

**THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE 'TEN  
FUNDAMENTALS' (*AL-MABĀDI' AL- 'ASHARAH*)  
IN CONCEPTUALIZING THE EPISTEMIC AIMS  
OF LEARNING IN ISLAM**

*Muhammad Mustaqim Mohd Zarif*

Faculty of Quranic and Sunnah Studies. Universiti Sains  
Islam Malaysia.71800. Nilai. Negeri Sembilan. Malaysia.

Email: [mustaqim@usim.edu.my](mailto:mustaqim@usim.edu.my)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22452/afkar.sp2020no2.2>

**Abstract**

The first Qur'anic revelation in Islam stressed on the fundamental epistemological issues that characterized the paramount role of knowledge and the attitude of the Muslims towards it throughout the history. Apart from knowledge of the subject matter itself, much emphasis was also given to mastering its prerequisites in the fields of grammar, rhetoric and logic (*al-mantiq*); collectively known as the 'sciences of the tools of knowledge' (*ilm al-ālāt*). In their discussions of logic, Muslims have developed a systematic foundational framework of knowledge mapping known as the 'ten fundamentals' or *al-mabādi' al-'asharah* and subsequently adapted it in the learning of the various sciences. Therefore, this paper attempts to discuss the significance of this framework in conceptualizing the epistemic aims of learning in the Islamic tradition. Discussions include its origins and development, functions and adaptations throughout the various sciences, as well as an assessment of its role in conceptualizing the epistemic aims of learning in Islam based on the relevant primary and secondary sources. It is found that the practical utility of this framework does not only correspond with the overall epistemic aims of learning in Islam but is also applicable within the contemporary settings of Islamic education in the digital era.

**Keywords:** Islam; education; logic; knowledge; epistemology.

### **Khulasah**

Ayat-ayat al-Qur'an pertama yang diwahyukan menekankan beberapa perkara dasar berkaitan epistemologi yang mencirikan peranan penting ilmu dalam Islam dan membentuk sikap umat Islam terhadapnya sepanjang sejarah. Selain pengetahuan mengenai kandungan sesuatu bidang ilmu, penekanan penting turut diberikan untuk menguasai prasyarat-prasyarat ilmu yang merangkumi bidang nahu, retorik dan mantik; yang dikenali secara kolektifnya sebagai 'ilmu alat' dalam tradisi Islam. Penerokaan umat Islam dalam bidang mantik juga telah membolehkan mereka membangunkan sebuah kerangka asas pemetaan ilmu secara sistematik yang dikenali sebagai 'asas yang sepuluh' atau *al-mabādi' al-'asharah* dan menerapkannya dalam pembelajaran pelbagai bidang ilmu. Oleh yang demikian, makalah ini terfokus untuk membincangkan kepentingan kerangka ini dalam merealisasikan matlamat epistemik dalam pembelajaran. Perbincangan merangkumi aspek asal-usul, perkembangan, fungsi dan adaptasi kerangka ini di samping menilai hubungannya dengan matlamat epistemik pembelajaran dalam tradisi Islam berdasarkan sumber-sumber primer dan sekunder yang berkaitan. Dapatan kajian ini mengesahkan kegunaan praktis kerangka ini yang bukan sahaja selari dengan matlamat epistemik pembelajaran dalam Islam, bahkan juga bersesuaian untuk diadaptasikan dalam konteks pendidikan Islam pada hari ini.

**Kata kunci:** Islam; pendidikan; mantik; ilmu; epistemologi.

### **Introduction**

Knowledge forms an integral part in the structure of Islamic worldview. In fact, the paramount importance

accorded to knowledge in Islam can be reflected from the very first revelation of the Qur'an that states as follows:

أَقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ ﴿١﴾ خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ  
عَلَقٍ ﴿٢﴾ أَقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ ﴿٣﴾ الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ  
﴿٤﴾ عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ ﴿٥﴾

“Read! In the name of your Lord who created;  
He created man from a clinging form; Read!  
Your Lord is the Most Bountiful One; Who  
taught by (means of) the pen; Who taught man  
what he did not know”<sup>1</sup>.

In explicating the meaning of these verses in a further detail, it can be said that Allah the Almighty has laid down the basic principles that constitute the epistemological foundation of knowledge in Islam. In other words, prior to the obligating the laws and rituals relating to the religion in the Qur'an, there is a need for every individual to understand the source, legitimacy, methodology and validity of the knowledge presented therein.

Thus, these verses stress on the importance of reading as the primary source of knowledge. Here, reading should be understood not only as mere utterances of written text, but also as a learning process involving various mental activities such as comprehension, interpretation, cogitation, deliberation and so on<sup>2</sup>. More importantly, the reading process is also linked with Allah the Almighty as the ultimate source from Whom all knowledge originates.

---

<sup>1</sup> Al-Qur'an, Surah al-'Alaq, 96:1-5. Translation of the Quranic verses into English in this paper is taken from M.A.S. Abdel Haleem's *The Quran* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

<sup>2</sup> On the various dimensions of reading, refer to: Mortimer J. Adler and Charles Van Doren, *How to Read a Book: The Classic Guide to Intelligent Reading* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014).

Early generations of Muslims whose attitude was moulded by the Qur'anic epistemological foundation and guidance of the Prophet SAW have endeavoured to uphold knowledge and embed it as an integral part of their lives. Due attention was given to the primary sources of knowledge, namely the Qur'an and Sunnah, which were later incorporated by succeeding generations of Muslims with the rational and philosophical sciences. It was in this spirit that knowledge was celebrated and held as triumphant throughout the Islamic civilization<sup>3</sup>.

In the heyday of their civilization, Muslims generally did not delimit the scope of their intellectual endeavours solely towards the religious sciences, rather they ventured into almost every aspect of sciences and philosophical wisdom available to them. Apart from knowledge of the subject matter itself, much emphasis was also given to mastering its prerequisites in the fields of grammar, rhetoric and logic (*al-mantiq*), which were collectively known as the 'sciences of the tools of knowledge' (*'ilm al-ālāt*). In his scheme of knowledge classification, al-Ghazālī (d. 505H) has categorized these technical subjects as 'preliminaries' (*muqaddimāt*) which are necessary to have a proper understanding of the 'fundamentals' (*uṣūl*) or the Qur'an and Sunnah<sup>4</sup>.

In this regard, the development of Islamic educational curriculum throughout the history has also seen the emergence of a systematic foundational framework of knowledge mapping known as the 'ten fundamentals' or *al-mabādī' al-'asharah* amidst the flourishing discussions among the Muslims in the field of logic.

---

<sup>3</sup> For more details on the role of knowledge in characterising the Islamic civilization, see: Franz Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant: The Concept of Knowledge in Medieval Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

<sup>4</sup> Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2005), 24-25.

