati bahawa pengelasan umum bagi ilmu telah dibahagikan kepada dua klasifikasi utama iaitu ilmu mu'āmalah dan ilmu mukāshafah. Seterusnya, konsep klasifikasi ilmu menurut al-Faṭānī difahami melalui karyanya yang bertajuk Fatāwā al-Faṭāniyyah yang membahas tentang 107 buah fatwa. Berdasarkan analisis awal, al-Faṭānī telah mengikuti klasifikasi ilmu pengetahuan yang telah digagaskan oleh al-Ghazālī secara tidak langsung. Kajian ini penting untuk memahami peranan ilmu sebagai tunjang asas yang sangat penting dalam Peradaban Islam dan kaitannya dengan pengislaman ilmu kontemporari.

Kata Kunci: *'ilm*; klasifikasi ilmu; Peradaban Islam; al-Ghazālī; al-Faṭānī; pendidikan

INTRODUCTION

The glory of Islamic civilization is not solely restricted to its 'golden achievements in 1001 inventions', but extends to its achievement in awakening and enlightenment

of nations all over the globe. Behind all the great discoveries covering social, ethics, science and many more, it was fundamentally started by the unique Islamic worldview of knowledge itself. Its salient feature was a recognition of the urgency to acquire knowledge as enjoined by the first commandment of Allah to the Prophet Muḥammad PBUH through the first revelation in Mecca urging him to ‘Read, in the name of Allah’. In addition, there is a Hadith which obliges Muslim men and women to seek knowledge. Hamid (2015) explained that the root word of *dīn* became the established noble foundation of civilization (*tamaddun*). On the contrary, this aspect of *dīn* never took root in Western civilization due to its secular fate (Al-Attas 1993). But if civilization in Islam signifies an advancement to the people, how do we reconcile between an act of servitude or worship (‘*ibādah*) and mundane purpose? (Qadir 1988). According to Wan Mohd Nor (2019), historical evidence has proven that a strong race or ethnic group that is not supported by knowledge would easily be attracted to the values of and embrace their conqueror’s civilization. Thus, behind all these questions arising, it is only knowledge that can unveil to us the answers.

Osman (1992) revealed that al-Ghazālī in his *Jawāhir al-Qur’ān* stated that ‘the Verse of the Throne’ (*ayat al-Kursī*) in the Quran is a chief form of cognition which comes first (*sayyidah*). It is due to its content on knowledge of God, His Essence and Attributes that later became the ultimate aim of Quranic knowledge. It demonstrated to us the concept of hierarchy based on the different stages of understanding reality and this point is the main reason for the idea that knowledge classification originated in the Revelation too (Al-Ghazālī 1977). In this regard, this study will discuss and point out the linkage between the concept of knowledge classification in compliance with Islam and its emergence in the Islamic Civilization.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative approach to explain the connection of knowledge, particularly its classification, and how it is related to the Islamic Civilization. Thus, this study is a library research work. Primary and secondary sources were used to obtain data and the data was then analysed using content analysis method, inductive and deductive reasoning of text (*turāth*).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Definitions of Terms

Classification

In the Oxford English Dictionary, classification is the action or process of classifying things into a group or class. However, the study becomes difficult in this scope of

meaning due to the restrictions on metaphysical matters. In this regard, empiricists maintain that the source of all knowledge by sensory experience are not included in this classification.

Knowledge

Knowledge comes from the word 'ilm or 'ayn-lām-mīm. Muslim scholars agree that the term 'ilm itself cannot be defined in the most accurate definition (*ta'rif bi al-ḥadd*) due to its limitless attributes. However, 'ilm can be defined by describing its special attributes. The criteria of 'ilm illustrated to us shows the wide perspective of itself to be understandable. Basri (2009) described the definition of 'ilm according to *Lisān al-'Arāb* by Ibn Manẓūr. There are four definitions of 'ilm. Firstly, 'ilm refers to one of the attributes of Allah SWT (The Omniscient) as mentioned in al-Quran. Secondly, 'ilm is the antonym (opposite) meaning with word *jahl* which means ignorance, unintelligent, idiotic, dullness etc. Thirdly, 'ilm means 'arafa which is knowing. Fourthly, 'ilm is 'alam or 'alamat or 'ulmat which relates to signs or things that define an object.

The Encyclopaedia of Islam⁴ states a few relevant associations of 'ilm which are *ma'rīfah, fiqh, hikmah, shu'ūr* and the word *ma'rīfah* is the most frequently applied to 'ilm which carries the meaning of knowledge. In the perspective of *uṣūl al-fiqh* as written in *Matan al-Waraqāt* by Al-Juwaynī, he explained that *fiqh* is more particular than 'ilm (Furber 2014). According to Baalbaki (1995), 'ilm can be defined by a few meanings such as knowledge and science.

In the Oxford English Dictionary, knowledge means information, understanding and skills acquired through education or experience, while the modern West defines knowledge as denoting acquaintance with, or clear perception of facts (Wan Mohd Nor 2019). From here, we can see how the meaning was restricted to the physical facet that can be captured by the senses, thus anything that is beyond sensory experience might be rejected and eventually thrown away, with religion as a prime concern.

In Ancient Greece, knowledge was earlier defined as philosophy. To define knowledge, it was basically referring to investigating something or gaining wisdom. Thus, this definition was symmetrically balanced with the original Greek words which are *philos* for love and *logos* for wisdom (Awang Sariyan 2016). However, Russell (1993) tried to elevate the meaning of philosophy between theological and science. In addition, Rosenthal (1992) in his famous treatise 'Knowledge Triumphant' tried to relate the Greek word *epistēmē* to the English meaning 'to stand', then later became 'to understand'. He had collected definitions of knowledge from hundreds of Muslim scholars and classified it into twelve categories. Historically, the original meaning of 'knowing' in the word 'ilm was an added value that came later after restrictedly

signifying the sign and object. Finally, he concluded that ‘knowledge is Islam’. In other words, knowledge in the Islamic perspective is more comprehensive, thus covering the unseen aspect which is not covered by the Greek term ‘philosophy’. According to Al-Attas (1993), there are two kinds of knowledge, namely, *ma‘rīfah* and *ma‘lūmah*. Mohd Zaidi (2009) exemplified these two kinds of knowledge as between the *arrival in the soul of the meaning of the thing* and the *arrival of the soul at the meaning of a thing*.

