



## A Stylistic and Semantic Analysis of the Word *Qalb* in the Quran: Insights from the Process of Knowledge Acquisition

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### Abstract

This study investigates the meaning of the word *qalb* in the Qur'an through a stylistic and semantic lens, with particular attention to its role in the process of human knowledge acquisition. Employing a qualitative-descriptive methodology and textual analysis of selected Qur'anic verses, the research explores the stylistic expressions and semantic nuances of *qalb* within contexts related to cognitive, affective, and spiritual functions. The findings *qalb* operates as an integrative faculty, synthesizing intuition, inner experience, and rationality processing reality and meaning in a holistic manner. The stylistic analysis reveals that references to *qalb* frequently appear in rhetorically charged structures aimed at evoking moral and spiritual consciousness, particularly in warnings against hardness of heart, calls for introspection, and reminders of the consequences of ignoring divine guidance. These findings affirm *qalb* as an epistemological construct inherently intertwined with the process of apprehending divine truth, which cannot be reduced to or replaced by the notions of '*aql* (intellect) or *shadr* (chest).

**Keywords:** *Qalb, stylistics, semantics, knowledge acquisition, epistemology*

### Introduction

The Qur'an, as the holy scripture of Islam, contains not only moral and spiritual teachings but also presents fundamental concepts related to human knowledge, understanding, and consciousness (Arif, 2019; Abdul Aziz et al., 2021; Zulkarnaini, 2022). One such concept that warrants deeper examination is *qalb* (قلب), which in many Qur'anic verses conveys meanings far beyond that of a mere physical organ, reflecting both intellectual and spiritual dimensions of the human being (Ferhat, 2020; Meshael, 2023). In various contexts, the word *qalb* is used to describe understanding, reflection, belief, and the human connection to revelation and knowledge (Meliani et al., 2023; Nasr & Ogunnaike, 2025). Thus, exploring the meaning of *qalb* in the Qur'an can offer a deeper insight into how Islam conceptualizes the process of knowledge acquisition.

Within the Islamic intellectual tradition, the process of acquiring knowledge does not rely solely on the intellect (‘*aq̣l*) or empirical experience, but also involves the *qalb* as the center of comprehension and consciousness (Rohman et al., 2022). This concept stands in contrast to Western epistemologies, which tend to emphasize rationalism and empiricism. Islam asserts that the *qalb* plays a crucial role in receiving, processing, and interpreting knowledge particularly knowledge derived from divine revelation (Bhat & Bisati, 2025). Accordingly, a study on the meaning of *qalb* in the Qur’an from the perspective of knowledge acquisition is essential to enrich the understanding of Islamic epistemology.

One effective approach for analyzing the meaning of *qalb* in the Qur’an is through semantic and stylistic studies. Stylistics, in the context of Islamic linguistics and literary analysis, serves to reveal how linguistic structures, lexical choices, and rhetorical patterns in the Qur’an contribute to specific semantic interpretations (Agustiar & Jamal, 2021; Nursyamsiah et al., 2022). Within this framework, the present study examines the meaning of the word *qalb* based on syntactic structure, semantic depth, and rhetorical context as found in Qur’anic verses.

There are eight clusters representing eight distinct research focuses over the past ten years. Studies related to the Qur’an have branched out into various interdisciplinary fields. Based on data retrieved using *Publish or Perish* from Google Scholar, a total of 96 studies were identified over the last decade using the keywords: *semantic*, *stylistics*, *knowledge*, and *Qur’an*. The data also indicate a steady increase in scholarly attention, suggesting that this topic has become increasingly relevant and compelling within research discourse over the past ten years.

Most studies on *qalb* in the Qur’an have primarily focused on exegesis and semantic analysis (Ahmad & Daehri, 2020; Husain, 2022; Meliasani & Nugroho, 2025). However, this study adopts a stylistic approach to examine how the word *qalb* is conveyed within the linguistic and rhetorical contexts of the Qur’an. Therefore, this research offers novelty in several aspects: it employs stylistics to gain a deeper understanding of the meaning of *qalb* in the Qur’an, and it connects the concept of *qalb* to the process of knowledge acquisition an area that has traditionally been explored more from philosophical and classical exegetical perspectives.