Notwithstanding some minor variations, these fundamentals consist primarily of ten elements as follows: *al-hadd* (definition), *al-mawḍū'* (subject), *al-ghāyah* (objectives), *nisbah* (affiliation), *al-faḍl* (status), *al-wāḍi'* (founder), *al-ism* (nomenclature), *al-istimdād* (source), *al-masā'il* (issues), and *al-ḥukm* (ruling). Due to their importance, these fundamentals were subsequently adapted in the learning of the various sciences up until the early part of the twentieth century.

However, despite its popular use throughout the Islamic history as will be further discussed in this paper, these ten fundamentals were neither found to be extensively adopted in the modern curriculum of Islamic learning nor received proper attention for discussion and debate. Therefore, this paper attempts to discuss the significance of this framework in conceptualizing the epistemic aims of learning in the Islamic tradition. Discussions include its origins and development, functions and adaptations throughout the various sciences so as to assess its role in conceptualizing the epistemic aims of learning in Islam and its applicability in the contemporary settings of Islamic education in the digital era.

### **The Ten Fundamentals: Its Origin and Development**

The rigorous efforts of the early Muslims in spreading the words of Allah the Almighty have led them to live and interact with people of various faiths and cultures, notably the Greeks, Romans, Persians and Copts. These interactions resulted in intensified intercultural exchanges and adaptations between them and the others that extended to include the intellectual and philosophical domains. Efforts were undertaken to translate Greek philosophical works into Arabic, which were later systematically developed by the Abbasids through the intellectual activities of the Bayt al-Ḥikmah in Baghdad.

It was during these translational activities that logic came to be known within the Islamic milieu, especially

through the works of Aristotle and Neo-Platonic philosophers. This newly-discovered science then became a new subject of knowledge known in Arabic as *al-mantiq* and was discussed by early Muslim philosophers especially al-Fārābī (d. 339H) and later Ibn Sīnā (d. 428H), among others<sup>5</sup>.

However, compared with its development in the Graeco-Hellenistic milieu, logic in Islamic intellectual tradition was developed almost devoid of its ties to the Neo-Platonic and Aristotelian physics and metaphysics. On the other hand, it became a subject that focuses solely on the rules of reasoning by the means of syllogism. In this regard, aspects relating to the theory of demonstrative science, dialectics, rhetoric and categories proposed by Aristotle were also usually developed separately in the curriculum of the madrasas.

Thus, logic was reduced solely as a tool for assessing arguments while avoiding errors of reasoning and was made a necessary instrumental skill to be acquired alongside Arabic language and rhetoric prior to one's learning of the religious sciences. At the same time, there was also a need for some Muslim scholars to incorporate logic as a legitimate and important component in understanding the religion especially in disciplines such as the principles of jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) and rationalistic theology (*'ilm al-kalām*) despite the opposition of some early traditional scholars<sup>6</sup>.

In illustrating this further, it is worthwhile to mention here the case of al-Ghazālī. In his celebrated work in *uṣūl al-fiqh* entitled *al-Mustaṣfā*, al-Ghazālī has strived to stress on the importance of logic in understanding *uṣūl al-fiqh* especially through the means of demonstrative

---

<sup>5</sup> Majid Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), xxi, 12, 113 passim.

<sup>6</sup> Khaled El-Rouayheb, *The Development of Arabic Logic 1200-1800* (Basel: Schwabe Verlag, 2019), 15-16.

reasoning<sup>7</sup>. Nonetheless, he was also quick to point out that logic in itself is not an intrinsic part of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, but only serves as a preliminary to demonstrate the verity of knowledge (*al-‘ilm*), reasoning (*al-naẓar*) and proof (*al-dalīl*) as opposed to the views of the Sophists and others. In this regard, his treatment on the preliminaries of logic consisting the issues of definition (*al-ḥadd*) and demonstration (*al-burhān*) is not only exclusive to *uṣūl al-fiqh*, but applicable to all the sciences<sup>8</sup>.

Apart from the detailed discussion on these issues, which might not appeal to everyone’s interest, as al-Ghazālī himself admitted<sup>9</sup>, he has also presented a more concise but comprehensive overview on *uṣūl al-fiqh* as a subject matter in the preface of his work comprising its definition (separately and as a phrase), its status and position within the hierarchy of knowledge as well as its scope and themes of discussion<sup>10</sup>.

This overview serves as a methodological introduction that does not only elucidate the subject matter to be discussed, but also position it within the epistemological structure of Islamic knowledge. In this regard, although al-Ghazālī might not be the first Muslim scholar to explicate this in writing, his inventiveness in integrating and harmonising the rational and philosophical sciences with the revealed sciences has had considerable influence upon later generations of Muslim scholars especially in fields of *uṣūl al-fiqh* and *‘ilm al-kalām*.

---

<sup>7</sup> Mohd Fauzi Hamat, “Penghasilan Karya Sintesis antara Mantik dan *Uṣūl al-Fiqh*: Rujukan kepada Kitab *al-Mustaṣfā min ‘Ilm al-Uṣūl* Karangan al-Imām al-Ghazzālī (m.505/1111)”, *Jurnal Afkar* Vol. 1 No. 1 (2000), 132-133.

<sup>8</sup> Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *al-Mustaṣfā min ‘Ilm al-Uṣūl* (Cairo: Sidra, n.d.), 13-15.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 6-14.

For instance, in his concise treatise in *uṣūl al-fiqh*, Ibn al-Ḥājjib (d. 646H); a renowned Maliki scholar has attempted similar approach in integrating *uṣūl al-fiqh* with logic. In the preface (*mabādī'*) of his work, he has discussed three aspects relating to the subject matter under study comprising its definition (*ḥadd*), benefits (*fawā'id*) and sources (*istimḍād*). Under definition, he has presented at least two different perspectives on the meaning of the term *uṣūl al-fiqh* and its implications, thus delineating the scope of its discussion. The main benefit of learning the subject is aptly summed as the ability to know the rules of God the Almighty. Its sources are also elaborated with brief justifications of each of the types mentioned<sup>11</sup>.

In a similar manner, works on logic during this period were also marked by the increased need to include a prefatory statement on the fundamentals of knowledge as discussed. In his treatise on logic and theology entitled *Maṭāli' al-Anwār fī al-Ḥikmah wa al-Manṭiq*, Qāḍī Maḥmūd al-Armawī (d. 689H) has specified the preliminaries (*al-muqaddimāt*) as the first of two sections under the logical discussion of conceptions (*al-taṣawwūrāt*). Here, he dedicated two chapters specifically dedicated to explaining the needs for logic and its subject of discussion<sup>12</sup>.

However, despite its relative classification under specific subject matter of logic, it is interesting to note that in his commentary of the work, Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 766H) has attempted to elucidate further this matter based on his own understanding. He explained that these preliminaries consist of rudimentary elements without

---

<sup>11</sup> Jamāl al-Dīn 'Uthmān ibn 'Umar ibn al-Ḥājjib, *Mukhtaṣar Muntahā al-Su'ul wa al-Amal fī 'Ilmay al-Uṣūl wa al-Jadal* (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2006), 201-202.