While science according to the tradition in Islamic history means “*the named awareness of an organized body of knowledge, which arises as a result of the process in determining a subject matter, investigated by a certain method yielding theories, is science*” (Açikgenç 2014:10). From this definition, there are four items which are vital to uphold the meaning of science. As we see from both definitions of knowledge and science in Islamic perspective, there is not much difference in the semantic views if we look from the Islamic epistemological framework. Further, Abdus Salam (1983) mentioned that there is no terminology in Arabic for science except ‘ilm which also refers to knowledge. However, as the differentiation of these meanings is not solvable due to their semanticity and how people give their own views towards it, we can then say that though the methodological approach might be different, the objective is the same. In this regard, this paper will use the term of knowledge in the Islamic perspective for the whole discussion.

Islamic Civilization

In the Oxford English Dictionary, civilization means the state of human society and cultural development and organization that is considered most advanced. In Islam, civilization can be derived from a few meanings such as *ḥaḍārāh*, *thaqāfah*, *‘umrān* and others. Etymologically, the number of these differences caused controversy as each term implied its own meaning. For example, some terms might be biased toward or against rational-empirical knowledge, while others for or against religious-central-orthodox, or combination of religious and knowledge. However, the most substantial in Islamic character signifying the meaning of Islamic civilization would be the term *tamaddun* (Hamid 2015).

According to Hamid (2015), if we look through the historical perspective, Islamic Civilization is a combination of worship to Allah and sociological living of society driven by *sharī‘ah* (Islamic law). The integration of *īmān*, ‘ilm and ‘amal which is not limited to discovering knowledge in a wider perspective but also produces a high level of faith and value of ‘amal that benefit human beings makes it strictly different from other civilizations. Osman (2014) specified a few terms on knowledge derived from the Islamic Civilization whether to be called the ‘knowledge culture’, ‘culture of

knowledge' or 'scientific culture' – so long as the core or gist is comprised of the word 'ilm (knowledge). Through this prevalent view of knowledge, the essential worldview constituted denotes civilization.

History on Classification of Knowledge across Civilizations

Early Phase [800BC – 300CE]

Aristotle (d. 322BC) was the first ancient Greek scholar (post-Socrates) to promote the idea of classification of knowledge which later contributed to Western civilization. In the earlier phase, Greece was more fascinated in mythology compared to knowledge. Mythology to the Greek scholars was a study of cosmology and something that relates to the origins of humans and surroundings which was explained in an intellectual and ethical way by Homer (around 800BC) (Russell 1993). At this time when Homer's thought deeply influenced the society, the Greeks did not reject knowledge at all but it was just that their view of mythology was almost exactly similar for knowledge. Meanwhile there were small assemblies of people, later named as philosophers, who split the mythical ideas into rational (*logos*) or philosophy (*philo sophia*). Here rationalism started to dominate the Greek society and mythology was gradually left out. According to Aristotle, it was only knowledge that could bring a human into the highest intellect which he called *epistêmê*. *Epistêmê* can also be defined as 'true knowledge' that can answer all the questions raised and finally explain the 'causality' (*cognitio per causas*) or why something happened in a larger scope of meanings (Abdul Rahman 2002).

Classification of knowledge by Aristotle was considered very early as he had divided knowledge into tools and purpose. Compared to Plato (428BC, his teacher) who was more to Mathematics, Aristotle was more toward biological research (Russell 1993). In his quest to establish biology as a discipline of knowledge, Aristotle listed a taxonomy by classifying a few kinds of animals according to their different features. Aristotle used the approach of exact definition to stress 'the reality of something' whether in the aspect of genus and species. In this attempt, the reality can be achieved by knowing the differences according to the classification and cataloguing into each group with accuracy.

Developmental Phase [400 – 1600CE]

According to Abdul Rahman (2002), the concept of knowledge classification was dividing knowledge into two major categories to attain mastery of words and numbers, in addition to differentiation between lower and higher utility of shaping the psyche. Both represent the historical evolution of Western classical education.

1. Trivium [Arts of the Word] (Grammar, Logic, Rhetoric)
2. Quadrivium [Arts of Number] (Arithmetic, Geometric, Music, Astronomy)

Modern Phase [1700CE – Current]

In the beginning of the modern phase, ideas on classification of knowledge centred on empiricism. Driven by the empiricism doctrine, the important aspect of the source of knowledge was restricted to physical or sensory experience. Later, no argumentation beyond this was accepted (Al-Attas 2007). The effect was very clear on the biological research discipline of taxonomy on plants and animals by Aristotle as discussed above. However, later came Carolus Linnaeus (1707-1778CE) a Christian-Orthodox Aristotelian opposed by Buffon (1707-1788CE), a follower of Platonism and neo-Platonism that put human beings into the highest hierarchy. This was the revival point for the struggle of the evolution theory. The battle resulted in dichotomy in the 19th century from which emerged the science stream and the arts stream (Abdul Rahman 2002). In 1928, Harvard University made the classification of knowledge into three categories, namely, natural science, social science and human science. In general, each stream of knowledge would result in specialization that can stand alone unhindered by others. Oppenheim mentioned that today's education has resulted and generated "those who know more and more about less and less" (Abdul Rahman 2002).