## Method

In this study, a qualitative methodology (Seamon & Gill, 2016) is employed as the primary approach to examine the meaning of the word *qalb* in the Qur’an and its relationship to the process of knowledge acquisition.

Within this framework, library research through document analysis (Gardin, 1973; Karppinen & Moe, 2023; Calcerrada & García-Ruiz, 2015; Birkan & Ayd, 2023) is applied to analyze Qur’anic verses that contain the word *qalb*, as well as various scholarly references related to stylistics, exegesis, and Islamic epistemology.

Data sources (see Table 1)

Primary Sources	The Qur'an and Tafsir (Exegesis) Surah <i>al-Hajj</i> (22:46) فَإِنَّهَا لَا تَعْلَى الْأَبْصَارَ وَلَكِنْ تَعْلَى الْقُلُوبِ الَّتِي فِي الصُّدُورِ
Secondary Sources	Qur'anic verses containing the word <i>qalb</i> Academic research documents

In this study, data collection techniques are based on document analysis and a qualitative approach. The data were gathered from both primary and secondary sources and analyzed using semantic and stylistic methods. The main source is the text of the Qur'an, specifically *Surah al-Hajj* (22:46), which is examined in depth through various linguistic and exegetical approaches.

Qur'anic Text Exploration involves identifying the word *qalb* in *Surah al-Hajj* (22:46) and tracing its morphological and syntactic forms in the verse. Qur'anic Exegesis Study entails examining various classical and contemporary interpretations of the word *qalb* and applying a comparative approach to assess differing commentaries from scholars. After collecting the data, the next step involves processing and analyzing it using the following methods:

*First*, data classification (Mezmir, 2020). Exegetical data are categorized based on the approaches used (philological, contextual, hadith-based, etc.), while lexical data are organized according to root words and semantic shifts. *Second*, semantic analysis (Maddy et al., 2014) This includes identifying the core and contextual meanings of the word *qalb* and applying semantic field theory to explore its relationship with the concept of scientific knowledge (*'ilm*) in Islam. *Third*, stylistic analysis (Al-Erjan, 2022). This step analyzes sentence structures, rhetorical parallelism, and the reinforcement of meaning in the verse, as well as examines the metaphor of *qalb's* blindness in the Qur'an and its implicit meanings. *Fourth*, interpretation within the context of Islamic epistemology (Zaelani, 2015), This final stage formulates the relationship between *qalb*, *'aql*, and *abshār* (sight/perception) in the process of knowledge acquisition and compares the findings with Islamic epistemological theories proposed by various scholars. For a more detailed overview, the research flow is illustrated in figure 2.

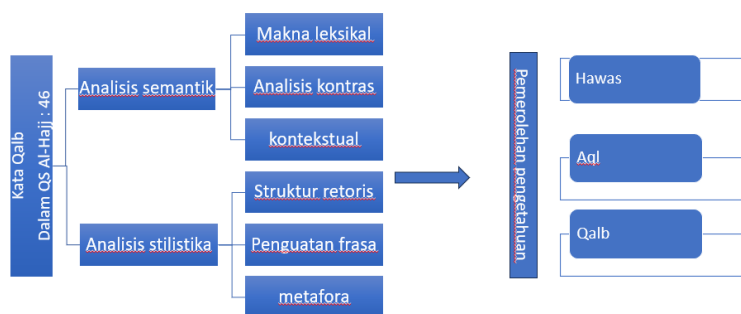


Figure 2. Research Flow

## Result and Discussion

### Result

Stylistics is the study of how language is used to create specific effects in a text (Sharma, 2011; Candria, 2019), both in literature and religious discourse, such as the Qur'an (Kadwa & Alshenqeeti, 2020). In analyzing the word *qalb* (قلب) in the Qur'an, a stylistic approach can be used to understand how this word is conveyed linguistically and rhetorically to form a deeper meaning.