<sup>12</sup> Qāḍī Maḥmūd al-Armawī, *Lawāmi' al-Asrār fī Sharḥ Maṭāli' al-Anwār fī al-Ḥikmah wa al-Manṭiq* (Maṭba'ah al-Ḥājj Muḥarram Afandī, 1885), 7-15.



which it is difficult to get a complete grasp and mastery of the knowledge to be learnt. Apart from the need and subject matter of logic, he has also added its definition and intended objectives, which according to his belief, is implicitly intended and contained within the lines of the original text. In a way, this indicates the increasing awareness amongst the learned circles for a more systematic presentation of epistemological framework intended in learning of the sciences at that time<sup>13</sup>.

In fact, towards the end of the eighth century of Hijrah, the need for such framework was prevalent that it was found to be discussed and implemented in other subjects as well. In this regard, the *Muṭawwal* of Sa'ad al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī (d. 792H), which is an extensive commentary of Jalāl al-Dīn al-Qazwīnī's (d. 739H) work on Arabic rhetoric is important to be highlighted. Here, he has specifically mentioned the term 'the preliminary of knowledge' or *muqaddimah al-'ilm* that needs to be differentiated with the proper preface of a book known as the *muqaddimah al-kitāb*. The former includes discussion of the definition, objective and theme of a subject matter in general whereas the latter is more specific in nature in explaining the *raison d'être* of a book's composition. Yet, he acknowledged that certain people might have confused between the two, thus the need for a proper explanation on this matter<sup>14</sup>.

It is important to note here that up to this point in Islamic history, the concept of the fundamentals of knowledge or the preliminary of knowledge was already known and implemented by scholars in their instructions of the various sciences especially in logic and later the religious sciences. They also acknowledged its utilitarian

---

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Sa'ad al-Dīn Mas'ūd ibn 'Umar al-Taftāzānī, *al-Muṭawwal Sharḥ Talkhīṣ Miiftāḥ al-'Ulūm* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2013), 138.

function in providing a comprehensive overview of a subject and its position in the overall scheme of knowledge. However, their understanding of it was mostly confined to the aspects relating to the definition, objective and theme of a particular subject notwithstanding certain compromises on its scope and depth of discussion. This is especially true in cases of commentaries where discussion on certain issues were restricted based on the original texts commented upon.

Thus, it was not only later that meaningful development in this concept took its definitive form as known today. In fact, it was in the eleventh century of Hijrah that saw the composition of a four-stanza poem on the preliminary of knowledge through the treatise on creed (*'aqīdah*) in verse by Abū al-'Abbās Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Tilimsānī al-Miqarrī (d. 1040H). In the preface of his work, this poem is included as a mean to instruct his readers on the need to conceptualize the nature of this religious subject and its position in the epistemological scheme of knowledge in Islam.

In a way, this indicates the adoption and prevalence of this concept in disciplines beyond logic and *uṣūl al-fiqh* as demonstrated before. At the same time, he has also extended the concept to be consisting of ten elements rather than three as usually discussed, which are aptly summed in the following poem<sup>15</sup>:

من رام فنا فليقدم أولاً \* علما بحده وموضوع تلا  
وواضع ونسبة وما استمد \* منه وفضله وحكم يعتمد  
واسم وما أفاد والمسائل \* فتلك عشر للمنى وسائل  
وبعضهم فيها على البعض اقتصر \* ومن يكن يدري جميعها انتصر

<sup>15</sup> 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulṣī, *Rā'ihah al-Jannah Sharḥ Idā'ah al-Dujunah fī 'Aqā'id Ahl al-Sunnah* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, n.d.), 23-27.

In general, this poem can be roughly translated as follows: "He who aspires to venture into a discipline should begin by knowing its definition, followed by its subject. He should also know its founder, its relation to the other sciences as well as its sources, virtues, legal ruling, terminology, benefits and topics of discussion. Thus, these are the ten principles for an avid seeker of knowledge. Some of these might be confined on behalf of the others, but he who knows them all is surely the victor".

From this, one can clearly see that it was no longer sufficient for a student to know only the definition, subject and objective of a discipline that he intends to venture into, but he also has to know the various aspects relating to its history and founder albeit briefly, in addition to its sources, virtues, legal ruling, terminology, benefits and topics of discussion. Although this much of information might seem overwhelming to the beginners in their initial quest for knowledge, it was hardly the case as these principles are often presented briefly and cordially so as to provide an overall outlook on the epistemological structure of a subject without losing their interest on its proper subject matter. On the other hand, a proper understanding that results from this explanation might spark the interest of the students and motivate them to learn regardless of the difficulties and challenges facing them.

At this point, however, it is important to note that the ten elements mentioned in the poem should be viewed to represent the concept in its most ideal form and by no means are final. In fact, there are also other variations with lesser elements based on individual preferences as alluded to in the poem quoted above. More importantly, this also indicates that this concept as a whole was already known and practiced by the Muslims in their learning tradition, and that the composition of the poem was a form of

formalizing this practice in a more user-friendly verse that can be easily memorised by anyone.

In illustrating this, it is useful to note the case of the commentaries of *Tanwīr al-Abṣār*; a work in Hanafite jurisprudence by al-Tamartāshī (d. 1004H). In the original text, there was no mention of the fundamentals of knowledge, as al-Tamartāshī intended his work to be a brief exposition that focuses solely on basic issues in jurisprudence. Yet, in its commentary by al-Ḥaṣkafī (d. 1088H), he has briefly explained seven out of the ten elements in introducing the discipline of *fiqh* in terms of its definition, theme, objective, sources, virtues, legal ruling and founder<sup>16</sup>.

In his super-commentary of al-Ḥaṣkafī's work, Ibn 'Ābidīn (d. 1252H) has further elaborated the importance of knowing these preliminaries of knowledge together with the prefatory remarks of the book to ensure proper understanding of knowledge and avoid futility in its acquisition. He also affirmed that these preliminaries are not limited towards certain subjects only, but applicable to all other sciences including the religious (Quranic exegesis, hadith, jurisprudence and creed), and the non-religious, which are further divided into literary (such as grammar, rhetoric, morphology and others), physical sciences (such as geometry, astronomy, arithmetic, music, algebra and others), and rational sciences (such as logic, metaphysics, *uṣūl al-fiqh*, theology, medicine and philosophy)<sup>17</sup>.

Indeed by analysing the discussion of Ibn 'Ābidīn regarding this matter, it is found that he also attempted to

---

<sup>16</sup> Muḥammad ibn 'Alī al-Ḥaṣkafī, *al-Durr al-Mukhtār Sharḥ Tanwīr al-Abṣār wa Jāmi' al-Biḥār fī Furū' al-Fiqh al-Ḥanafī* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2002), 11-16.

<sup>17</sup> Muḥammad ibn Amīn ibn 'Ābidīn, *Radd al-Muhtār 'alā al-Durr al-Mukhtār Sharḥ Tanwīr al-Abṣār* (Riyadh: Dār 'Ālam al-Kutub, 2003), 1: 116.

complement discussing the rest of the elements not mentioned by al-Ḥaṣkafī, and in doing so, he has presented a detailed exposition on the important principles and issues relating to the Hanafite school of jurisprudence, its main scholars and books and their level of authority, as well as the methods of reconciling divergence of opinions amongst the jurists.

