

THE DICHOTOMY OF *JUZ'I* AND *KULLI* IN THE SUBJECT OF ISLAMIC THEOLOGY: A PRELIMINARY PROPOSAL

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Abstract

This article examines the inclusion of *kulli* (universal) and *juz'i* (particular) aspects in *kalam* (Islamic theology). Many theologians after al-Ghazali have emphasized the universality of *kalam* within the Islamic sciences. *Kalam* aims to offer rational justifications for the existence and unity of Allah SWT, the mission of the Prophet (PBUH), and the divine origin of the Qur'an. Other fields in Islamic studies require evidence from *kalam* to support their arguments, while *kalam* is considered a *kulli* source of legitimacy. However, some *kalam* issues derive solely from textual sources, similar to other Islamic sciences. This article presents these topics as a *juz'i* aspect of *kalam*. Studying past and present theologians' practices exposes methodological distinctions between *kulli* and *juz'i* issues. Given that *ahad* sources is utilized in specific subjects, it can be posited that the *mutakallimun*'s comprehension of 'knowledge' pertains to the *kulli* subjects of *kalam*. This differentiation may also contribute to distinguishing between *kalam* and '*aqa'id*.'

Keywords: *Kalam*; '*aqa'id*'; methodology of *Kalam*; *khobar al-wahid*; epistemology.

Khulasah

Makalah ini mengkaji aspek *kulli* (universal) dan *juz'i* (khusus) dalam Ilmu Kalam (teologi Islam). Ramai

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ahli teologi selepas al-Ghazali telah menekankan sifat universal Kalam dalam ilmu-ilmu Islam. Tujuan utama Ilmu Kalam adalah untuk memberikan justifikasi rasional mengenai kewujudan dan keesaan Allah SWT, kerasulan Nabi s.a.w, serta asal-usul al-Qur'an sebagai wahyu Ilahi. Bidang-bidang lain dalam pengajian Islam memerlukan bukti daripada Kalam untuk menyokong hujah mereka, manakala Kalam dianggap sebagai sumber legitimasi yang bersifat *kulli*. Walau bagaimanapun, beberapa isu dalam Kalam berasal semata-mata daripada sumber teks, yang mana ini sama dengan bidang ilmu Islam lain. Makalah ini membentangkan topik-topik tersebut sebagai aspek *juz'i* dalam Kalam. Kajian terhadap amalan ahli teologi terdahulu dan masa kini mendedahkan perbezaan metodologi antara isu *kulli* dan *juz'i*. Memandangkan sumber *ahad* digunakan dalam subjek-subjek tertentu, dapat diusulkan bahawa pemahaman *mutakallimin* terhadap 'ilmu' berkaitan dengan subjek *kulli* dalam kalam. Perbezaan ini juga mungkin menyumbang kepada perbezaan antara Ilmu Kalam dan 'Aqa'id.

Kata kunci: Ilmu Kalam; 'Aqa'id; metodologi Kalam; *khabar al-wahid*; epistemologi.

Introduction

Among the Islamic sciences, *kalam* (theology) is regarded as a *kulli* (universal) science, while the others are categorized as *juz'i* (particular) sciences. Al-Ghazali explains this distinction by stating that *kalam* establishes the foundations of religion, whereas other Islamic sciences address specific aspects of religion after these foundations are proven. This article argues that *kalam* is not universally *kulli* in all respects and, in certain contexts, should be classified among the *juz'i* sciences. Furthermore, this perspective introduces a novel approach to distinguishing between *kalam* and 'Aqa'id, highlighting their methodological differences. The study is expected to contribute to the methodology of *kalam* in these respects.

The use of *khabar al-wahid* as evidence in matters of faith has long been a contentious issue within Islamic theology. The debate is arguably exacerbated by the lack of a clear distinction between *kulli* (universal) and *juz'i* (particular) theological topics. This article seeks to explore the historical roots of this controversy and offers a novel perspective on this enduring debate.

Following the introduction, the article is structured into four distinct sections. The first section examines the concepts of *kulli* and *juz'i* sciences, with a focus on *kalam's* classification as a *kulli* science. The second section explores the *juz'i* aspects within the discipline of *kalam*. Building on this foundation, the third section highlights the significance of the *kulli* and *juz'i* distinction for *kalam's* methodology. Finally, the concluding section applies this framework to address specific classical and contemporary issues within the field.

In both classical and contemporary studies, no approach explicitly advocating for the division of theological topics into *kulli* and *juz'i* has been identified. However, we believe that the following statements from the introduction to al-Dawwani's commentary on the *'Adudiyah* are pertinent to this discussion:

"Peace be upon the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) who protects us from *taqlid* in the *usul* and *furu'* of the *kalam*."¹

Kalanbawi stated that the phrase *usul* and *furu'* of *kalam* could have four different meanings. In his first commentary, he provided a few lines of discourse that align with the existence of the *kulli* and *juz'i* aspects of *kalam*, as explained in this article.²

¹ Isma'il al-Kalanbawi, *Hashiyat al-Kalanbawi 'ala Sharh al-'Adudiyah* (Istanbul: Matbaai Amire, 1317H), 6.

² Al-Kalanbawi, *Hashiyat al-Kalanbawi*, 6.

Apart from this, several works address the concepts of *kulli* and *juz'i* sciences in the classification of knowledge. Ilyas Celebi's article entitled "The Problem of Subject Matter in the Science of Kalam from its Emergence to the Present"³, and Cabbar Sabil's article "The Mother of Islamic Sciences in al-Ghazali's Perspective" are among the recent studies on this subject.⁴ Additionally, many recent studies on the methodology of *kalam* have drawn attention. These studies present various interpretations of *kalam* as a *kulli* science, and indirectly, they have been referenced in this article.

Wilda Rochman Hakim and Shofiyullah Muzammil's "Renewal of 'Ilm al-Kalam in The Contemporary Era: A Study of Taha 'Abdurrahman's Metatheological Concept"⁵ and an article by Ismail Sik on "The Relationship between Theology and Usul al-Fiqh" are among the studies that address the methodology of theology.⁶ Although the distinction between *'aqa'id* and *kalam*, which is also the subject of this article, is mentioned in many studies, few independent works are focusing on this subject. Yasar Unal's article titled "On the Relationship between Kalam and 'Aqa'id" is one of the exceptions.⁷

³ Ilyas Selebi, "The Problem of Subject in Theology from its Emergence to the Present", *Marmara University Journal of Theology Faculty* 28 (2005), 5, <https://doi.org/10.15370/muifd.24052>.