Throughout the times from ancient Greece evolving later to Western civilization, fused by different historical aspects and cultures, the Western view of knowledge has become problematic and lost its true purpose. They have elevated doubt and scepticism, agnosticism, up to the level of scientific methodology and finally brought chaos to all realms of human knowledge (Qadir 1988; Al-Attas 2007). The Western view has also failed to understand the concept of knowledge wisely such that the ultimate question that can truly be answered by Revelation was placed and categorized wrongly into the lowest hierarchy of knowledge (Abdul Rahman 2002). According to Mutahhari (2012), the West followed the rationalism of Descartes' theory believing that knowledge has only a single stage (Rational stage).

Classification of Knowledge: An Islamic Perspective

In the Islamic Civilization, the idea of knowledge classification was well received by Muslim scholars as they believed that knowledge has multiple stages (Mutahhari 2012). According to Osman (2014), the Muslim classification of knowledge of any period has revealed a great deal of the knowledge culture by covering many aspects as well as showing us its characteristics and achievements. However, there were queries on how classification of knowledge can be exemplified in a single framework? (Heck 2002).

Thus, there lies the importance of the Islamic worldview to build the epistemological framework for scholars who exposed their area of study to the concept of unity form of knowledge and its degrees. By general classification, knowledge can be divided into revealed knowledge and acquired knowledge (Açikgenç 2014). Hamid (2010) explained that acquired knowledge is not limited to intellectual knowledge but extends to religious knowledge or any knowledge that can be learned. Further, revealed knowledge or religious knowledge is arrived at the soul by faith, not specifically by studying Quran and Sunnah literally, but in fact needs revelation and reasoning too.

Early Muslim scholars had classified knowledge according to ‘model of Aristotle’ and identified what was lacking. This endeavour was seriously started by al-Kindī (d. 837CE). Then, al-Fārābī continued the method in more detail and later added the Islamic discipline of knowledge. While the classification of knowledge according to Ibn Sīnā (d. 1037CE), al-Ghazālī (d. 1111CE) and Ibn Rushd (d. 1198CE) were really influenced by al-Fārābī (d. 950CE), the same also happened to a group named Ikhwān al-Ṣafā (the Brethren of Purity) (4th H). Ibnu Khaldūn came in a later period to analyze and finalize the idea of classification of knowledge in his time (Al-Attas 2018). According to Osman (1992), successive generations of Muslim scholars had utilised their intellectual talent on this theme as can be seen through the works of al-Kindī to al-Dihlawī (18th CE).

Al-Ghazālī’s Classification of Knowledge

Al-Ghazālī was one of the prolific Muslim scholars in history who was granted the title *Hujjat al-Islām* (the Proof of Islam). He mastered many disciplines such as jurisprudence (*fiqh wa uṣūlihi*), *kalām*, *taṣawwuf*, philosophy and others, thus became greatly influential in Islamic heritage. He developed classification of knowledge based on his ability in vast Islamic traditions, especially on Quran and Sunnah, and critical research from previous scholars such as al-Muḥāsibī (d. 242H/857CE), al-Junayd (d. 297H/910CE), Abu Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 386H/996CE), Abū Bakar al-Bāqillānī (d. 402H/1013CE), ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Qushayrī (d. 465H/1072CE) and al-Rāghib al-İsfahānī (d. 502H/1108CE) (Wan Mohd Azam 2011; Mohd Fakhruddin 2005).

The main discussion on classification of knowledge by al-Ghazālī can be found in some of his works such as: *Ihyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, Book 1 (*Kitāb al-‘Ilm*) [490H/1097CE]; *Jawāhir al-Qur’ān* [495H/1101-2]; *Mizān al-‘Amal*, Chapter 9 & 27 [488H/1095CE]; *al-Mustaṣfā min ‘Ilm al-Uṣūl* [503H/1109CE]; and *al-Risālah al-Laduniyyah* (Treiger 2011, 2012; Che Zarrina 1999). While his project on integration (classification) showed the relevance of positioning one knowledge inherent in another, not by bringing two classes of knowledge or more into the same basket (Hamid 2010:160). To this extent, the ability of al-Ghazālī on the theme of classification of knowledge should

be unquestionable. It was al-Ghazālī, the Shāfi'ī scholar who continued the spirit and quest for the truth in which he was highly influenced by al-Shāfi'ī on classification of knowledge. Around two hundred years before, there were not much works by al-Shāfi'ī in epistemology compared to jurisprudential research, but at least, al-Shāfi'ī left his works as legacy and made his contribution on knowledge classification into 'ilm al-'āmm (common sciences/knowledge) and 'ilm al-khāṣ (specialised sciences/knowledge) (Wan Mohd Azam 2011; Nazzwardi 2000).

In his effort to establish disciplines of knowledge, al-Ghazālī had to counter the Greek worldview and their philosophy that had affected a few Muslim scholars right after their exposure during study, researching and translating Aristotle, Plato and other works. According to Nasution (1999:11-13), financial support by the ruler since Umayyad rule had opened the gateway to intellectual works by outsiders entering the Islamic corpus such as from ancient Greece (pre-Socrates and post-Aristotle), Persia and India. During the era of al-Ghazālī, the wide-ranging area of knowledge expanded consistently. However, numerous influences from other civilizations were also absorbed into Islamic culture thus causing some negative impact to Muslim scholars.

The Greek philosophers were very well known for their persistence in the quest for the truth. Although restricted in sources of knowledge, they gained great achievements on attaining knowledge through the Aristotelian syllogism - even though some might be contradictory by Islamic standards. On certain issues, Wan Mohd Nor (2019) mentioned that the Greeks were made inadequate to overcome their own conflict on this source of knowledge – whether to prioritize the reasoning aspect or their tradition (belief aspect). Al-Ghazālī rose up to defend the principle of Islam by studying and writing *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah*, *al-Munqidh min al-Dalāl*, *al-Qiṣṣat al-Mustaqīm*, *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, and other works. In other words, al-Ghazālī implemented Islamization of knowledge to counter the Greek philosophy and methodology that affected Islamic values of the Muslim perspective (Wan Mohd Azam 2011).