In this regard, he has provided an extensive summary of the Hanafite *fiqh*, its history and methodologies, which is not only useful to get an overview of the school but also prepare the reader in dealing with the text and views of scholars as presented in the text. At the same time, he also quoted another verse on these preliminaries of knowledge from a certain Ibn Dhikrī as follows<sup>18</sup>:

فأول الأبواب في المبادي \* وتلك عشرة على المراد  
الحد والموضوع ثم الواضع \* والاسم واستمداد حكم الشارع  
تصور المسائل الفضيله \* ونسبة فائدة جلية

Interestingly, his quotation of another version of the poem only confirms the widespread of this concept and its adoption in the Islamic learning tradition at that time, and that the poem by al-Miqarrī might be limited within its specific cultural milieu only. In terms of content, however, both poems display stark resemblance in terms of the elements of these preliminaries. It also indicates the reception of the ten elements as an acceptable standard at that time. A more popular version of the poem, however, was attributed to Muḥammad ibn 'Alī al-Ṣabbān (d. 1206H) as follows<sup>19</sup>:

---

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 1: 117.

<sup>19</sup> I am unable to this poem in his available works in grammar and logic. Perhaps it is written in his other works. See: Muṣṭafā Riḍā al-Azharī, *Kashf al-Ghuyūm 'an Risālah Mabādī al-'Ulūm li al-Shaykh Muḥammad ibn 'Umar al-Ma'rūf bi Nawawī al-Jāwī* (Cairo: Dār al-Rifā'ī, 2019), 239.

إن مبادي كل فن عشرة \* الحد والموضوع ثم الثمرة  
وفضله ونسبة والواضع \* والاسم والاستمداد حكم الشارع  
مسائل والبعض ببعض اكتفى \* ومن درى الجميع حاز الشرفا

In fact, this version of the poem was so popular that it became known as the ten fundamentals (*al-mabādi' al-'asharah*), and was widely quoted and discussed by authors in various sciences. In his survey, Muṣṭafā al-Azharī has also identified at least 34 works in Arabic, most of which are still in the manuscript form, that expound the concept of the preliminary of knowledge<sup>20</sup>. In a way, this indicates its incorporation in the curriculum of the traditional Islamic educational system that needs to be highlighted notwithstanding the fact that not much is known about the extent of its practice in the actual madrasah system in general.

On the other hand, these fundamentals in their present form were also found not to be the main focus of discussion in most of the manuals concerning the ethics of learning (*adab al-muta'allim*) and classification of knowledge (*taqṣīm al-'ulūm*), although some of the elements such as definition, objective and purpose of the sciences were intrinsically discussed albeit in different method and style of presentation. Perhaps, its existence as a part of logic might contributed to this as the authors might have not felt the need to separately discuss it. This was especially true in the past, where logic, together with grammar and rhetoric were taught in the elementary level as a 'tool' for acquiring 'proper' disciplines of the sciences. Moreover, the relatively later development of these fundamentals as a separate entity might also be a factor that contributed to this.

---

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

In this regard, it is instrumental to note the distinctive approach taken by al-Tahānawī in the twelfth century of Hijrah (18<sup>th</sup> century) on this matter. In his important work on the nature and classification of knowledge, he stressed on the importance of knowing 'the eight principles' (*al-ru'ūs al-thamāniyah*) as a prerequisite for anyone who intends to understand a book (which is the recorded form of knowledge). These eight principles comprise the knowledge of a subject in terms of its purpose, benefit, nomenclature, authoritative figures, category, position, content and objective. Interestingly, he also attributed these principles to the ancient philosophers and their practice. At the same time, he also acknowledged the possibility of adding more principles to the existing eight to aid a person in understanding a specific discipline of knowledge<sup>21</sup>.

In many ways, the eight principles mentioned by al-Tahānawī are similar to the concept of the ten fundamentals discussed in this paper. In terms of its origin, their similarity abounds as both are developed within the sphere of philosophy, in which logic plays an important aspect of it. Likewise, the details of the principles listed are also similar with only variations in terms of its descriptors and number. This is hardly surprising as can be seen from the beginning that the concept of the preliminary of knowledge varied greatly in terms of its elements and that it only reached its current state after a series of development and adaptation throughout the Islamic history.

Therefore, the consistency in the number of these elements is only secondary compared with its main purpose, that is to assist a reader or student in having an overall perspective on learning a particular branch of knowledge. Nonetheless, the eight principles propagated

---

<sup>21</sup> Muḥammad 'Alī al-Tahānawī, *Kashshāf Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Funūn wa al-'Ulūm* (Beirut: Maktabah Lubnān, 1996), 1: 14-17.

by al-Tahānawī, although important, was not able to surpass the ten fundamentals in terms of its popularity and widespread adoption in the various learned treatises and learning traditions as will be further discussed.

### **The Ten Fundamentals and The Epistemic Aims of Learning in Islam: An Assessment**

Prior to discussing the role of the ten fundamentals in actualising the epistemic aims of learning in Islam, it is imperative to have a clear notion on what is meant by the epistemic aims as depicted in this study as well as its position in the Islamic sources. Literally, the word epistemic is derived from the Greek word episteme which generally means knowledge. In this regard, epistemology can simply be explained as an account of knowledge, especially in terms of its definition, methods, types, sources, validity, scope and so on<sup>22</sup>. It does not concern primarily with specific subjects rather the focus is more on understanding the theory and nature of knowledge itself. Thus, its aims and objectives transcend beyond the particularities of specific disciplines towards a unified understanding of a knowledge system based on its underlying worldview.

Similarly, the epistemic aims of knowledge mean the primary objectives intended from the entire process of learning and acquiring the knowledge in totality that will be of significant values for an individual to function properly as an educated man in his life. Thus, these aims are not about the mastery of certain aspects of academic disciplines in terms of the facts and principles and theories, but inherently about the skills, utility and values gained from the learning process that contribute to one's perspective and understanding in orienting thought and

---

<sup>22</sup> Yahaya Jusoh and Azhar Muhammad, *Falsafah Ilmu dalam al-Quran: Ontologi, Epistemologi dan Aksiologi* (Johor Bahru: UTM Press, 2012), 79-80.



action. According to Robertson, there are at least four of such aims, which are as follows: Understanding; cognitive skills and know-how; epistemic virtues and; cognitive emotions as well as judgement<sup>23</sup>.

Understanding entails acquiring the meaning and significance of knowledge which transcends beyond propositional knowledge. In other words, the knowledge acquired should be connected, organized and arranged within the larger structure of knowledge that will develop one's perspective and influence his thought and action. In this regard, understanding is of various degrees depending on the individual's ability and learning experience. At the same time, it is not only sufficient for the educated person to understand and transmit knowledge, rather he should also be able to develop the necessary cognitive skills in order to produce and evaluate knowledge. This again varies depending on the stage of human development and the specified educational goals. Yet, critical thinking and problem-solving skills are amongst the much needed and necessary cognitive skills that must be nurtured in education at its various stages<sup>24</sup>.