⁴ Cabbar Sabil, "The Mother of Islamic Sciences in al-Ghazali's Perspective", *Jurnal Aqidah dan Filsafat Islam* 9(1) (2024), 30.

⁵ Wilda Rochman Hakim, "Renewal of 'Ilm al-Kalam in the Contemporary Era: A Study of Taha 'Abdurrahman's Methodological Concept", *Kanz Philosophia* 9(2) (2023), 353.

⁶ Ismail Sik, "Relationship Between Theology and Method of Law in Thought of Hanafi - Maturidite", *International Journal of Cultural and Social Studies* 2(1) (2016), 344.

⁷ Yasar Unal, "On the Relationship between Kalam and Akaid", *The Journal of Religious Studies (Dini Araştırmalar)* 14(40) (2012), 156.

The Concepts of *Kulli* and *Juz'i* Sciences and the Being of *Kalam* as a *Kulli* Science

Kulli and *juz'i* are two terms used in logic and philosophy with opposite meanings. In Arabic, the word 'kull' (كل), meaning 'the whole', expresses something belonging to the whole by adding the attributive suffix *ya* (ي). *Juz'i* (جزءي), on the other hand, refers to something belonging to the part, with the relative *ya* (ي) added to the word *juz*, meaning 'part' or 'section'. As a term, *kulli* is defined as "the word that expresses the individuals under the species and the existence indicated by that word".⁸ In the category of existence, *kulli* refers to a higher level of *juz'i*. On the other hand, *juz'i* is defined as "a concept that does not refer to the whole of a type of existence, but only to a part of it".⁹

Accordingly, since 'kind' is the highest category among the five universals in logic, it is always used for universal concepts. 'Species', on the other hand, is *juz'i* in relation to *genus* and *kulli* in relation to *differentia*. Although philosophers discuss the variations of these two concepts, the explanation of the five universals provided above is sufficient to understand the classification of Islamic sciences and the concept of *kulli* and *juz'i* sciences. We can say that the classification of sciences and the determination of their sub-branches follow a ranking from general to specific, much like the distinction between *genus*, *species*, and *differentia*.

The tradition of classifying sciences can be traced back to the Greek philosophers, at least considering the surviving written culture. The first attempts in this regard are attributed to Plato (427-347 BC) and Aristotle (384-322

⁸ Muhammad bin 'Ala al-Tahanawi, *Kashshaf Istilahat al-Funun wa al-'Ulum* (Beirut: Maktabah Lubnan Nashirun, 1996), 2: 1376.

⁹ Al-Tahanawi, *Kashshaf Istilahat al-Funun wa al-'Ulum*, 1: 560.

BC).¹⁰ In the history of Islamic thought, the tradition of counting and classifying sciences began with Islamic philosophers. This intellectual development, which started with the treatises of al-Jabir bin Hayyan (200/815) and al-Kindi (252/866), continued with al-Farabi (339/950) and Avicenna (428/1037).

Al-Farabi wrote an independent treatise on the subject titled *Ihsa' al-'Ulum*. In another work, *Maqalah fi ma Ba'da al-Tabi'ah*, he discusses the concepts of *kulli* and *juz'i* knowledge. While he classified sciences such as nature and geometry as *juz'i*, he regarded metaphysics—which he considered the science of *Tawhid*—as a *kulli* science.¹¹ The fact that metaphysics deals with existence makes it a *kulli* science, while other sciences, which are based on the concept of existence, are considered *juz'i*. Ibn Sina wrote a treatise titled *Aqşam al-'Ulum al-'Aqliyyah*, in which he regarded the study of existence, under the name of wisdom, as the highest form of knowledge, with other sciences being its derivatives.¹² According to the philosophers, philosophy, which addresses existence, is considered a *kulli* science.

It can be said that the attitude of the Peripatetic philosophers influenced al-Ghazali. Although al-Ghazali criticized the philosophers in many ways, it can be argued that he sometimes drew upon their ideas. In contrast to the philosophers' view of philosophy as the *kulli* science, with

¹⁰ Huseyin Adem Tuluca, "Tashkoprizada Ahmad Afandi's Classification of Sciences", *Cukurova University Journal of Faculty of Divinity* 21(2) (2021), 543.

¹¹ Abu Nasr Muhammad bin Muhammad al-Farabi, "Maqalah fi Ma Ba'da al-Tabi'a", in *al-Thamarah al-Mardiyyah fi Ba'd al-Risalat al-Farabiyyah* (Beirut: Dar al-Farabi, 2012), 211-214; Ibrahim Agah Cubukcu, "The Division of Sciences according to Islamic Authors and the Place of al-Ghazali Among Them (Islam Muelliflerine Gore Ilmlerin Taksimi ve Bunlar Arasında Gazzali'nin Yeri)", *Journal of the Faculty of Theology* 7 (1960), 121.

¹² Abu 'Ali al-Husayn Ibn Sina, *Tis'u Rasa'il* (Cairo: Dar al-Arab, n.d.), 104-105.

all other sciences being considered subordinate to it, al-Ghazali placed *kalam* on the same level as philosophy. He regarded *kalam* as a *kulli* science that analyzes existence.¹³

Al-Ghazali is the first to clearly categorize the Islamic sciences into *kulli* and *juz'i*. While it is possible to draw indirect conclusions from the works of al-Farabi and Avicenna before him, al-Ghazali's statements on the subject are much more explicit. Not only did he establish this distinction, but he also conceptualized *kalam* as a *kulli* science.¹⁴ Although al-Ghazali presented various classifications of sciences in his works, his distinction between the religious and rational sciences in *al-Risalah al-Ladunniyyah* and *al-Mustasfa* is the most comprehensive.¹⁵ According to him, the religious sciences are divided into two branches: *usul al-din* and *furu' al-din*. The first branch of knowledge he addresses under *usul al-din* is *kalam*. In *al-Mustasfa*, he further elaborates on this subject as follows:

“Know that the sciences are divided into two parts: rational and religious. Medicine, mathematics, and engineering can be called rational sciences. Religious sciences, on the other hand, can be classified as theology, *fiqh*, jurisprudence, *hadith*, *tafsir*, and the science of the subtle. When we say the sciences of the *batin*, we mean the sciences of the heart, the sciences of purifying the heart from bad morals. Rational and religious sciences are divided into two parts: *kulli* and *juz'i*. Among the religious

¹³ Omer Turker “Classification of Sciences in Islamic Thought”, *Journal of Sociology* 22 (2011), 533-534.