When he wrote his *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*, he had studied extensively and was thus able to rule judgement on the affected Muslim philosophers accordingly. Among the twenty particular problems of the philosophers, 17 were categorized as heresy (*bid'ah*) while the three others were judged as unbelieving (*kufir*). The three problems that led to disbelief were (1) eternity of the world (*qidam al-'ālam*), (2) the denial of God's knowledge of the particulars (*juz'iyat*), and (3) resurrection of the body (*al-ma'ād al-jismānī*). al-Ghazālī attacked the philosophers that relegated Revealed Law (*shara'*) to the intellect. For al-Ghazālī the *shara'* must stand side by side with the intellect because it is like the relation of a foundation and building (*al-asās wa al-binā'*) that cannot be separated (Mohd Fakhrudin 2005). However, after the total demolition of Madrasah Ibn Sīnā (*mashshā'ī*/peripatetic school) caused by his attack (criticism) in

his *Tahāfut*, al-Ghazālī was accused as one of the scholars who caused deterioration in physical development which before that was inspired by philosophical doctrine in the East. In this matter, the actual reason was due to misunderstanding of al-Ghazālī's contribution to the revival of *'ulūm al-dīn* (Qadir 1988).

Osman (1992) in his 'Classification of Knowledge in Islam: A Study in Islamic Philosophies and Science' mentioned that al-Ghazālī applied a few systems of classification in an epistemological framework based on his research in *Kitāb al-'Ilm* from *Ihyā'* and *Risālah al-Laduniyyah*. There are four systems according to al-Ghazālī:

1. Classification into theoretical ('ilm naẓari) and practical ('ilm 'amali) knowledge.
2. Classification into presential ('ilm al-ḥuḍūrī, 'ilm al-mukāshafah, 'ilm al-laduniyyah) and acquired ('ilm al-ḥuṣūlī) knowledge.
3. Classification into religious (*shar'iyah*) and intellectual ('aqliyyah, ghayr shar'ī) knowledge.
4. Classification into individual obligations (*farḍ 'ayn*) and collective obligations (*farḍ kifāyah*) knowledge.

In his intellectual discourse, al-Ghazālī was more inclined to discuss 'ilm al-mu'āmalah compared to 'ilm al-mukāshafah or 'ilm al-ḥuḍūrī due to the limitations of human ability and capacity to achieve an acknowledgeable understanding of the latter. Al-Ghazālī also stated that this knowledge was a kind of *al-malakah fawq al-'aql*. In this regard, al-Ghazālī's major discourse was oriented to knowledge that humans have the capability to acquire such as 'ilm al-ḥuṣūlī, that depends much on 'aql or intellectual or cognitive skills. It was parallel to his quotes, *ma'rifat al-shay' 'ala mā huwa bih*, which is knowing something as it is (Wan Mohd Azam 2011).

According to Hamid (2015), al-Quran does not only prescribe theological doctrine and religious rituals, but also projects a seminal concept (epistemological framework) that encourages the worldview among individual Muslims to apply a good attitude in life and eventually grow into community scale (*Madīnah*: the city) and build a civilization based on the concept of *dīn* (Islam).

Thus in *Jawāhir al-Qur'ān*, al-Ghazālī shows his contribution to Islamic Civilization by classifying the knowledge in the Quran into two parts which are the shell (outward/external) (*al-qushrah*, *al-kiswah*, *al-ṣadf*) and the pith (inward/internal). The outward part discusses Arabic language (*al-lughah al-'arabiyyah*) that divides into: (a) *tafsīr* relating to Arabic syntax (*i'rab*), (b) *qirā'at* (knowledge of reading), (c) *alfāz* (knowledge of spelling the correct words or *makhraj* or *lafāz*). Meanwhile the inward and unseen part which is the essence is divided into two levels which is lower rank (*tabaqāt al-suflā*) that covers the knowledge of the Prophet, doctrine and polemics (*kalām*) and jurisprudence (*shara'*). Secondly is the upper rank ('ilm al-ṣawāb). It

describes the purification of the soul by guiding onto the straight path (*al-‘ilm bi al-sirāt al-mustaqīm*) which starts with removal of destructive qualities or obstacles (*muhlikāt*) and replacing and equipping the soul with the saving qualities (*munjiyāt*). According to al-Ghazālī, this type of knowledge will uplift the seekers (*sālik*) into the noblest rank which is knowing Allah (*ma‘rifah*) (al-Ghazālī 1977; Treiger 2011; Wan Mohd Azam 2011). Then, al-Ghazālī classified knowledge in the Quran into ‘ulūm shar‘ī and *ghayr shar‘ī*. According to him, *kalām* and *fiqh* are a lower category of internal knowledge in the Quran. The end of studying this knowledge will result in a fruitful and high achievement that is *ma‘rifah*.

In matters of religious practicality or ‘amal or ‘ilm al-mu‘āmalah, it may consist of three items; beliefs (*i‘tiqād*), acts (‘amal) and prohibitions (*tark*). Someone who has achieved maturity (‘aql balīgh) needs to understand in general (*ijmālī*) the two-part declaration of faith (*shahadatayn*) and its meaning (*ma‘nā*) that becomes the first requirement to meet the *fard‘ ayn*. Then, someone who witnessed his īmān must gain his knowledge that relates to daily prayer which is five times a day together with any requirements relating to prayer such as *wudhū‘*, time for prayer, *kaifiyat* (procedure), requirements for valid prayer and its invalidation. Meanwhile, the scope of *tark* as discussed by al-Ghazālī is not limited to wrongdoing (*ma‘ṣiyat*) itself such as stealing, or other sinful acts. It is when someone has done his ‘amal, simultaneously, he has left the prohibition of neglecting/abandoning the prayer (Wan Suhaimi 2019). In other words, the knowledge on *fard‘ ayn* is parallel to the concept of ‘ilm al-‘āmmah as proposed by al-Shāfi‘ī. It is just that al-Ghazālī emphasized that the *fard‘ ayn* will preserve the Muslim from ambiguity on faith (*ẓann, shak, wahm*), deception by the devils, and other additional issues on ‘ilm al-‘āmmah not discussed in detail by al-Shāfi‘ī. Here, al-Ghazālī collected/compiled knowledge based on the concept of ‘ilm al-khaṣṣah by al-Shāfi‘ī and shortened the phrase *fard‘ fihi qaṣd al-kifāyah* into *fard‘ kifāyah* (Wan Mohd Azam 2011).