On the other hand, epistemic virtues refer to the proper utility and exercise of one's cognitive skills in the proper contexts and circumstances. In order to do so, the learner must be instilled with the virtues that will contribute towards the building of an epistemic character such as open-mindedness, empathy, responsiveness to the criticism of others, self-reflectiveness, love of truth and others. It is only when a learner mastered the three afore-discussed aims that he will be able to exercise proper and sound judgement in settling intellectual disputes or solving intellectual problems. In fact, it is the central core

---

<sup>23</sup> Emily Robertson, "The Epistemic Aims of Education", in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Education*, ed. Harvey Siegel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 11-34.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 19-20.

of epistemic aims of learning that dictates one's thought and influence his behaviour and course of action<sup>25</sup>.

Arguably, all these elements are universal in nature, meaning that they can be related with any knowledge system regardless of its underlying worldview. This is because, these aims are targeted towards fulfilling the fullest potentials of the human intellect (*'aql*) to function properly in the society. It is however, of particular importance also to analyse these aims vis-a-vis the concept and epistemic aims of learning in Islam.

As a premier revelational source and guidance, the Qur'an is laden with verses and words that emphasise on the importance and significance of knowledge. The first revelation to the Prophet Muhammad SAW, as afore-discussed, revolves around the centrality of knowledge and its source. Consequently, the role of intellect comes to the forefront as it is the main aspect of human being that can accept knowledge and materialise learning. In this regard, it is important to note that Allah the Almighty has stated that the sole purpose of creation is to accept and worship Him alone as in the following verses:

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ مَا أُرِيدُ مِنْهُمْ مِّن رِّزْقٍ وَمَا أُرِيدُ أَنْ يُطْعَمُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الرَّزَّاقُ ذُو الْقُوَّةِ الْمَتِينُ

"I created *jinn* and mankind only to worship Me; I want no provision from them, nor do I want them to feed Me; God is the Provider, the Lord of Power, the Ever Mighty"<sup>26</sup>.

To worship Allah the Almighty signifies that human being must be able to know and understand His injunctions and prohibitions so as to act and serve in the

---

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 21-22.

<sup>26</sup> Al-Qur'an, Surah al-Dhāriyāt, 51:56-58.

appropriate and acceptable manner. In fact, this is explained further in another verse of the Qur'an:

الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ  
عَمَلًا ۗ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْعَفُورُ

“(He) who created death and life to test you (people) and reveal which of you does best. He is the Mighty, the Forgiving”<sup>27</sup>.

This verse acknowledges that life is a test. In order to pass the test and overcome all the hurdles and problems faced, human being must use his intellect, which needs to be guided and fuelled by knowledge to assist him to the right course of thought and action. It is due to this that intellect is made as the basis for religious responsibility (*taklīf*) and rightful participation in the society<sup>28</sup>.

In effect, the Qur'an has emphasised on the importance of intellect and its utilisation in the right way. It is interesting to note that the word *'aql* is not used as a noun in the Qur'an although its synonyms such as *lubb*, *nuhā*, *qalb*, *fu'ād* and others are mentioned several times. Yet, as a verb, it has been mentioned forty-nine times in various forms and tenses. In particular, the word *tafakkur* which signifies thinking and its derivatives are mentioned eighteen times in various chapters and verses.

In addition, there are also various terminologies used in the Qur'an to indicate the activities of the intellect such as *naẓar* (to consider), *tabaṣṣur* (insight), *tadabbur* (pondering), *tafaqquh* (to comprehend), *tadhakkur* (to bear

---

<sup>27</sup> Al-Qur'an, Surah al-Mulk, 67:2.

<sup>28</sup> There is an authentic hadith of the Prophet that exempted *taklīf* for the following people: a sleeping person until he wakes up, a child until his maturity, and a mentally-insane until he is cured. See: Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1969), no *ḥadīth*. 4403.

in mind), *i'tibār* (to reflect), *ta'qqul* (reasoning) and *tawassum* (to contemplate)<sup>29</sup>.

It is imperative to state here that these concepts as used in the Qur'an can also be analysed from the context of the four epistemic aims of learning afore-discussed to aid our understanding of these verses in a greater detail. Thus, a categorical classification based on the linguistic and semantic meanings is attempted here, although it is by no means absolute or final as overlapping of meaning and usage of these words might occur in certain situations.

Thus, in reflecting understanding as the first aim of learning, the Qur'an has employed the use of the word *tafaquh* to this effect. It appears several times in the Qur'an to mean comprehending and understanding such as in the following verse:

وَمَا كَانَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لِيَنْفِرُوا كَافَّةً ۚ فَلَوْلَا نَفَرَ مِن كُلِّ فِرْقَةٍ  
مِّنْهُمْ طَائِفَةٌ لِّيَتَفَقَّهُوا فِي الدِّينِ وَلِيُنذِرُوا قَوْمَهُمْ إِذَا رَجَعُوا  
إِلَيْهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَحْذَرُونَ

“Yet it is not right for all the believers to go out (to battle) together; out of each community, a group should go out to gain understanding of the religion, so that they can teach their people when they return and so that they can guard themselves against evil”<sup>30</sup>.

According to al-Iṣfahānī, *fiqh* means arriving at the knowledge of the unknown through the knowledge of the known, and it is by this definition is more specific than the word *'ilm* (to know). At the same time, it is also a term given to the study of the religious rulings, and one who masters it is known as a *faqīh* or one with profound

<sup>29</sup> Jamal Badi and Mustapha Tajdin, *Creative Thinking: An Islamic Perspective* (Kuala Lumpur: IIUM Research Centre, 2005), 3-7.

<sup>30</sup> Al-Qur'an, Surah al-Tawbah, 9:122.

knowledge and understanding as opposed to the generic term '*ālim* or the learned'<sup>31</sup>. In other word, understanding as implied by this term goes beyond the particularities of the knowledge of a subject matter, but inherently linking it with the ontological perspective of Islam regarding the relation between man and God and the creation. In turn, this understanding must be spread and utilised effectively in order to safeguard the interest of the society and protect them from harm.

As for the cognitive skills needed to ensure effective learning, the Qur'an is laden with terminologies and verses that invite men to think critically and exercise their reasoning in acquiring truth. It shuns superstitious beliefs and myths and poses challenges as a new methodology of learning. In fact, there are as many as one thousand and two hundred thought-provoking questions in the Qur'an that necessitate serious reasoning and cogitation in order to affirm its message of truth<sup>32</sup>. For instance, Allah the Almighty says:

أَوَلَمْ يَرَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ كَانَتَا رَتْقًا  
فَفَعَلْنَا هُمَا ۖ وَجَعَلْنَا مِنَ الْمَاءِ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ حَيٍّ ۚ أَفَلَا  
يُؤْمِنُونَ

“Are the disbelievers not aware that the heavens and the earth used to be joined together and that We ripped them apart, that We made every living thing from water? Will they not believe?”<sup>33</sup>.