¹⁴ Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali, *al-Mustasfa* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1993), 6; Celebi, *The Problem of Subject in Kalam*, 40.

¹⁵ Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali, *al-Risalah al-Ladunniyyah* (Cairo: Dar al-Muqattam li al-Nasr, 2014), 38; al-Ghazali, *al-Mustasfa*, 6; Cubukcu, *The Division of Sciences*, 126-127.

sciences, *kalam* is the universal (*kulli*) one. Other religious sciences such as *fiqh*, *usul al-fiqh*, *hadith* and *tafsir* are the minor sciences. Thus, the commentator deals with the meaning of the book, the *muhaddith* with the authenticity of the *hadith*, the jurist with the judgments of the taxpayer's actions, and the methodologist with the evidence of the judgments. Theologians have the widest perspective of the religious sciences. They deal with what exists."¹⁶

The basis of al-Ghazali's division of Islamic sciences into *kulli* and *juz'i* sciences lies in the fact that theology establishes the religion itself by addressing what exists. Since *kalam* affirms that the Qur'an is revealed by God and that the Prophet Muhammad is His Messenger, it is considered *kulli* in relation to other sciences. The other religious sciences would lose their intellectual basis without this foundational framework. Therefore, *kalam* serves as the foundation of Islamic sciences, intellectually grounding the religion. Naturally, the proof of the religion's truth is demonstrated both through external evidence and the consideration of existence.

After al-Ghazali, many Ash'ari and Maturidi theologians emphasized the *kulli* aspect of *kalam*, asserting that it is *ashraf al-'ulum* (the most noble of sciences) and that other sciences depend on its conclusions. As a *kulli* science, theology aims to prove the religion itself through an understanding of existence and serves as the source of legitimacy for other sciences. On the one hand, *kalam* establishes the existence of Allah and His attributes; on the other hand, it intellectually proves that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is His Messenger and that the Qur'an

¹⁶ Al-Ghazali, *al-Mustasfa*, 6.

is His word. In making this argument, *kalam* starts with existence and relies on the necessary principles of reason.

Therefore, while adopting a *kulli* approach, theologians rely not on textual evidence but instead on rational arguments. To illustrate this, when proving the unity of Allah, the verse "Say, Allah is One" (al-Ikhlās 112:1) from the Holy Qur'an is not initially presented as evidence. At the first stage, the fact that this verse is from Allah is not yet established. Instead, following a deductive method, the existence of Allah is first proved through reasoning such as *huduth*, possibility, and other rational methods. Then, His unity is intellectually demonstrated using arguments like *burhan al-tamanu'* (the proof of incompatibility) and *burhan al-tawarud* (the proof of contradiction). The results of these rational deductions are later found to be consistent with the verses of the Qur'an.

The *Juz'i* Aspect of the Science of *Kalam*

The science of *kalam* proves the existence, unity, and attributes of Allah SWT, as well as the Prophethood of Muhammad (PBUH) and the divine origin of the Qur'an, using rational proofs. After the foundational proofs of theology, other Islamic sciences gain the opportunity to address their respective questions. Commentators focus on matters related to a deeper understanding and interpretation of the Qur'an, such as the relationships between verses, their context (*siyaq* and *sibaq*), their classification as *Makki* or *Madani*, and the status of *nasikh* and *mansukh*. *Hadith* scholars have developed a system to assess the authenticity of statements attributed to the Prophet (PBUH) and to accurately determine his Sunnah. *Hadith* sciences also examine the meanings of *hadith*, the circumstances of their occurrence, and related matters. These two branches of knowledge aim to preserve the Qur'an and Sunnah, the primary sources of Islam, in their original form and to ensure their correct understanding and interpretation.

The Islamic sciences of *Fiqh*, '*Aqa'id*, and *Tasawwuf*, on the other hand, focus on determining the issues related to their respective disciplines from the Qur'an and Sunnah through a rational lens. These three sciences correspond to the first three questions asked in the Jibril *hadith*, each representing a scientific discipline within their domain.¹⁷ While acts of worship such as prayer, fasting, zakat, and pilgrimage fall under the purview of *Fiqh*, matters of belief, including faith in Allah, His angels, His books, His messengers, the Last Day, and destiny, are addressed by '*Aqa'id*.

Performing worship as if one were seeing Allah pertains to the realm of Sufism, which focuses on spiritual matters and inner devotion as mentioned in the Qur'an and Sunnah. *Fiqh* addresses the *ahkam* (rulings) related to acts of worship and transactions, emphasizing the practical and legal aspects of Islamic life as derived from the Qur'an and Sunnah. Meanwhile, '*Aqa'id* concerns matters of faith, focusing on the fundamental beliefs outlined in the Qur'an and Sunnah. Together, these disciplines provide a holistic framework for understanding and practicing Islam.

In order to make inferences about belief from the Qur'an and Sunnah, it is essential to establish that the Qur'an is from Allah and that the Prophet is His messenger, similar to other *juz'i* sciences. For example, the existence of the torment of the grave is not a belief that can be derived through rational reasoning alone. Instead, it is an inference drawn from the Qur'an and Sunnah regarding belief. Such inferences are no different from those made in other sciences derived from the Qur'an and Sunnah, except that they pertain specifically to belief. Therefore, we can assert that these issues represent the minor aspect of *kalam*.

¹⁷ Muhammad bin Isma'il al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari* (Cairo: Dar Al-Taaseel, 2012), *hadith* no. 50, 10:224.

Theology has three main tasks: proof, determination and defense.¹⁸ These tasks can be outlined as follows: to prove the existence of Allah SWT through intellectual proofs, to determine from the scriptures what is to be believed, and to remove any doubts that may arise regarding these two matters. The first task corresponds to the *kulli* approach of *kalam*, while the second pertains to its *juz'i* aspect. Although all three aspects are collectively referred to as *kalam* in the literature, the particular (*juz'i*) aspect can also be referred to as '*aqa'id*'.