#### *Lexical Analysis*

In this verse, the word *qalb* (قلب) is used in its plural form *qulûb* (قلوب), which literally means "hearts." However, conceptually in the Qur'an, *qalb* is more than just a physical organ; it is the center of understanding, awareness, and the acceptance of knowledge (Loukas et al., 2010). The lexical review of the word is as follows:

First, Origin of the word: *qalb* originates from the root ق-ل-ب (q-l-b), which means "to turn" or "to change" (Ahmad & Daehri, 2020). This reflects the nature of *qalb*, which is easily turned or changed in understanding and accepting the truth. This metaphor suggests that *qalb* is not fixed, but is always potentially subject to change based on experience, environmental influence, and spiritual readiness.

Second, Contrast with *abshâr* (أَبْصَار): In this verse, *qalb* is contrasted with *abshâr* (vision or eyesight), indicating that blindness in this context is not merely physical blindness, but the blindness of the heart in understanding the truth (Mann, 2019). The verse uses *qalb* as a metaphor for consciousness and understanding. The blindness mentioned in this context is not physical blindness (*abshâr*), but rather inner blindness or the inability of the *qalb* to receive and comprehend the truth.

#### *Syntactic and Rhetorical Analysis in the Verse*

This verse has a contrasting structure that emphasizes the meaning of *qalb* as the center of consciousness and knowledge acquisition.

First, contrast between physical sight and inner sight:

- لَا تَعْيَى الْأَبْصَارُ (*lâ ta'mal- abshâru*) → "It is not the eyes that are blind"
- وَلَكِنْ تَعْيَى الْقُلُوبُ (*wa lâkin ta'mal-qulûbu*) → "But the hearts are blind"

In this verse, there is structural parallelism that underscores that true blindness is not the inability to see physically, but the inability of the *qalb* to comprehend the truth. The metaphor of the blindness of the *qalb* suggests that knowledge and truth are not only about physical sight, but also about the readiness of the heart to accept guidance.

Second, Reinforcement of meaning with the phrase “fi ash-shudûr” (in the chest). The phrase أَلَّتِي فِي الصُّدُورِ (*allatî fi ash-shudûr*) or "that is in the chest" serves as a form of emphasis (ta'kid) that the *qalb* in question is not merely an organ, but the center of human consciousness and thought.

- The use of *الصدور* (*shudûr* – chest) stylistically emphasizes that the blindness of the *qalb* comes from within a person, not from external factors.
- In Arabic rhetoric, this phrase is used to stress that the blindness of the heart is worse than physical blindness.

In the context of Islamic epistemology, the process of knowledge acquisition does not rely solely on the senses (such as sight), but also on the *qalb* as the center of deeper understanding. The role of the *qalb* in accepting knowledge: A healthy *qalb* will accept knowledge well, understand the truth, and be open to revelation. Conversely, a "blind" *qalb* will reject the truth, even if the eyes see the signs of Allah's greatness.

The relationship with the concept of failure in knowledge acquisition: This verse indicates that failure to understand the truth is not due to a lack of empirical evidence, but due to the *qalb*'s unwillingness to accept and understand knowledge (Ali & Bakar, 2025). This aligns with the concept of "knowledge given to a pure *qalb*." A closed or "blind" *qalb* is unable to capture the wisdom from the knowledge around it (Arif, 2020).

## Discussion

In semantic studies, the word *qalb* (قلب) in the Qur'an has a dynamic meaning that not only refers to the physical organ (heart) but also to psychological, spiritual, and epistemological aspects (Kadwa & Alshenqeeti, 2020). The meaning of this word can be examined based on shifts in meaning, its relationship with other words, and its usage in various contexts within the Qur'an, particularly in the process of acquiring knowledge.

Rhetoric in the Qur'an enriches the meaning of *qalb* through several techniques, including:

First, Metaphor (*Majāz*) (Nurbayan, 2019; Elimam, 2016). As mentioned earlier, *qalb* is often used metaphorically, beyond its literal meaning. For example:

• أَفَلَا يَتَذَكَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ أَمْ عَلَى قُلُوبٍ أَقْفَالُهَا (QS. Muhammad: 24)

"Then do they not reflect upon the Qur'an, or is it that their hearts are locked?"

The phrase "their hearts are locked" is a metaphor indicating a person's spiritual state, closed off from the truth. This evokes a strong emotional effect on the listener or reader.