On discussing *fard‘ kifāyah*, al-Ghazālī divided it into two sub-categories which are *shar‘ī* (knowledge produced based on reasoning by someone towards Revelation) and *ghayr shar‘ī* (knowledge produced based on reasoning). Knowledge of *shar‘ī* has one part which is praiseworthy (*maḥmūdah*) only. The praiseworthy comprises of four kinds, namely, sources (*uṣūl*), branches (*furū‘*), auxiliary (*muqaddimāt*), and supplementary (*mutammimāt*). Firstly, kind of sources (*uṣūl*), are the four *khābar ṣādiq*, namely, the Book of Allah (al-Quran), the Tradition of His Prophet (al-Sunnah), *ijmā‘* (consensus or agreement of all Muslims), and *āthār* (*turāth*/tradition) relating to the Companions of the Prophet. Secondly, the branches (*furū‘*), are what have been drawn from the sources, but not meant according to literal meaning. Thirdly are the prerequisites (*muqaddimāt*) that act as the instrument for ‘ilm shar‘ī. For example, are the Arabic language and syntax necessary instruments to engage and understand the primary

sources which are the Quran and Sunnah? Fourthly, the supplementary (*mutammimāt*) which enhance deeper understanding of the sources (*uṣūl*). These include *tafsīr* (Quranic Exegesis), *sīrah* (biography of the Prophet and the Companions) and *fiqh* (expressing the laws of the Quran as well as its manifest meaning) (Al-Ghazālī 2013). However, it is also *fiqh* that was categorized by al-Ghazālī into worldly-knowledge (‘ulūm al-dunyā) from the branch of ‘ilm shar‘ī relating to administrative and human activities purposes. The ‘ilm shar‘ī has no blameworthiness because it is not on the knowledge itself but on the performer/perpetrator (Wan Suhaimi 2019).

According to al-Ghazālī, the *ghayr shar‘ī* knowledge is divided into three categories: praiseworthy (*maḥmūd*), blameworthy (*madhmūm*), and permissible (*mubāḥ*). For example, are language, syntax, and medical (*ṭibb*) praiseworthy? In the permissible category, al-Ghazālī explained philosophy as acceptable to be studied. There are four subjects on philosophy, namely, geometry and arithmetic (*al-handasah wa al-ḥisāb*), logic (*manṭiq*), metaphysics (*ilāhiyyat*), and natural sciences (*ṭabi‘iyyat*). In fact, the level of this knowledge as a permissible can lower down into blameworthy if there is a deviation in the intention of the performer (Wan Suhaimi 2019).

In explaining the last group in classification of knowledge, that is, ‘ulūm al-dīn, any knowledge that can give an understanding on Islam covering faith (īmān), jurisprudence (*ḥukm*) and ethics (*akhlāq*) will be considered as a religious knowledge. For example; the acceptance of logic as one of the components to theology (as a *farḍ kifāyah*) functioning to shield the ‘aqīdah and answer the doubtfulness and any error by problematic philosophers. The attribute of knowledge that is praiseworthy can be converted into blameworthy due to the wrong intention (*niat*). For example, ‘ilm shar‘ī such as *kalām* and *fiqh* that were naturally produced in the Islamic Civilization are praiseworthy and also the *ghayr shar‘ī* such as astronomy, geometry can fall into blameworthy due to the state of intention. In order to guide the Muslim onto the right path, al-Ghazālī elevated Islamization by adding *farḍ ‘ayn* and *farḍ kifāyah* into a larger group of classification, which is ‘ilm mu‘āmalah.

al-Ghazālī’s idea on this matter can be seen in the Islamization of logic. Logic, introduced by Greek scholars, was inappropriate with Islamic methodology. For example the syllogistic reasoning by Aristotle that categorized the major premise (universal), minor premise and conclusion. The formula is to synthesize new knowledge. However, the analogy that has been used will result in an error because it depends too much on the major premise. It means that if the major premise was created not by a meticulous research basis or by sceptical action, the probability of resulting in error is too high and will not generate any new beneficial knowledge. In other words, it will just mention or rephrase the major premise in the earlier statement. This method has much influenced any discipline of knowledge nowadays such as philosophy, applied science and theology.