Celebi states the following about the science of theology: "The science of theology deals both with the principles (*al-'aqidah*) revealed by Allah with clear evidence and clearly communicated by the Messenger of Allah (PBUH), and with the means of proving and explaining them."¹⁹ When this statement is combined with the ideas presented in the article, the following conclusion can be drawn: The particular (*juz'i*) aspect of *kalam* is primarily based on the scriptures, while the universal (*kulli*) conclusions of *kalam* are mainly derived from reason.

Since early times, the science of theology has been referred to by various names, such as *Usul al-Din* and *al-Fiqh al-Akbar*. Among these, '*Aqa'id* and *Kalam* are the most commonly used. Various scholars have stated that these two names are not synonymous and that there is a distinction between them.²⁰ "It can be said that the division of the subjects of *kalam* into *kulli* and *juz'i* highlights the difference between these two terms. Accordingly, it may be suggested that the *juz'i* subjects of *kalam* should be called '*aqa'id*. Additionally, the following statement by Celebi,

¹⁸ Fehmi Sogukoglu, "Methods of Proof, Determination and Defence in *Kalam*" in *The Problem of Methodology in the Science of Kalam*, ed. Mahmut Cinar et al. (Gaziantep: Gaziantep University Press, 2017), 57.

¹⁹ Celebi, *The Problem of Subject Matter*, 9.

²⁰ Unal, *On Kalam-Akaid*, 173-174.

which distinguishes between *kalam* and '*aqā'id*, is also important:

"On the other hand, theology explains all its principles by itself, and there are no principles, whether religious or secular, that are explained by other sciences. This is because Islamic scholars have expanded the subject matter of *kalam* to include the '*aqidahs* and the theoretical issues on which they are based".²¹

When these statements are combined with the classification proposed in the article, it becomes clear that '*aqā'id* constitute the *juz'i* aspect of *kalam*, while the theoretical arguments on which '*aqā'id* are based form the universal (*kulli*) aspect of *kalam*. However, contrary to this, we can assert that the Qur'an and Sunnah are proven through the theoretical issues that form the basis of al-'*aqā'id*. In fact, the topics of al-'*aqā'id* require theological proof based on the Qur'an and Sunnah. In this case, al-'*aqā'id* relies on the universal (*kulli*) proof of *kalam*. Therefore, we can conclude that the statement "theology has no principles explained by other sciences" applies exclusively to the *kulli* aspects of theology, as follows:

Kalam (*kulli* aspect of *kalam*)

Qur'an and Sunnah

Al-'*Aqā'id* (*juz'i* aspect of *kalam*)

When the *kulli* and *juz'i* aspects of *kalam* are considered together, *kalam* appears as a self-sufficient branch of science. However, when we evaluate '*aqā'id* separately, the issues of '*aqā'id* must categorically be derived from the Qur'an and Sunnah. In this respect, it is no different from other branches of science.

²¹ Celebi, *The Problem of Subject Matter*, 10.

The Significance of the Distinction Between the *Kulli* and the *Juz'i* in Terms of Theological Methodology

Some theological issues related to divinity and prophethood are associated with the *kulli* aspects of *kalam*, while issues concerning the hereafter (*sam'iyyat*) pertain to the specific (*juz'i*) aspects, i.e., '*aqā'id*'. While the topics of *sam'iyyat* fall entirely within the scope of '*aqā'id*', some topics related to divinity and prophethood are specific, while others are universal. The article distinguishes between the subjects of *kalam*, which include the existence, unity, and attributes of Allah, and the subjects of '*aqā'id*', such as the names of Allah and the possibility of seeing Him. Prophethood-related issues, such as the possibility of sending prophets, the miracle of guidance, and the attribute of trustworthiness, fall under theology, whereas topics like Muhammad being the last prophet and the second coming of Jesus (*nuzul 'Isa*) are also addressed in theology. The distinguishing element in classifying these subjects is whether the proof can be established solely through reason, sensory perception, and reliable reports, without the need for divine intervention. In other words, it concerns being based on knowledge ('*ilm*').

In *kalam*, reason, the senses, and accurate reports are accepted as methods of acquiring knowledge. Knowledge is the first issue addressed in theology within the context of *wasā'il* (means of obtaining knowledge). While there is some controversy over whether knowledge or existence should take precedence, knowledge holds a special place in determining the methodology employed in *kalam*. Although there are various differences in the definitions of knowledge, it should be emphasized that in theological terminology, knowledge is not simply considered as 'the existence of any knowledge in humans.' In the definitions

of the Mu'tazilah and Ahl al-Sunnah, the emphasis is placed on the compatibility of knowledge with reality.²²

Therefore, an incorrect rational conclusion, an erroneous observation, or an inaccurate report is not accepted as knowledge. In other words, one cannot speak of the truth or falsity of knowledge unless it is one hundred percent true. Thus, in theological terms, the concepts of 'false knowledge' and 'certain knowledge' contain a logical error. Knowledge must be certain and fully true; anything that does not meet this standard is not considered 'knowledge.' Concepts such as *al-zann* (opinion) and *al-shakk* (doubt) are used in the literature to describe this distinction. Although different disciplines may attribute different meanings to 'knowledge', it should be noted that its usage in theology follows the above understanding.

In both classical and contemporary theological works, it is stated that there are three methods for gaining knowledge: reason, the senses, and true reports. Through these three methods, one can attain 'knowledge'. Since these methods can also be employed to acquire knowledge at the level of faith or conjecture, theology has clarified the conditions under which these methods can be considered valid for acquiring knowledge. Accordingly, the intellect is the source of two kinds of knowledge: necessary (*daruri*) and inferential (*istidlali*). Necessary knowledge is that which is intuitively known without the need for reasoning. An example of this is knowing that a part of something is always smaller than the whole. Inferential knowledge, on the other hand, is the knowledge derived from reasoning, such as recognizing the existence of fire from the presence

²² Abu al-Hasan 'Abd al-Jabbar bin Ahmad al-Qadi 'Abd al-Jabbar, *Sharh al-Usul al-Khamsah* (Cairo: Maktabah al-Wahbah, 1996), 46; 'Abd al-Qahir al-Baghdadi, *Usul al-Din* (Istanbul: n.pb., 1928), 6; Nur al-Din al-Sabuni, *al-Kifayah fi al-Hidayah* (Beirut: Dar Ibn Hazm, 2014), 45.

of smoke.²³ If a correct conclusion is drawn, the intellect will provide accurate information. Theologians agree that the five senses are valid sources of knowledge, provided they are functioning properly.²⁴ However, if the senses are impaired or if there are misleading factors between the sensed object and the individual, the knowledge gained through the senses will be at the level of conjecture.