It is important to note that many of the questions posed in the Qur'an can only be proven recently through

---

<sup>31</sup> al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Mufradāt fī Gharīb al-Qur'ān* (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, n.d.), 384.

<sup>32</sup> Jamal Badi and Mustapha Tajdin, *Creative Thinking*, 24.

<sup>33</sup> Al-Qur'an, Surah al-Anbiyā', 21:30.

the marvellous advancement of science and technology amongst mankind in the twentieth century. It is only through intense scientific research and the use of high-technological instruments that scientists and physicists are able to theorise on the nature of the beginning of the universe, which affirms to the fact mentioned in the Qur'an some fourteen hundred years ago. Thus, words like *nazar*<sup>34</sup> and *tadabbur*<sup>35</sup> are often mentioned to entice men to think critically and discover the truth by himself and not blindly following and imitating others.

As for the epistemic virtues in the Qur'an, there are numerous verses that guide its reader to the proper ethics and methods in the process of learning. It is difficult to list these virtues exhaustively in this paper, yet only a few will be highlighted here for the purpose of discussion. For example, a learner should strive to explore and travel to learn and reflect as much as he can as this will enrich his experience, broaden his perspective on life and be more open to various opinions and practices. Allah the Almighty says in the Qur'an:

قُلْ سِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ بَدَأَ الْخَلْقَ ۚ ثُمَّ اللَّهُ يُنشِئُ النَّشْأَةَ الْآخِرَةَ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

“Say: Travel throughout the earth and see how He brings life into being: and He will bring the next life into being. God has power over all things”<sup>36</sup>.

At the same time, he needs to be humble to acknowledge and accept truth when it appears to him with the relevant evidences and proofs regardless of his sentiment and emotion on the matter. Refusal in this

---

<sup>34</sup> See, for instance: al-Qur'an, Surah al-A'rāf, 7:185.

<sup>35</sup> See in particular: al-Qur'an, Surah Šād, 38:29.

<sup>36</sup> Al-Qur'an, Surah al-'Ankabūt, 29:20.

situation is an act of arrogance that is strongly condemned by Allah the Almighty as in the following verse:

سَأَصْرِفُ عَنْ آيَاتِيَ الَّذِينَ يَتَكَبَّرُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ  
وَإِنْ يَرَوْا كَلَّآءَ آيَةٍ لَا يُؤْمِنُوا بِهَا وَإِنْ يَرَوْا سَبِيلَ الرُّشْدِ لَا  
يَتَّخِذُوهُ سَبِيلًا وَإِنْ يَرَوْا سَبِيلَ الْعِغْيِ يَتَّخِذُوهُ سَبِيلًا  
ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَكَانُوا عَنْهَا غَافِلِينَ

"I will keep distracted from My signs those who behave arrogantly on Earth without any right, and who, even if they see every sign, will not believe in them; they will not take the way of right guidance if they see it, but will take the way of error if they see that. This is because they denied Our signs and paid them no heed"<sup>37</sup>.

In the same manner, the Qur'an has set the guidelines for the proper way in dialogues and debates with people of other faiths on matters relating to belief and religion such as mutual respect, empathy towards the opinions of others, employment of peaceful, non-coercive and non-violent approaches, while focusing on commonalities and shared interests<sup>38</sup>.

The outcome of this learning process is in the form of *i'tibār*, which, according to al-Iṣfahānī, is "the state of arriving at knowing the unseen based on the knowledge of the seen"<sup>39</sup>. In other words, the outcome of the learning process in the proper way will lead the learner to exercise sound judgement and correct decision. This is elaborately explicated in the Qur'an in the following verses:

---

<sup>37</sup> Al-Qur'an, Surah al-A'rāf, 7:146.

<sup>38</sup> See for example: al-Qur'an, Surah Āl 'Imrān, 3:64, al-'Ankabūt, 29:46 and many others.

<sup>39</sup> al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Mufradāt fī Gharīb al-Qur'ān*, 320.

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ  
لَآيَاتٍ لِّأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ قِيَامًا وَقُعُودًا  
وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِهِمْ وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ  
رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هَذَا بَاطِلًا سُبْحَانَكَ فَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ

“There truly are signs in the creation of the heavens and earth, and in the alternation of night and day, for those with understanding; who remember God standing, sitting, and lying down, who reflect on the creation of the heavens and earth: ‘Our Lord! You have not created all this without purpose. You are far above that! so protect us from the torment of the Fire’<sup>40</sup>.

In these verses, Allah the Almighty has characterized these “men of understanding” (*ulū al-albāb*) as the perfect model of learner who, by going through the rigorous process of *tafakkur*, is able to not only reach the truth, but also come to realisation on the higher purpose of life and submission to Allah the Almighty as the only God worthy to be worshipped. In effect, his thought and actions are directed towards fulfilling his duties as servant of Allah to gain His Mercy and pleasure both in this world and in the hereafter.

At this point, it is important to highlight that it is this spiritual-religious dimension of truth that clearly delineates the epistemic aims of learning in Islam compared with the others as man is made accountable of his deeds and actions both temporally and eternally. Muslims, through their contemplation of the Qur’anic verses and understanding of the Prophetic traditions,

---

<sup>40</sup> Al-Qur’an, Surah Āl ‘Imrān, 3:190-191.



realised the importance of these epistemic aims forwarded by the Qur'an and strived to enculturate knowledge and learning as their main endeavours towards gaining the pleasures of Allah the Almighty. In this regard, it is only apt that al-Attas has defined education and learning process in Islam as<sup>41</sup>:

“The recognition and acknowledgement, progressively-instilled into man, of the proper places of things in the order of the creation, such that it leads to the recognition and acknowledgement of the proper place of God in the order of being and existence”.

It is also due to these epistemic aims that Muslim scholars reproached excessive obsession towards memorisation of knowledge in the process of learning. For once, it gives the false pretence of 'scholarship' especially if pursued on its own without diligent care towards achieving the higher aims of learning as discussed before. On the contrary, the real purpose of scholarship is creative and original creation. In the words of Ḥājī Khalīfah (d. 1068H), the real purpose of learning is not to acquire memorised knowledge, but a scholarly approach or attitude (*malakah*) which directs the learner towards creative production and intellectual alertness<sup>42</sup>.

Thus, it is in similar spirit that the Muslims developed the 'ten fundamentals' to assist the learners in gaining the understanding of any particular subject under study and clarify its relationship with the other sciences. In illustrating this further, it is useful to delve into the

---

<sup>41</sup> Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *The Concept of Education in Islam: A Framework for an Islamic Philosophy of Education* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1999), 26.