Second, Antithesis (*Muqâbalah*) (Muhamad et al., 2024). The concept of *qalb* in the Qur'an is often juxtaposed with the condition of a healthy heart (*qalbun salîm*) and a sick heart (*marîdh*).

• إِلَّا مَنْ أَتَى اللَّهَ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ (QS. asy-Syu'arâ: 89)

"Except for the one who comes to Allah with a sound heart."

This contrast creates a rhetorical effect, emphasizing the importance of the heart's condition in determining a person's spiritual fate.

Third, Pleonasm and Repetition (Fatimah et al., 2023). In some verses, the word *qalb* is repeated to emphasize a particular message. For example:

وَلَكِنَّ تَعْنَى الْقُلُوبِ الَّتِي فِي الصُّدُورِ (QS. Al-Hajj: 46)

"...but the blind are the hearts that are in the chests."

The use of emphasis (*ta'kid*) by mentioning both *qalb* and *shadr* (chest) creates a deeper rhetorical effect, suggesting that the heart not only exists physically but also plays a significant spiritual role.

As previously reiterated, etymologically, *qalb* originates from the root word ق-ل-ب (q-l-b), which means "to turn" or "to change." This meaning indicates that the heart is not fixed and is prone to shifting between accepting or rejecting understanding. In the Qur'an, *qalb* is used in various meanings related to cognitive and spiritual aspects:

- Physical meaning → *Qalb* can refer to the biological organ in the human body.
- Cognitive meaning → *Qalb* as the center of thought and awareness (the heart as a tool for understanding).
- Spiritual meaning → *Qalb* as the seat of faith or spiritual blindness (the heart as a tool for receiving revelation).

In Islamic epistemology, the process of acquiring knowledge (*ma'rifah*) is not solely dependent on rationality (*'aql*) or sensory observation (*hawâs*), but also on the inner readiness (*qalb*). These three elements work synergistically to achieve true and beneficial knowledge. This verse emphasizes that the failure to acquire knowledge is not due to a lack of empirical data (*abshâr*), but because the *qalb* is "blind," thereby rejecting the truth.

Sensory organs (*hawâs*) serve as the first tool for acquiring knowledge, especially through empirical observation (Luthfiah, 2023). In Islam, the five senses play a significant role in recognizing the reality of the world, as Allah often invites people to reflect on the universe in the Qur'an (Dalimunte et al., 2024), such as in *QS. al-Ghâshiyah: 17*. Examples of acquiring knowledge through the senses:

- Eyes (*abshâr*) → Observing natural phenomena and events around us.
- Ears (*sam'a*) → Hearing information and understanding communication.
- Touch, taste, smell → Helping recognize and understand physical reality.

However, in *QS. al-Hajj* (22:46), Allah emphasizes that sensory observation alone is insufficient. Many people can see facts, but still fail to understand or accept the truth.

أَفَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَتَكُونَ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ يَعْقِلُونَ بِهَا أَوْ آذَانٌ يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا فَإِنَّهَا لَا تَعْيَى الْأَبْصَارُ وَلَكِنْ تَعْيَى الْقُلُوبُ الَّتِي فِي الصُّدُورِ

*Then do they not walk the earth, and have hearts by which they understand or ears by which they hear? For indeed, it is not the eyes that are blind, but the hearts within the chests."*

This shows that knowledge acquired through the senses must be transformed through reason and the heart to become beneficial knowledge.

Reason ('*aql*') functions as the center for processing information (Ahmat Miftakul Huda & Suyadi, 2020). After acquiring data from the senses, reason is tasked with analyzing, reasoning, and constructing scientific concepts. In the Qur'an, Allah often calls on humans to use their reason, such as in *QS. al-Baqarah: 44*.

أَتَأْمُرُونَ النَّاسَ بِالْبِرِّ وَتَنْسَوْنَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ تَتْلُونَ الْكِتَابَ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ

*Do you order people to righteousness while you forget yourselves, and you recite the Scripture? Then will you not use reason?"*

The role of reason in acquiring knowledge:

- Analyzing phenomena → Investigating cause and effect and seeking the laws that govern them.
- Constructing concepts and theories → Using logic to understand the interrelationships between knowledge.
- Making decisions → Based on rational consideration of the data acquired.