The true narrative (*al-khabar al-sadiq*) is divided into two categories. The first is the narrative given by a person claiming prophethood, supported by miracles. The second is the trustworthy narrative provided by a group of people so numerous that it is impossible for them to collectively unite in falsehood or error. In this case, *ahad* news does not constitute knowledge and is considered to express conjecture.

The reason why the definition of knowledge and the methods of acquiring knowledge are meticulously emphasized in theology is the aim to prove the truth of religion, thereby establishing its role as a universal science. Among the methods of gaining knowledge mentioned above, the question of trustworthy news, in particular, requires closer examination. In fact, for many, the concept of reliable news is often associated exclusively with religious narratives. However, theologians used the concept of true news primarily in the context of constructing a universal science of the knowledge of existence. The examples they provided for true news support this view.

For instance, al-Sabuni, after asserting that *mutawatir* news is a necessary cause of knowledge, gave examples of sultans from the past and cities located in distant places.²⁵ Similarly, al-Amidi, after citing the Sumeniyyah and the Berahimah, who denied that *tawatir* constitutes

²³ Nur al-Din al-Sabuni, *al-Bidayah min al-Kifayah fi al-Hidayah* (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif, 1969), 30-31.

²⁴ Al-Sabuni, *al-Kifayah*, 48.

²⁵ Al-Sabuni, *al-Bidayah*, 30.

knowledge, states that anyone with reason necessarily knows about distant cities, past nations, sultans who lived in ancient times, prophets, imams, famous personalities, and historical events.²⁶ It is noteworthy that neither of these two authors used religious examples in their arguments. On the other hand, religious knowledge transmitted as trustworthy is also extensively used in universal matters. For example, information such as the fact that Prophet Muhammad lived in Mecca and brought the Qur'an as a miracle falls into this category.

In the theological works of the Maturidi and Ash'ari schools, many matters of faith are determined by *ahad* news. This situation may appear to present a contradiction between practice and theory.²⁷ However, it is a principle accepted by most theologians that *ahad* news does not constitute knowledge. Ramadan al-Buti, a contemporary scholar of *kalam*, summarized this issue with the following statement: "A judgment on faith cannot be based on speculative narratives, even if they are true (*sahih*)."²⁸ Although some Ash'ari scholars have argued that *ahad* news gives knowledge in the presence of suppositions.²⁹

²⁶ Sayf al-Din al-Amidi, *al-Ihkam fi Usul al-Ahkam* (Damascus & Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islami, 1402H), 2: 15.

²⁷ Fehmi Sogukoglu, "The Possibility of Classifying the Subjects of Aqidah with regard to Certainty from the Perspective of Ahl al-Sunnah", *Sakarya University Journal of Faculty of Theology* 25.47 (2023), 183. <https://doi.org/10.17335/sakaifd.1256294>.

²⁸ Sa'id Ramadan al-Buti, *Kubra al-Yaqiniyyat al-Kawniyyah* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr al-Mu'asir, 2009), 35-36.

²⁹ Rıza Korkmazgoz has written a comprehensive article on the opinions of the Maturidi and Ash'ari scholars on the epistemological value of *khbar al-wahid*. Since Korkmaz has dealt with the issue in detail, this article avoids going into the details of the issue in order to avoid repetition of information. To summarise, the Maturidis have clearly stated that the *khbar al-wahid* does not constitute knowledge. While some of the Ash'aris say that the news does not constitute knowledge, others say that the news can express knowledge in the presence of presumptions. Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'ari, al-Baqillani, al-Juwayni, al-Ghazali are of the first opinion, while al-Amidi and Ibn Hajar al-

However, the general opinion is contrary to this view. As a solution to the problem, we can claim that the issues mentioned by al-Maturidi and the Ash'ari scholars in the context of the theory of knowledge are valid for universal theological issues. According to them, matters of faith can be determined by presumptive evidence in more specific issues. For example, in *al-Fiqh al-Akbar*, which is a definitively accurate theological text, the concepts of God's unity (*tawhid*), the eternity of His attributes, and the sanctity of His essence are based on specific religious data. Furthermore, "the most virtuous people after the prophets are Abu Bakr, then 'Umar, then 'Uthman, then 'Ali."³⁰ Additionally, "the message of the *mi'raj* is true. He who rejects it is a misguided bid'atist. The appearance of the Dajjal, the Ya'juj and Ma'juj, the rising of the sun from the west, the coming of Jesus from heaven, and the signs of the apocalypse reported in the *al-khabar al-sahih* are all true."³¹ He also addresses uncertainties, such as the wiping of the feet and the Sunnah of performing the Tarawih prayer as matters of *'aqa'id*. Similar issues arise in other *'aqa'id* texts.³²

On the question of the most virtuous person after the prophets, al-Iji says: "We do not have the opportunity to make a certain and definite judgment on the question of virtuousness". Then he says: "It is seen that none of the proofs is conclusive for the person who is rational. But the past scholars of our sect have said that the most virtuous is Abu Bakr, then 'Umar, then 'Uthman, then 'Ali. We should

'Asqalani are of the second opinion. See, Riza Korkmazgoz, "The Value of Knowledge and Evidence of *Khabar al-Wahid* in the Science of Kalam", *Journal of Academic Research in Religious Sciences* 18(1) (2018), 225.

³⁰ Nu'man bin Thabit Abu Hanifah, "al-Fiqh al-Akbar", in *Five Works of Imam al-A'zam* (Istanbul: Ifav, 2017), 55.

³¹ Abu Hanifah, "al-Fiqh al-Akbar," 58.