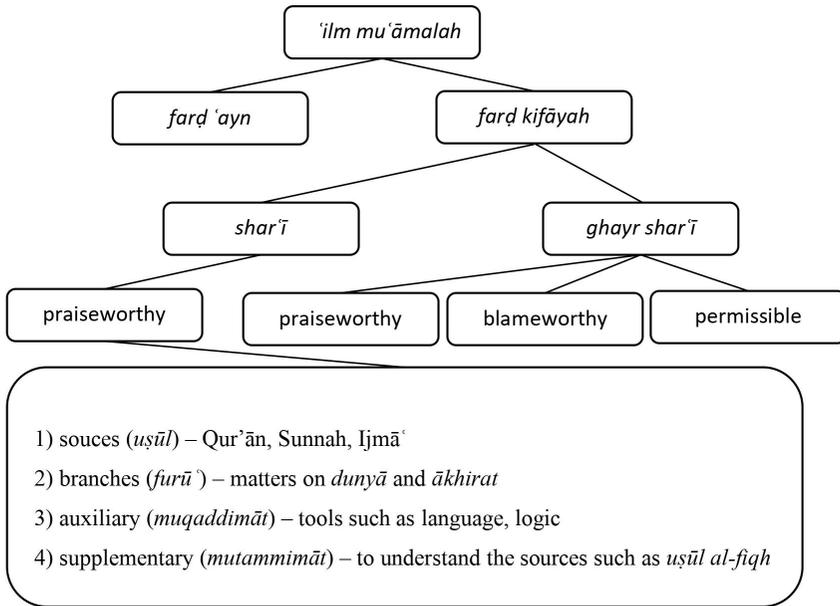


DIAGRAM 1 Classification of 'ilm mu'āmalah according to al-Ghazālī

al-Ghazālī proposed a reform of logic as a methodology until it became acceptable among Muslim scholars and resulted in shielding purpose, especially 'aqīdah *Islāmīyyah*. By purifying from the elements against Islamic methodology, logic was categorized as *ghayr shar'ī* and at the same time was one of the knowledge in the branch of *farḍ kifāyah*. Gilani & Tazul Islam (2018) pointed out that al-Ghazālī's approach on this integration as a teaching purpose was to develop the competency of learners.

According to Nugraha (2017), the existence of the categorical values of knowledge as stated above is due to the result or outcome of the knowledge itself. al-Ghazālī evaluated the knowledge based on two aspects which are (1) praiseworthy result/outcome and (2) believing the evidence (*dalīl*). The first aspect is more important because it can produce more benefits (*fawā'id*) and simultaneously signify the importance of religious knowledge compared to others in achieving remembrance of Allah.

Al-Faṭānī's Classification of Knowledge

In this study, we had reviewed other works and identified the main themes: Al-Ghazālī as the scholar who classified knowledge and to what extent scholars of the Malay World became successful in this great achievement. On highlighting the period of 20th

century, we found that al-Faṭānī had the potential to be analysed. Even though he did not write directly on epistemology, several discussions of knowledge can be seen in his *Fatāwā al-Faṭānīyah* (hereafter mentioned as FF) which covers *uṣūluddīn*, *fiqh*, *tawḥīd*, *taṣawuf*, Arabic and Malay semantics, history of Islam, politics, science, al-Quran and Hadith (Perayot 1992). Açıkgenç in Hamid (2015) also mentioned that, ‘every human activity is traceable to its worldview, and as such it is reducible to that worldview.’

al-Faṭānī was one of the Malay scholars surrounded by epistemological ambience (Wan Mohd Shaghir 2005). His intellectual milieu had navigated him into an academic career which was in writing Islamic textbooks and later in proofreading (*taṣḥīḥ*) of important books covering Arabic and Malay texts. His engagement in this field had earned him the title ‘a savant merit’ (Hurgronje 1970). Bradley (2014) described al-Faṭānī as the second important family to give an effective impact on knowledge broadcasting within the Patani communities. If we look at his genealogical identity, al-Faṭānī was a direct descendent of Muslim scholars, each of whom might have been actively involved in Islamic sciences in their time. According to Wan Mohd Shaghir, of all the great Malay scholars who carried the cognomen (*laqab*) ‘al-Faṭānī’ and had undergone extensive study and learning journey throughout their lifetime, al-Faṭānī was the only one who was recognized as having mastered 47 types of knowledge. Based on a previous study that discussed a very limited explanation of classification of knowledge in the perspective of Al-Faṭānī, this study is made significant by its later outcome.

Discussion on knowledge (‘ilm) in the fatwa is not limited to the terminology itself. Even the Quran (around 78,000 words) that is the source of knowledge only mentions 750-800 times the term ‘ilm (by root word ‘*ayn-lam-mim*) and several repetitions of the term *fiqh* which denotes knowledge (Al-Attas 1993; Rosenthal 1992). From overall examination of 107 fatwas, al-Faṭānī did not use any word directly phrasing the term ‘ilm. In this regard, it is through al-Faṭānī’s study of methodological claims to answer questions by a person who asked for a fatwa (*mustafti*) which enabled us to establish his epistemological perspective, especially by looking at the linguistic applications such as ‘know’, ‘*yaqīn*’, ‘firm’, ‘certain’, ‘not sure’, etc., (Mohd Zaidi 2009).

Firstly, we would like to highlight the framework of Muslim scholars as stated by Al-Attas (2014): “*The representatives of Islamic thought - theologians, philosophers, metaphysicians - have all and individually applied various methods in their investigations without preponderating on any one particular method. They combined in their investigations, and at the same time in their persons, the empirical and the rational, the deductive and the inductive methods and affirmed no dichotomy between*

the subjective and the objective, so that they all affected what I would call the ‘tawḥīd’ method of knowledge.”

A general view of 107 fatwas by FF can be divided into three large groups consisting of ‘aḳīdah (9 fatwas), *fiqh* (97 fatwas) and *taṣawwuf* (1 fatwa). The majority collection which was in *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) covered four aspects which were ‘ibādah, mu‘āmalah, munākahat and *jināyat*. According to Perayot (1992) the style of al-Faṭānī’s delivering his advisory opinion (*fatwa*) followed the classical Arabic methods. Muhammad Adib and Mohamad Zaini (2011) revealed that al-Faṭānī’s methodology was following the standards of principles of jurisprudence system (*uṣūl al-fiqh*).