However, even though reason has extraordinary capabilities, it still has limitations. Reason can only understand things that are rational and empirical, while in Islamic epistemology, there are dimensions of knowledge that can only be understood through the heart (*qalb*).

In *QS. al-Hajj (22:46)*, Allah affirms that the failure to acquire knowledge is not due to a lack of empirical data (*abṣār*) or a weakness in logic ('*aql*'), but because the *qalb* is "blind."

وَلَكِنْ تَعَىٰ الْقُلُوبُ أَلْفَىٰ فِي الْصُّدُورِ

*"But the blind are the hearts (qalb) that are in the chests."*

The Role of *qalb* in acquiring knowledge:

- As a moral filter → *Qalb* functions to assess whether a piece of knowledge is beneficial or harmful.
- As a center of intuition and spirituality → Some knowledge cannot be acquired through logic alone, but requires a pure heart to accept the truth.
- As a tool to understand revelation and true knowledge → Knowledge in Islam is not only derived from observation and analysis but also from divine revelation.

If a person's *qalb* is closed off by arrogance, desires, or insincerity, even though they have sharp eyes and an intelligent mind, they will still fail to understand the truth. This shows that the *qalb* is the key element in the process of acquiring true knowledge. Without a pure *qalb*, knowledge may be misused or fail to bring benefit.

In Arabic studies, particularly in semantic and stylistic analysis, the words *qalb* (قلب), '*aql*' (عقل), and *shadr* (صدر) have different meanings but are often related to cognitive, emotional, and spiritual aspects of human beings. These three words appear in various contexts in the Qur'an, hadith, and classical Arabic literature, with unique meanings and profound philosophical implications.

*The Meaning of Qalb (قلب) from the Perspectives of Stylistics and Semantics*

The word *qalb* (قلب) literally means "heart" or "core," but in the context of Arabic especially in religious and literary texts—it is often used to describe the inner aspects of human beings, including consciousness, emotions, and spiritual understanding. The word is derived from the verb *qalaba* (قلب), which means "to turn" or "to change," indicating the heart's ever-changing nature, both emotionally and in terms of belief.

In the Qur'an, *qalb* is often associated with deeper understanding not just rationality, but also intuition and faith. For example:

خَتَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ... (QS. Al-Baqarah: 7) "*Allah has sealed their hearts...*"

This indicates that the heart functions as the center of faith and understanding, not merely a biological organ.

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَذِكْرٍ لِمَنْ كَانَ لَهُ قَلْبٌ... (QS. Qaf: 37) "*Indeed in that is a reminder for whoever has a heart (qalb)...*" Here, *qalb* refers to spiritual awareness and the ability to receive truth.

From a stylistic perspective, the use of *qalb* in Arabic emphasizes the dynamic and affective aspects of human understanding. The word often appears metaphorically to describe one's psychological and spiritual condition.

*Comparison with 'Aql (عقل)*

The word '*aql* (عقل) in Arabic comes from the root '*aqala* (عقل), which means "to bind" or "to restrain." Semantically, '*aql* refers to rationality, intelligence, and logical thinking.

The main differences between *qalb* and '*aql* are:

- *Qalb* is more connected to emotions, intuition, and spirituality, whereas
- '*Aql* emphasizes rationality, logic, and critical thinking.

In the Qur'an, '*aql* never appears in noun form but rather as a verb, such as:

لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ (QS. Al-Baqarah: 73) "*...so that you may understand.*" This implies that the intellect is something active, used to comprehend and analyze reality.

Stylistically, '*aql* is used more in the context of commands to think or understand divine laws, while *qalb* is more often linked to the human heart's condition and emotional aspects.

*Comparison with Shadr (صدر)*

The word *shadr* (صدر) literally means "chest" or "front part of the body," but semantically, it often refers to status, courage, and the breadth of one's insight.

Its use in the Qur'an often conveys broader psychological connotations:

نَزَعْنَا مَا فِي صُدُورِهِمْ مِنْ غِلٍّ... (QS. Al-A'raf: 43) "*We removed whatever resentment was in their breasts...*". *Shadr* here describes the emotional container of human feelings, including hatred or sincerity.