³² Abu Ja'far al-Tahawi, *al-Aqidah al-Tahawiyah* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islami, 1414H).

follow them and leave the truth of the matter to Allah."³³ This attitude of al-Iji resembles the behavior of *muqallids* rather than the construction of a critical faith. As a result, the theologians did not adhere to the principles outlined in the examples above within the context of the theory of knowledge.

It should be noted that the possibility of using *al-khabar al-wahid* as evidence in matters of faith and its expression of knowledge are two distinct concepts. Abu al-Yusr al-Bazdawi (d. 482/1089) articulated this idea as follows:

"As for the reports of the *ahad* on matters of the hereafter, there are famous ones and lesser-known ones. However, this kind of news requires both action and some knowledge. What is meant by action here is the attachment of the heart to it. Indeed, action is above knowledge and cognition, and it is not a necessary consequence of them."

'Ala' al-Din al-Bukhari, commenting on this statement, affirms that even if the message does not require knowledge, it does require faith.³⁴

The view we advocate—that theological topic should be divided into *kulli* and *juz'i*—can be compared to al-Dawwani's division of theological topics into major and minor.³⁵ This distinction does not imply that *kulli* topics are proven by absolute proof and *juz'i* topics by inferential proof. While all *kulli* matters are based on knowledge, some *juz'i* matters may be based on knowledge, while others may be based on conjecture. For instance, al-Sarakhsi, a Hanafi jurist, states that *khabar al-wahid* does not express

³³ Al-Iji, *al-Mawaqif*, 412.

³⁴ 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn Ahmad 'Ala' al-Din al-Bukhari, *Kashf al-Asrar Sharh al-Usul al-Bazdawi* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, 1997), 2: 547-548.

³⁵ Al-Kalanbawi, *Hashiyat al-Kalanbawi*, 6.

knowledge, yet it can be used with conjecture in matters such as the torment of the grave, the questioning by al-Munkar and al-Nakir, and the sighting of Allah in the hereafter.³⁶

Again, 'Izz al-Din 'Abd al-Salam states that one who rejects a matter of *'aqa'id* that is proven by fictitious evidence is not considered a disbeliever. He mentions intercession, *al-mizan*, and the torment of the grave in the context of matters based on fictitious evidence. However, he asserts that anyone who denies the resurrection of the dead, reckoning, reward, and punishment will be considered an unbeliever.³⁷

All the issues mentioned in this paragraph are from the *sam'iyat*, and according to the classification made in this article, they fall under the minor issues of *kalam*, or in other words, the issues of *'aqa'id*. Therefore, some of the minor issues of *kalam* are based on conclusive evidence. Nevertheless, according to the practice of many Maturidi and Ash'ari scholars, conclusions can be drawn on certain superficial matters through *zanni* evidence. However, this does not mean that every *al-hadith al-sahih* can be used in matters of faith. In fact, it is well-known that the four madhhabs do not act on every *al-hadith al-sahih*, even in practical matters.³⁸

Ibn Humam (d. 861/1457), one of the later Maturidis, clearly states in *al-Musayarah* that most issues of *'aqa'id* are based on knowledge, while some are based on conjecture. The commentary on this work mentions that

³⁶ Abu Bakr Muhammad bin Ahmad al-Sarakhsi, *Usul al-Sarakhsi* (Hyderabad: Ihya' al-Ma'arif al-Nu'maniyyah, 1372H), 1: 321-330.

³⁷ 'Izz al-Din Ibn 'Abd al-Salam, *al-Qawa'id al-Kubra* (Damascus: Dar al-Qalam, 2000), 1: 183; Adnan Algul, *The Place and Importance of Izz al-Din ibn Abd al-Salam in Islamic Legal Science* (Istanbul: Cira Akademi, 2017), 156.

³⁸ Abdullah Celik, *Buharinin Sahih'inde Dort Mezhebe Gore Amel Edilmeyen Hadisler (Some Hadiths in Bukhari's Sahih That Four Sunni Schools did Not Act Upon Them)* (Ankara: Fecr, 2024).

matters such as the condition of being male in prophethood are based on supposition.³⁹ It is believed that al-Kawthari, one of the later scholars, also held this view. In his work *Nazrat al-'Abirah*, in which he asserts that the appearance of 'Isa (*nuzul*) is a matter of faith that must be believed, he states the following: "An *ahad al-khabar al-sahih* can create a firm belief in some people, while a firm proof may not create belief in some people".⁴⁰

Based on this information, it can be said that many scholars, both al-Maturidi and al-Ash'ari, explicitly stated that some of the minor issues of theology were based on conjecture. The fact that the Ahl al-Sunnah do not *takfir* their opponents in matters of faith such as *ru'yat Allah*, *nuzul 'Isa*, and the torment of the grave—issues that are among the minor topics of *kalam*—confirms this idea. In fact, if the aforementioned issues were part of the *kulli* issues or the knowledge-based elements of religion, they would have been expected to lead to *takfir*, since denying them would entail rejecting something related to the essence of religion.

As a result, we can conclude that since *khabar al-wahid* is not considered certain knowledge, it cannot be used to prove *kulli* matters. However, it can be used to establish *juz'i* matters (related to *'aqa'id*) in the presence of presumptions. Although this approach is not always explicitly stated, it is reflected in the works of Maturidi and Ash'ari scholars, as we have illustrated with some examples above.

Application of the Distinction Between *Kulli-Juz'i* to Some Classical and Current Issues

It has already been mentioned that *kulli* theological questions must be based on knowledge, while *juz'i*

³⁹ Kamal al-Din Ibn Abu Sharif, *al-Musamarah fi Sharh al-Musayarah* (Cairo: al-Maktabah al-Azhariyyah li al-Turath, 2006), 9: 11.

⁴⁰ Muhammad Zahid al-Kawthari, *Nazrah al-'Abirah* (Cairo: Dar al-Jil li al-Tiba'ah, 1987), 87-88.

questions can be based on both conjecture and knowledge. Therefore, *kulli* matters include definitive judgments, i.e., matters that are *wajib* (obligatory) and *muhal* (impossible), while *juz'i* matters include issues that are intellectually possible.