<sup>42</sup> As adapted and summarized from: Franz Rosenthal, *The Technique and Approach of Muslim Scholarship* (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1947), 64.

elements of these fundamentals in further details as follows<sup>43</sup>:

- *al-Ḥadd*, the definition of a given subject or branch of knowledge.
- *al-Mawḍū'*, the subject matter of the knowledge.
- *al-Ghāyah* or *al-thamarah*, its objectives or the benefits obtained from learning it.
- *Niṣbah*, its relation with other subjects.
- *al-Faḍl* or *al-rutbah*, its status amongst other subjects.
- *al-Wāḍi'*, its founder and development.
- *al-Ism*, its nomenclature.
- *al-Istimdād*, the sources utilised in its subject matter.
- *al-Masā'il*, the issues and points of discussion in the subject.
- *al-Hukm*, the religious ruling on learning the subject.

Arguably, these ten precepts can be further divided into core and supplementary elements. The core elements represent the main concept in which other precepts are closely-related and thus can be subsumed within its scope of discussion. Whereas, the supplementary elements are those precepts that are expanded from the core ones usually for the sake of illustration and clarity.

In this regard, the first three precepts, i.e. *al-ḥadd*, *al-mawḍū'* and *al-ghāyah* or *al-thamarah* can be considered as the core elements while the remaining are only supplementary. As for *al-ḥadd*, its subsets include *al-ism*, *niṣbah* and *al-wāḍi'*, whereas *al-istimdād* and *al-masā'il* are closely-related to *al-mawḍū'*. On the other hand, *al-ghāyah* or *al-thamarah* entails knowing its religious ruling

---

<sup>43</sup> See: M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, "Early Islamic Theological and Juristic Terminology: *Kitāb al-Hudūd fī al-Uṣūl*, by Ibn Fūrak", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 54(1) (1991), 5-41.

(*al-hukm*) and status amongst other subjects (*al-fadl* or *al-rutbah*). It is perhaps in similar understanding that prompted al-Taftāzānī to only discuss only these three aspects as demonstrated earlier<sup>44</sup>.

In the early period of Islamic history, learning was almost an individual endeavour which depended primarily on the extent of a person's ability to travel to meet as many teachers as he could as well as his personal interest. In this open and flexible environment, the learner can almost study anything from any teacher without recourse to the fixed syllabus of learning as in the modern curriculum of formal education. Here, the role of the teacher is of paramount importance to guide the learner to the correct understanding of a subject and its relationship with other subjects, which was usually accomplished through the ten fundamentals scheme as discussed here.

In this regard, the inclusion of these fundamentals at the outset of a treatise used as textbook will serve this purpose well, as the learner will first learn about the definition and parameter of the subject that he is reading. He will also learn about the nomenclature of the subject, its rationale and its historical development and major figures. Then, he will be introduced to its main focus of discussion including its issues as well as its main sources. This will be followed by its objectives, benefits as well as its status in relation to the other subjects. Finally, he will know about the religious ruling regarding it, and whether it is obligatory, commendable or prohibited for him to learn it. In a way, he will also be motivated to learn through his knowledge of these fundamentals, especially when he learnt about its virtues, benefits and objectives.

In the end, the learner would have had a clear mapping and structure of the subject, in terms of its concept, scope and objectives. He would also be able to relate the importance of a subject and analyse its

---

<sup>44</sup> See: Sa'ad al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī, *al-Muṭawwal*, 138.

usefulness, whether as a means towards other subjects or as an end in itself. His recognition of the status of the subject within the larger structure of knowledge in Islam will enable him to put his understanding in the proper perspective that will ultimately help to make appropriate intellectual judgement that is just and suitable. It is in this context that the ten fundamentals are instrumental and significant in assisting him to realise the epistemic aims of learning as discussed.

Perhaps, Ibn al-Akfānī (d. 749H) was referring to these fundamentals when he wrote down the conditions of learning and stated that one should strive to know the status of a subject, its position, topics of discussion and scope while at the same time should ensure to know the limit of each subject so as to avoid confusion and misunderstanding. He also acknowledged the importance of 'the eight principles' (*al-ru'ūs al-thamāniyah*), which he applied on the basis of each book written on any particular subject<sup>45</sup>. In many ways, these eight principles are but another version of the ten fundamentals, which are propagated by some scholars including al-Tahānawī as discussed before. Regardless, this only affirms the significance of these fundamentals in assisting students towards achieving the epistemic aims of their learning.

More importantly, the ten fundamentals were also made as part of the curriculum of studies at al-Azhar University. This was especially observed during the leadership of Muḥammad al-Inbābī (d. 1313H) as *Shaykh al-Azhar* in the latter part of the nineteenth century who made it compulsory for every teacher to master these fundamentals for the following eleven subjects: *uṣūl al-fiqh*, *al-fiqh*, *al-ma'ānī*, *al-bayān*, *al-badī'*, *al-manṭiq*, *al-tawḥīd*, *al-naḥw*, *al-ṣarf*, *al-tafsīr* and *al-ḥadīth*. In effect, this policy has resulted in the surge in the number of

---

<sup>45</sup> Ibn al-Akfānī Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Sinjārī, *Irshād al-Qāṣid ilā Asnā al-Maqāṣid* (Beirut: n.p., 1904), 13-23.

works produced, especially amongst al-Azhar scholars, that treat these ten fundamentals in independent treatises<sup>46</sup>.

An example of such work could be seen from the treatise composed by 'Alī Rajab al-Şālihī entitled *Tahqīq Mabādī al-'Ulūm al-Aḥad 'Ashar*. Obviously, this work is intended as textbook that aims to expound the fundamentals of eleven subjects taught at al-Azhar. Although it is preferable that students are exposed to these fundamentals prior to their engagement and study of these subjects, not much is known of its application whether at the outset of each subject or in a separate learning session. Regardless, the book was reprinted for the second time in 1936 which might suggest its considerable use in the educational curriculum of al-Azhar at least until the first part of the twentieth century<sup>47</sup>.

## Conclusion

Based on the literatures analysed, this paper has managed to demonstrate the historical development of the ten fundamentals and that it found its origin through the introduction of the study of logic and its proliferation amongst the Muslims. Although the initial form of the concept was somewhat vague and ununiformed, its substance was, nonetheless, crystal clear especially in its function to provide a general understanding for the learner towards a subject to be studied. It was only much later that the varying forms of the concept comprising three or eight elements, were harmoniously assembled in verse to make up its final form, that is the ten fundamentals.

At the same time, the epistemic aims of Islamic learning, which have been argued to be universal in nature and congruent to the contemporary understanding, go

---

<sup>46</sup> Muştafā Riḍā al-Azharī, *Kashf al-Ghuyūm*, 19.

<sup>47</sup> See: 'Alī Rajab al-Şālihī, *Tahqīq Mabādī al-'Ulūm al-Aḥad 'Ashar* (Cairo: Maṭba'ah Wādī al-Mulūk, 1936), 2-4.

beyond the latter's secular perspective to include the spiritual-religious dimension of knowledge. In other word, although the learner should aim at attaining deep understanding of a subject that will enable him to utilise his knowledge critically with the suitable ethical construct in making proper intellectual judgement, he should also reach towards the realisation with certainty on the existence of Allah the Almighty and the ultimate purpose of this life. As such, his knowledge and expertise on a subject matter alone is no longer sufficient as he needs to accompany it with proper action that will ultimately be judged in the Hereafter.