وَيَضِيقُ صَدْرِي وَلَا يَنْطَلِقُ لِسَانِي... (QS. *ash-Shu'arâ*: 13). "My chest tightens, and my tongue is not fluent...". *Shadr* here reflects psychological tension and anxiety.

Unlike *qalb*, which focuses more on inner change and spiritual awareness, *shadr* relates more to deeply felt emotions like fear, courage, or anxiety.

A stylistic approach to analyzing the word *qalb* in the Qur'an shows that this word refers not just to a physical organ but carries rich, complex meanings within spiritual, cognitive, and emotional contexts.

### *The Process of Knowledge Acquisition*

The process of acquiring knowledge is closely linked to epistemology—a branch of philosophy concerned with knowledge, which consistently questions how humans know something, what justifies a knowledge claim, and what the structure of truth is (Pramling, 2023). In modern thought history, an important debate arises between two primary approaches in epistemology: methodism and particularism.

*Methodism*, associated with René Descartes, begins by asking, "What is the valid method for obtaining knowledge?" Knowledge, in this framework, must be built on strict, systematic, and doubt-free methods. Descartes emphasized methodological doubt as a starting point, leading to an undeniable truth: *Cogito, ergo sum* (bin Sa'id & Tjahyadi, n.d.).

In contrast, *particularism*, developed by Roderick Chisholm (Sankey, 2015), rests on the belief that we already possess certain knowledge, from which we then derive the appropriate methods. That is, particularism asks, "What knowledge do we already have?" and then evaluates what method justifies that knowledge. This debate highlights the difference in epistemological direction: starting from method to content, or from content to method.

In *Theaetetus*, Plato formulated that knowledge can be understood as *justified true belief*—a belief that is true and justified (Nawar, 2013). A statement qualifies as knowledge if it meets three criteria: Belief; The subject believes the proposition. Truth; The proposition is true. Justification; The subject has adequate reasons or evidence for believing it.

However, this paradigm was challenged by Edmund Gettier in 1963 (Slaght, 1977), who showed that someone could have a justified true belief yet still lack real knowledge. In famous Gettier cases, the belief turns out true merely by coincidence—not because of valid justification. This shook the foundations of classical epistemology and introduced discussions about a fourth condition (non-defeasibility) or reformulating the concept of justification.

The validity of knowledge in scientific research often hinges on the underlying theory of truth. Two dominant theories include: *Correspondence Theory*; A statement is true if it corresponds accurately to objective reality (Patterson, 2003). This theory emphasizes representativeness and verifiable empirical observation. Second, *Coherence Theory*; A proposition is true if it logically fits within an already established system of knowledge (Korotkova & Gbur, 2020). It doesn't require direct alignment with reality,

but rather rational consistency within a conceptual framework. This theory plays a key role in inference and reasoning, including *a posteriori* synthesis (based on experience), *a priori* analysis (rational concept analysis), and *a priori* synthesis (a combination of both in theoretical systems).

Discussions about knowledge structures are inseparable from the concept of justification the reason behind a belief qualifying as knowledge (Pritchard, 2018). Discussions about knowledge structures are inseparable from the concept of justification—the reason behind a belief qualifying as knowledge. While knowledge is often classically defined as justified true belief, the process of justification itself poses profound problems, known as the enigmatic nature of justification.

This is well illustrated by the Agrippan Trilemma or Münchhausen Trilemma (Álvarez-González, 2025). a three-pronged dilemma suggesting that every justification leads to:

First, *Regressus ad infinitum* (De Bianchi, 2015): Every reason needs another reason endlessly making it epistemologically impractical.

Second, *Circular Reasoning* (Goldstick, 2003): A belief is justified by another that is in turn justified by the original logically flawed.

Third, *Dogmatism* (Gallo, 2020): A belief is accepted without further justification—raising accusations of being dogmatic. In response, three main approaches evolved, offering alternative structures for building and sustaining epistemic justification.