If a systematic approach is taken from the outermost to the innermost *kulli* issues, the first place will be occupied by the proofs of Allah's existence in response to atheism. Theologians prove the existence of Allah through proofs such as *huduth* (origination), *imkan* (possibility), and *nizam* (order). As a necessary consequence of this proof and as an expression of rational necessity, Allah is called *wajib al-wujud* (the Necessary Existent). After proving His existence, the belief in *tawhid* (divine unity) is established against the trinitarian and dualistic approaches using proofs like *burhan al-tamanu'* (the proof of incompatibility) and *burhan al-tawarud* (the proof of contradiction).⁴¹

It should be noted that the al-Qur'an al-Karim addresses the human mind in opposition to beliefs that distort *tawhid* and involve *shirk*. The warnings in the verses, in essence, caution that "one should not believe in anything that is intellectually contradictory."⁴² Atheism and polytheistic beliefs are not only intellectually flawed but also incompatible with the teachings of the Qur'an. What follows are ideas that, although intellectually impossible, have found support among some Muslims and are somehow linked to Qur'anic teachings. The misconception held by the Mushabbihah (anthropomorphism) faction—that Allah resembles a

⁴¹ For these two demonstrations, see: Samih Dughaym, *Mawsu'at Mustalahat 'Ilm al-Kalam al-Islami* (Beirut: Maktabah Lubnan Nashirun, 1998), 380-381.

⁴² "(Abraham) said, Do ye then worship, besides Allah, things that can neither be of any good to you nor do you harm? Fie upon you, and upon the things that ye worship besides Allah! Have ye no sense?" al-Anbiya' 21: 66-67.

creature—is firmly rejected by both the Mu'tazilites and the Ahl al-Sunnah, who uphold the concept of *tanzih*.⁴³

This approach, which is primarily rejected on the basis of rational principles, is also refuted by the scriptures, as it deals with a universal subject. With the necessity of certain rational deductions, the essence of Allah is eternal, and the eternal *wajib al-wujud* (necessary existence) cannot possess the qualities unique to created phenomena. Things that exist in space and are made of matter and *arad* (accidents) are created afterwards. Therefore, Allah is free from time and space, of which He is the Creator. The Mushabbihah, on the other hand, who approached the issue by taking the literal meaning of the texts, attributed the reported attributes to Allah's essence in the same way they are understood for bodies. Although the Mushabbihah relied on evidence according to their own criteria, they developed a belief contrary to the basic principles of reason and, as a result, adopted an erroneous belief.

Since the issue between the Munazzihah (those who affirm God's transcendence) and the Mushabbihah (those who anthropomorphize God) could be distinguished through the undisputed judgments of reason, it did not lead to any serious debate among Muslims. However, there are issues between the al-Mu'tazilah and the Ahl al-Sunnah that are more difficult for reason to resolve, leading to intense debates. While it is debatable whether these issues fall under the category of *kulli* or *juz'i*, strong opinions can be formed on some of them. The attributes of subordinate attributes belonging to the essence, the attribute of *kalam*, the creatureliness of the Qur'an, and *ru'yatullah* are the most prominent of these issues.⁴⁴ As an example, we can examine the issue of *ru'yatullah*.

⁴³ Fehmi Sogukoglu, *Tanzih in Islamic Thought (Islam Dusuncesinde Tenzih)* (Ankara: İlahiyat, 2022), 196-198.

⁴⁴ Since the article aims at a theoretical construction, it is sufficient to mention a few examples. Many of the controversial issues between

According to the al-Mu'tazilah system of thought, the visibility of Allah must be considered among the *kulli* issues of theology. They argue that it is intellectually impossible to see Allah. In order to see something, certain qualities of being in space, such as alignment, are required. Al-Qadi 'Abd al-Jabbar explains the matter as follows:

"This method of proof is based on the following statements: First, we mortals see with our eyes. Second, he who sees with the organs of sight can see the object either in front of him or in the state of being present to him. Third, it is not permissible for Allah to be opposite to someone, to be present to him, or to be in this context. Allah, the Creator of the universe, is exempt from this. Therefore, Allah cannot be seen."⁴⁵

In contrast to this Mu'tazilah argument, the Ahl al-Sunnah accept that it is intellectually possible to see Allah. While the function of seeing may be as the Mu'tazilah say in this world, the nature of seeing in the hereafter is not known. According to the Ahl al-Sunnah, the cause of seeing something is its existence. Since Allah exists, He can be seen.⁴⁶ If the possibility of seeing Allah is determined intellectually, it can be inferred from the presumptive judgments found in the scriptures that Allah can be seen. Therefore, according to the Ahl al-Sunnah, the believers will see Allah in Paradise.⁴⁷ However, since this judgment

the Mu'tazilites and Ahl al-Sunnah can be investigated in terms of being *kulli* and *juz'i*.

⁴⁵ Abu al-Hasan 'Abd al-Jabbar bin Ahmad al-Qadi 'Abd al-Jabbar, *Sharh al-Usul al-Khamsah (Topkapi Nusha)* (Istanbul: Presidency of the Manuscript Society of Turkey, 2013), 1: 400.

⁴⁶ Al-Sabuni, *al-Kifayah*, 160.

⁴⁷ Since our subject is not the analysis of this issue, we have not tried to enter into a long discussion and determine the result. However, we can say that Ahl al-Sunnah has followed a more accurate method in this matter. The possibility of seeing Allah in the Hereafter is not a matter

is not based on conclusive knowledge, one who does not believe in it cannot be declared a disbeliever (*kafir*).

We can observe disagreements within the Ahl al-Sunnah on some issues based on the distinction between *kulli* and *juz'i*. One of the most prominent of these disagreements is the issue of *taklif ma la yutaq* (the obligation to do what is beyond one's capacity). According to the Maturidis, Allah does not oblige any of His servants with what they cannot bear, while according to the Ash'arites, He can. Al-Sabuni clearly summarizes the issue as follows:

"Practically speaking, there is a consensus among the *ummah* that Allah does not oblige any creature to do what it is not capable of doing. The dispute in this matter is whether the matter is intellectually possible or not."