In this paper, the discussion on classification of knowledge will be focused on the theme of ‘aḳīdah through one selected fatwa. In fatwa number 3, al-Faṭānī was asked on ‘aḳīdah with the following question:

“Question: ...when someone asks, Allah is an Essence (*dhāt*) or Attribute (*ṣifat*)? And then, the person that has been asked answered the question as, ‘I do not know’...” (Al-Faṭānī 1957)

Then, al-Faṭānī answered with the following fatwa:

“Answer: ...the *īmān* is established (*thābit*) in the absence of denial [when firmly believed and bound in the mind] that Allah is *mawjūd, qīdam, baqā’*, and so on”. Al-Faṭānī continued, “...the person is not justified as disbeliever (*kufur*) and the word is not unlawful (*ḥarām*) because he had told the real statement about himself, that is, do not know...”. Then, al-Faṭānī concluded, “...all the questions raised is a kind of heresy (*bid‘ah*) that is prohibited to anyone that has a knowledge but intentionally raised for this kind of question. In fact, it will drag the answerer to lose his manners (*adab*) to Allah and sometimes might drift him to disbelief (*kufur*)...” (Al-Faṭānī 1957).

As we mentioned above about al-Faṭānī’s epistemological ambience in his life, we have seen that the style of his answer was in a form of epistemological framework. The classification started when al-Faṭānī tried to divide the ‘someone’ into two kinds of person, that is, knowing the reality and unknowing of the reality. Firstly, al-Faṭānī stated the highest degree of knowing that is “*īmān* is permanent when he believes that Allah is *mawjūd, ...*” which means that the person who readily understands and firmly believes its meaning either in the scope of reality whether in general (*ijmāl*) structure or detailed (*tafṣīl*) – is considered as the highest knowledge that he has. In other words, the importance of understanding this knowledge is a kind of individual obligation (*fard ‘ayn*) when every Muslim who declares his faith must know at least the necessary knowledge (‘ilm) on belief (‘aḳā’id). A Muslim must also determine

his position in believing Allah as truly as it is according to the guideline by Muslim scholars (‘ulamā’).

Then, al-Faṭānī divided ‘someone (refer text)’ with another two kinds of classes that is knowing but acting as if he does not know and not knowing at all “...*had told the real statement about himself that is do not know...*”. Generally, al-Faṭānī was following al-Ghazālī when he categorized the classification into *shar’ī* knowledge. From here, al-Faṭānī did not use any statement such as blameworthiness towards knowledge itself, instead of blaming the person. Al-Faṭānī urged anyone who tried to popularize this ‘wrong question’ that was targeted to that person “...*prohibited to anyone that has a knowledge but intentionally raised this kind of question...*”.

On the other hand, the answer as responded by al-Faṭānī here is also showing us a classification between knowledge and belief (*i’itiqād*). The researcher’s observations are on the bottom line:

“... has knowledge but intentionally raised this kind of question. In fact, it will drag the answerer to lose his manners (*adab*) to Allah ...” (Al-Faṭānī 1957)

In understanding the type of knowledge that is *muḥdath*, knowledge called as necessary (*darūrī*) knowledge or spontaneous cognition and understanding. The researcher understands that the ‘intentional’ referred to by al-Faṭānī here does not refer to action, but he does want to interpret the *darūrī* type of knowledge which only seeks light propositions - which is sufficient with a spontaneous movement of soul or understanding. This is because, every knowledge is based on evidence (*dalīl*) or truth by itself while belief (*i’itiqād*) can be demonstrated either to attach to the ‘true belief’ or ‘false belief’ (Bilfaṭḥ 2017). For this reason, al-Faṭānī asserted that the action from the questioner could draw the answerer to the false belief (*i’itiqād*) as his expression states ‘drag’ - or causing the answerer to hold on to either ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ without option. On the other hand, knowledge cannot be at the ‘fault’ stage because knowledge is something that is true and confident only. If the questioner has asked a true statement in asking the question, the result of that question should not mislead the answerer to stick to a false conclusion – which is a wrong belief (*i’itiqād*).

al-Faṭānī’s classification of the stages of knowing:

1. A person who knows (highest)
2. A person who does not know (middle)
3. A person who knows but ignores or neglects the importance of knowing (lowest)

However, the stages for (2) and (3) group in the above classification by al-Faṭānī did not discuss in detail about the existence of the Sophists (*ṣufasṭa’iyyah*) who were divided into three groups, namely, subjectivist (‘*indiyah*’), obstinate (‘*inādiyah*’) and

agnostic (*lā adriyyah*). While explaining a knowledge based on *kalām* perspective, al-Faṭānī stated that:

“...that Allah Almighty is Essence (*dhāt*), not attributes (*ṣifat*)...” (Al-Faṭānī 1957)

In the actual field of knowledge, the relationship is further discussed in the field of Islamic logic. While the answer by al-Faṭānī can be understood by the following diagram on classifying the relationship between the Essence and Attributes as absolute general and peculiar (*‘umūm wa khuṣūṣ mutḷaq*) signifying that ‘all B is A and not all A is B’:

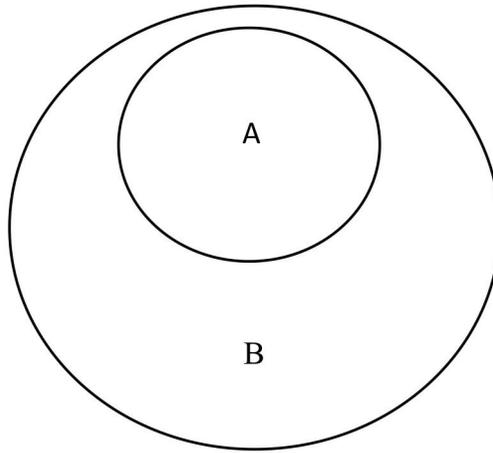


DIAGRAM 2 Understanding the relationship of absolute general and peculiar (*‘umūm wa khuṣūṣ mutḷaq*) between essence (A) and attributes (B)