In this regard, the adaptation of the concept of the ten fundamentals by the Muslims in their tradition of learning was primarily due to its significance, practicality and the need to provide a systematic and holistic perspective on the structure of knowledge and its hierarchy for the learner in a convenient, systematic and logical manner. In many ways, it assisted the learner towards achieving the epistemic aims of learning from the outset of his endeavour in seeking knowledge. Thus, it was only fitting that this concept was formally embedded within the curriculum of learning at al-Azhar University in the nineteenth century, and this has undoubtedly stimulated further writings and discussions on the matter.

Nonetheless, not much is known of this concept and its adaptation by Muslims in the current day scenario of Islamic learning. Present educational curriculum in many Muslim countries are markedly secular and modelled from the Western framework and modern perception of knowledge. Ultimately, this has resulted in the compartmentalisation of knowledge especially in the case of Islamic studies that has serious implications on the ability of its learners to understand, being critical and solve problems of the society effectively. Moreover, the selection of subject matter for the curriculum, especially

in higher education, is also driven by utilitarian and pragmatic factors rather than the epistemic aims of Islam<sup>48</sup>. In the long run, these would not only produce ill-equipped learners, but more importantly could impair the overall concept and structure of knowledge in Islam.

In this regard, it is only apt to revisit the concept of the ten fundamentals as discussed here and find the best possible method of its implementation, whether embedded or independently, within the existing curriculum of Islamic learning. This, I believe, would greatly assist the learner to not only know the priority of the various subjects in Islamic studies, but also help him to understand, relate and place them properly in the overall structure of knowledge in Islam.

### **Acknowledgement**

This paper is supported by Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia, through university research grant USIM/MG/UNISSA/FPQS/055012/70419.

### **References**

- Abdel Haleem, M.A.S. "Early Islamic Theological and Juristic Terminology: *Kitāb al-Hudūd fī al-Uṣūl*, by Ibn Fūrak", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 54 (1) 1991: 5-41.
- Abdel Haleem, M.A.S. *The Quran*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Adler, Mortimer J. and Charles Van Doren. *How to Read a Book: The Classic Guide to Intelligent Reading*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014.
- Al-Armawī, Qāḍī Maḥmūd. *Lawāmi' al-Asrār fī Sharḥ Maṭāli' al-Anwār fī al-Ḥikmah wa al-Manṭiq*. Maṭba'ah al-Ḥaj Muḥarram Afandī, 1885.

---

<sup>48</sup> For more details, refer to: Rosnani Hashim, *Towards an Islamic Curriculum: Principles and Issues* (Gombak: IIUM Press, 2019), 5-7.

- Al-Attas, Syed Muhammad Naquib. *The Concept of Education in Islam: A Framework for an Islamic Philosophy of Education*. Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1999.
- Al-Azharī, Muṣṭafā Riḍā. *Kashf al-Ghuyūm 'an Risālah Mabādī al-'Ulūm li al-Shaykh Muḥammad ibn 'Umar al-Ma'rūf bi Nawawī al-Jāwī*. Cairo: Dār al-Rifā'ī, 2019.
- Badi, Jamal and Mustapha Tajdin. *Creative Thinking: An Islamic Perspective*. Kuala Lumpur: IIUM Research Centre, 2005.
- El-Rouayheb, Khaled. *The Development of Arabic Logic 1200-1800*. Basel: Schwabe Verlag, 2019.
- Fakhry, Majid. *A History of Islamic Philosophy*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.
- Al-Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid. *al-Mustasfā min 'Ilm al-Uṣūl*. Cairo: Sidra, n.d.
- Al-Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid. *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*. Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2005.
- Hashim, Rosnani. *Towards an Islamic Curriculum: Principles and Issues*. Gombak: IIUM Press, 2019.
- Al-Ḥaṣkafī, Muḥammad ibn 'Alī. *al-Durr al-Mukhtār Sharḥ Tanwīr al-Abṣār wa Jāmi' al-Biḥār fī Furū' al-Fiqh al-Ḥanafī*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2002.
- Ibn 'Ābidīn, Muḥammad ibn Amīn. *Radd al-Muḥtār 'alā al-Durr al-Mukhtār Sharḥ Tanwīr al-Abṣār*. Riyadh: Dār 'Ālam al-Kutub, 2003.
- Ibn al-Akfānī, Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Sinjārī. *Irshād al-Qāsid ilā Asnā al-Maqāsid*. Beirut: n.p., 1904.
- Ibn al-Ḥājib, Jamāl al-Dīn 'Uthmān ibn 'Umar. *Mukhtaṣar Muntahā al-Su'ul wa al-Amal fī 'Ilmay al-Uṣūl wa al-Jadal*. Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2006.
- Mohd Fauzi Hamat, "Penghasilan Karya Sintesis antara Mantik dan *Uṣūl al-Fiqh*: Rujukan kepada Kitab *al-Mustasfā min 'Ilm al-Uṣūl* Karangan al-Imām al-Ghazzālī (m.505/1111)", *Afkar* 1, 2000: 132-133.



- Al-Nābulṣī, 'Abd al-Ghanī. *Rā'ihah al-Jannah Sharḥ Idā'ah al-Dujunah fī 'Aqā'id Ahl al-Sunnah*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, n.d.
- Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, al-Ḥusayn ibn al-Mufaḍḍal. *Al-Mufradāt fī Gharīb al-Qur'ān*. Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, n.d.
- Robertson, Emily. "The Epistemic Aims of Education", in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Education*, ed. Harvey Siegel. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009: 11-34.
- Rosenthal, Franz. *Knowledge Triumphant: The Concept of Knowledge in Medieval Islam*. Leiden: Brill, 2006.
- Rosenthal, Franz. *The Technique and Approach of Muslim Scholarship*. Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1947.
- Al-Ṣāliḥī, 'Alī Rajab. *Taḥqīq Mabādī al-'Ulūm al-Aḥad 'Ashar*. Cairo: Maṭba'ah Wādī al-Mulūk, 1936.
- Al-Sijistānī, Abū Dāwūd. *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1969.
- Al-Taftāzānī, Sa'ad al-Dīn Mas'ūd ibn 'Umar. *Al-Muṭawwal Sharḥ Talkhīṣ Miftāḥ al-'Ulūm*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2013.
- Al-Tahānawī, Muḥammad 'Alī. *Kashshāf Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Funūn wa al-'Ulūm*. Beirut: Maktabah Lubnān, 1996.
- Yahaya Jusoh and Azhar Muhammad. *Falsafah Ilmu dalam al-Quran: Ontologi, Epistemologi dan Aksiologi*. Johor Bahru: UTM Press, 2012.

Muhammad Mustaqim., “The Significance of the ‘Ten Fundamentals’ (*al-Mabādī’ al-‘Asharah*),” *Afkār* Special Issue 2 (2020): 45-78