The meaning of *qalb* in the Qur'an, when studied through epistemology, reveals that it is not merely a biological heart but a center of consciousness, knowledge, understanding, and belief (Isramin, 2019). It is closely connected to epistemological concepts such as:

First, *Qalb as the Epistemic Center in the Qur'an*: The heart functions as an epistemic tool, paralleling modern epistemology's concern with sources and validation of knowledge.

Second, *Particularist Approach in Knowledge Acquisition*: This emphasizes pre-existing knowledge before evaluating methods aligned with *qalb* in the Qur'an as a vessel for *fitrah* (innate knowledge or *ma'rifatullah*).

The JTB concept in epistemology aligns with Qur'anic criticism of those who possess *qalb* but do not use it for understanding, indicating that *qalb* is not merely for belief but also for justifying truth.

Correspondence and coherence theories of truth are also reflected in Qur'anic spirituality. A sound *qalb* will accept truth that corresponds with reality (correspondence) and aligns with divine values (coherence).

In the Qur'an, Allah consistently uses *qalbun* (قلب) to refer to understanding, awareness, and acceptance of truth not *shadr* (صدر), which is more commonly used for describing the inner space or entry point for fleeting thoughts and whispers.

This choice is not random it reflects a deeper, more active level within human consciousness. If *shadr* is like the “front door” of the human heart, then *qalb* is its core—where decisions, belief, and understanding are formed.

In Islamic epistemology, *qalb* is not a biological organ but the spiritual-intellectual center of a person, playing a central role in acquiring, verifying, and understanding knowledge. This is seen in verses referring to *qalb* as the instrument for *tadabbur* (reflection), *tafakkur* (thought), and *tafaqquh* (deep understanding), such as in *Surah al-Hajj* (22:46):

فَأَنَّا لَا تَفْهَمُ الْبَصَارَ وَلَكِن تَعْمَى الْقُلُوبُ الَّتِي فِي الصُّدُورِ

"This is because it is not the eyes that are blind, but the hearts (*qulûb*) in the chests."

This shows that *qalb* is not merely an emotional vessel but the main tool for understanding truth more essential than sight or hearing.

Meanwhile, *shadr* is more often used to describe initial inner reactions, such as anxiety or acceptance.

The Qur'anic preference for *qalb* over *shadr* is meaningful. Classical commentators like Al-Raghib al-Asfahani in *al-Mufradât fî Gharîb al-Qur'ân* (Chandra, 2024), describe *qalb* as the *iltifât al-ma'rifah*—the turning point for all knowledge. Al-Razi in *Mafâtîh al-Ghayb* emphasized *qalb* as the vessel of knowledge and divine light, whereas *shadr* is merely an open space for various influences.

Structurally, *shadr* can be seen as the outer layer of the soul where initial tendencies reside. When Allah refers to *shadr* in the context of "openness" or "tightness" (QS. *al-An'âm*. 125), it points to inner predispositions, not active understanding.

In contrast, *qalb* signals epistemic activity—processing, moral reflection, and rational consideration enabling one to accept and believe the truth. This aligns with Western epistemology's justified true belief model, where knowledge is not just information, but justified belief in truth.

The Qur'anic use of *qalb* to denote understanding is not merely linguistic—it reflects deep theological and epistemological dimensions. It guides humans not only to rely on outward perceptions (*shadr*), but to activate the inner center of reflection (*qalb*) through which true knowledge and understanding can be attained.

## Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the word *qalb* in the Qur'an does not merely carry its literal meaning as a physical organ or a symbol of emotion, but holds a central position in Islamic epistemology as the seat of consciousness and understanding. Through stylistic and semantic approaches, it is found that the use of the word *qalb* in the Qur'an is consistently associated with activities such as thinking, reflecting, understanding, and even rejecting the truth—reflecting the active role of the *qalb* in the process of acquiring knowledge. The verses that contain the word *qalb* indicate that knowledge in the Qur'anic perspective is not merely the result of rational effort (*'aql*) or sensory data, but involves spiritual and inner dimensions that can only be accessed through a pure and open heart. Thus, the *qalb* functions as an integral epistemic medium,

connecting intuition, contemplation, and revelation. This study affirms the significance of *qalb* as a key concept in understanding the nature of knowledge in Islam, and offers a new perspective for integrating science, faith, and spiritual awareness in the human thinking process.

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