Al-Sabuni evaluated the issue from exactly the same perspective as we have approached it, and he regarded *taklif ma la yutaq* as a *kulli* issue, emphasizing that Allah is the ultimate Judge and that it is intellectually impossible. Based on this, we can argue that the Ash'arite view on this issue is incorrect. There is both *knowledge* on this issue, and there is no statement in the scriptures that contradicts this knowledge. On the contrary, the Qur'an states: "Allah does not burden a soul beyond that it can bear" (al-Baqarah 2:286). As Sa'id Fudah notes, this disagreement has no practical consequences, but it is theoretically important in terms of determining the methodology of the sects.⁴⁸

It has already been stated that *kulli* issues include matters that the intellect considers either obligatory or contradictory. As can be seen from the above examples, if a *kulli* issue based on knowledge contradicts the implication

that can be deduced with today's data. Therefore, the issue falls within the scope of the possible.

⁴⁸ Sa'id Fudah, *Sharh al-Asha'irah wa al-Maturidiyyah* (Amman: Dar al-Fath, 2011), 39-40.

of any *nass* (text), then the *nass* should be interpreted (*ta'wil*) in an appropriate way. This *ta'wil* does not mean distorting the *nass* or attempting to fit its meaning to reason, but rather trying to find the correct meaning intended by the *nass*. We can illustrate this situation with various examples, such as the reinterpretation of certain verses in the Qur'an in light of the scientific understanding of the roundness of the earth.

The roundness of the earth is a piece of 'knowledge' that has been established through sensory observation by those who have had the opportunity to observe it from space. For the general population, who do not have the chance to directly observe this (*'ayn al-yaqin*), it becomes knowledge because it has been transmitted in a trustworthy manner. In such cases, if there are any teachings in the Qur'an and Sunnah that could be interpreted to suggest the earth is flat, they should be understood in the light of this knowledge. This principle can be applied to many contemporary issues. It is crucial that this interpretation is grounded in 'knowledge.'

Considering the above examples, we can say that the distinction between *kulli* and *juz'i* helps clarify the relationship between the knowledge gained from science and the *nusus* (texts). It is well known that the theologians of their time used disciplines such as physics, chemistry, and biology to address universal questions, including the existence and oneness of Allah, as well as the proof of the prophet's prophethood. Of course, it should be noted that while they benefited from these sciences, they adhered to the principles they had established in their theological knowledge.

Conclusion

This article explores the possibility of classifying the subjects of *kalam* into *kulli* and *juz'i*. Based on the practice of theologians, it is concluded that such a classification is not only possible but necessary. Although many

theologians introduce the theory of knowledge at the beginning of their theological works, this approach cannot be applied uniformly to all the issues addressed within the same works. Therefore, it is essential to differentiate between topics and determine which methodology is appropriate for each.

There must be a logical distinction when determining whether a subject is *kulli* or *juz'i*. In Islamic sciences, *kulli* knowledge refers to matters that establish the religion itself and must be based on certain rational conclusions. Accordingly, the foundational principles of belief, which can be determined through reason rather than scripture, form the *kulli* subjects of *kalam*. When a matter of belief is to be accepted because it is rooted in scripture, it falls under the category of *'aqa'id* (matters of faith). In other words, the *kulli* subjects of *kalam* are those matters of belief that are intellectually obligatory or contradictory. All matters that are believed in but are intellectually possible, rather than obligatory, are considered the minor issues of *kalam*. While *kulli* matters require reliance on knowledge, *juz'i* matters may allow for inferences based on presumptive evidence.

The above criterion is crucial for distinguishing between *kulli* and *juz'i*, but it is also important to note that some *kulli* issues of *kalam* are explicitly mentioned in the Qur'an. Whether such issues should be classified as *kulli* or *juz'i* remains open to debate. In our view, even though these issues are explained on the basis of scripture, they should still be considered *kulli*, as they fall within the domain of the intellect.

The classification of *kalam* subjects as *juz'i* also helps clarify the distinction between *kalam* and the science of *'aqa'id*. Throughout the history of Islamic thought, both *kulli* and *juz'i* aspects of theology have been encompassed within *kalam*. However, some scholars have suggested that *'aqa'id* and *kalam* are distinct sciences. Considering the

distinction proposed in this article, the minor issues of *kalam* can be referred to as '*aqā'id*. In this case, '*aqā'id* would include all matters of belief derived from the teachings of Islam.

Yet, the distinction between *kalam* as a *kulli* science and '*aqā'id* as a *juz'ii* science raises the question: Should we include the universal issues addressed in the Qur'an within the scope of '*aqā'id*? The answer, we believe, is that all subjects explained through the Qur'an are indeed part of '*aqā'id*. However, it should be emphasized that those parts of '*aqā'id* that fall under the *kulli* science must be based on knowledge—specifically, *tawatur*.

Since matters that the intellect considers obligatory (*wajib*) or impossible (*muhal*) play a key role in *kulli* issues, only knowledge—obtained through the intellect, senses, or accurate information—can be used to prove these matters. By intellect, we refer to the fundamental principles of reason; by senses, we refer to the sensory faculties, such as hearing; and by accurate news, we mean reports from the prophet supported by miracles or *mutawatir* (widely transmitted) news. It would be erroneous to draw conclusions about *kulli* matters based solely on *ahad* news, even if it is supported by presumptive evidence. In contrast, this approach may be valid for *juz'i* issues.

The application of the methodology of *kulli* science to *juz'i* issues in *kalam* leads to several disputes, particularly between the al-Mu'tazilah and the Ahl al-Sunnah. The Ahl al-Sunnah holds that certain matters, such as the torment of the grave, *ru'yat* Allah (seeing Allah), and certain signs of the Last Day, must be believed in, even though they are based on fictitious knowledge and are not supported by conclusive evidence. These issues, while not grounded in rational or empirical proof, are accepted within the framework of '*aqā'id* and faith.

In general, both Ahl al-Sunnah and al-Mu'tazilah agree on matters of knowledge when they are supported by

the *nass* (Qur'an or Sunnah). However, if the *nass* implies a judgment that contradicts an established matter of knowledge, both sects agree that the *nass* should be interpreted in a way that reconciles it with knowledge. This approach is considered correct because there should be no inherent contradiction between *nass* and knowledge. The stance of the Ahl al-Sunnah and the al-Mu'tazilah towards the Mushabbihah (anthropomorphist) faction aligns with and supports this conceptual framework, emphasizing that knowledge and the *nass* must not conflict but should instead be interpreted in a manner that preserves both.

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