By this relationship, al-Faṭānī explained that the Attributes (*ṣifat*) were not additional (*zā'id*) to His Essence (*Dhāt*) – but subsistent by Himself (Essence) (*qā'im bi dhātihi*). If not, the Attributes (*ṣifat*) will be understood as ‘something new’ to the Essence (*Dhāt*) and this might be contradictory (*tanāquḍ*) to the whole understanding of one of the God’s Attributes which is the Eternal (*qidam*) – which later results in impossibility of the ratio-intellect (*mustahīl ‘aqlī*). Besides that, The Necessarily Existent Being (*wājib al-wujūd*) is totally different from the possible being (*makhlūq* or *al-a'yān al-mumkināt*) where it was created by God as a quiddity (*dhāt*) to exist in this external reality or world (*fī al-khārij*) – this type of possible being has its starting point; originated from non-existence (*ma'dum*) into existence (*wujūd*). This existence also could be divided into two categories that is in need of each other, the substantial (*jawhariyyah*) and the accidents or additional attributes (*‘araḍiyyah*) (Al-Attas 2014). This strong ontological framework by al-Faṭānī can be concluded here as following the

Ashā‘irah traditions. In another aspect, al-Faṭānī summarized his classification with the concept of ‘loss of *adab*’ through this statement “...*in fact, it will drag the answerer to lose his manners (adab) to Allah and sometimes might drift him to disbelief (kufur)...*” (al-Faṭānī 1957). According to al-Attas, the loss of *adab* is the second stage after the confusion of knowledge which later results in the rise of false leaders. Here, al-Faṭānī also highlighted the importance of *adab* to knowledge before someone can have an *adab* to Allah. Once again, al-Faṭānī realized that the confusion (error) of knowledge will result in a lot of chaos in *adab* and the Muslim community will be flooded with numbers of false leaders (scholars). In other words, al-Faṭānī stated the importance of education that results in a civilization (knowledge-based) by individuals who later grow naturally in a group or community.

In discussing knowledge on creed and jurisprudence, al-Faṭānī referred to the individual in question, “...*sometimes might drift him to kufur...*”. Thus, it can be understood here that al-Faṭānī used the word from the science of *fiqh* which is the term ‘*kufur*.’ This matter was emphasized by al-Faṭānī to represent the knowledge of jurisprudence due to several factors. For example, the fall of one’s disbelief will affect the practical matters of the Muslim individual such as the question of marriage between husband and wife (*munākahat*), inheritance property and their children (*mawāriṭh*) and so on. This matter requires extensive and detailed debate and investigation in the field of jurisprudence and for that reason, al-Faṭānī used the word as ‘*might drift him to kufur*’ - and this statement shows al-Faṭānī wanted to shift the debate from creed to jurisprudence. On understanding the objective of knowledge, every knowledge has its own objectives (*aghrāḍ*) or actuality (*ḥaqīqah*) – not to be understood here as a dualistic understanding.

In certain places, confused people without proper guidance might bring chaos when a few irresponsible people discuss a subject beyond its limit. Al-Ghazālī (2019) in his *Qisṭās al-Mustaqīm fī Taqwīm Ahl al-Ta‘līm*, cited from al-Quran in categorizing human beings into three groups - as a purpose for organizing people. Firstly, the elite group (*khāṣ*) who are the men of insight and special perception. This group of people can be taught the rules of justice (‘*adil*’) – which relate also to manners (*adab*); as they will also grow important in the development of the society. Secondly is the common folk (‘*‘āmm*’) who are dominant and fill up their daily life in occupation and profession. The third group is a controversial or dialectic argument group (*jadāl*) - in between the first and second groups. Their tendency usually point to the ambiguous part (*mutashābihāt*) of the Quran and they desire much dissension. What we conclude here, the group of common folk can be summoned to Allah by preaching, the elite by wisdom and the men of contention through dialectic. Now, the statement made by al-Faṭānī ‘...*sometimes might drift him to kufur...*’ was not justifying him in accordance

to the law at all; perhaps encouraging a concept of categorization among people in a society based on their knowledge background – concluding in an attempt to exclude the ‘pseudo-scientific questioner’ out of the public.

Here, we can conclude that al-Faṭānī was attentive to the concept of manners (*adab*) toward knowledge to attain a correct classification of knowledge. With this approach, al-Faṭānī could organize the person based on their stages of knowledge either as certainty (*yaqīn*) (100%) – at the same time refusing sceptical stages such as the conjecture (*ẓann*) (99-51%), doubt (*shakk*) (50%) and illusory (*wahm*) (below 50%). Al-Faṭānī was very firm in his determination because this sort of problem is related to belief (*i’tiqād*) among Muslims and must be accurately following the majority (*Ahli Sunnah wa al-Jamā’ah*). We may assume that the discussion by al-Faṭānī can be categorized into the field of *tawhīdic* epistemology and needs further analysis of a few more fatwas to establish a connection between classification of knowledge in his fatwas in the perspective of Islamic Civilization.

CONCLUSION

Generally, it is the true knowledge that portrays Islam in the most correct way, thus it gives an impact to civilization. Besides, the aspect of *dīn* that conceptualizes the worldview of Islam was truly inspired by Quranic teachings and later grew into the spirit of seeking the truth along the path of knowledge, and rose to the highest pinnacles of glory. In other words, the Islamic Civilization was a knowledge-based civilization or ‘Islam itself is a civilization’. As there comes the realization of the importance of knowledge and their stages, a scientific approach has been made to classify the knowledge accordingly for their benefits (*fawā’id*) and subject matters (*mawḍū’āt*) so that they can be placed accordingly. This study shows the importance of the idea of knowledge classification is to establish proper education among Muslim by explaining an *adab* to knowledge, besides understanding the unity of knowledge and some problems on dichotomy of knowledge – resulting in appreciation of the intellect. It is also clear that Muslims were very concerned about a balanced approach for both the theoretical and practical knowledge. Result shows that the great influence of al-Ghazālī was indirectly followed by al-Faṭānī. The concept of integration (*tawhīdic*) of knowledge is clear in the fatwa discussed even though within the specialized discipline of knowledge.

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