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**THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE INTERPRETATION
METHODOLOGY OF QS. AL-‘ALAQ 1-5 IN TAFSIR MAFATIH AL-
GHAYB AND TAFSIR AL-KASYRAF: A COMPARATIVE STUDY**

UNDERGRADUATE THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Bachelor's Degree
(S.Ag) in the Department of Qur'anic Studies and Exegesis



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PREFACE

Bismillahirrahmanirrahim

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the worlds, who has bestowed His guidance, mercy, and knowledge upon humanity. Peace and blessings be upon the Prophet Muhammad, who received the first revelation contained in Surah Al-‘Alaq, a chapter that laid the foundation for the Islamic tradition of knowledge and intellectual inquiry.

This thesis, entitled “*Epistemological Construction Analysis of the Interpretation of QS. Al-‘Alaq in Tafsir Mafatih al-Ghayb and Tafsir Al-Kasysyaf*,” is presented as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for obtaining the undergraduate degree. This study explores the epistemological foundations underlying the interpretations of Surah Al-‘Alaq in the works of Fakhr al-Din al-Razi and Al-Zamakhshari, two prominent classical Muslim scholars whose exegetical methodologies significantly contributed to the development of Islamic intellectual tradition.

The author realizes that this thesis would not have been completed without the support, guidance, and encouragement from many individuals. Therefore, sincere gratitude is extended to the thesis advisor for invaluable supervision and constructive feedback throughout the research process. Appreciation is also expressed to the lecturers and academic staff who have contributed to the author’s intellectual development. Special thanks are dedicated to beloved parents and family for their endless prayers, support, and motivation.

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May this work be beneficial and counted as a sincere effort in seeking knowledge.



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Penulis



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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the epistemological construction in the interpretation of QS. Al-‘Alaq verses 1–5 in two classical tafsir works, namely *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb* by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and *Al-Kasysyāf* by al-Zamakhsharī. As the first revelation, Surah Al-‘Alaq has a fundamental position in shaping the paradigm of Islamic science, especially regarding revelation, reason, and epistemology. This study examines two main research problems, namely: (1) how is the interpretation of QS. Al-‘Alaq verses 1–5 in the *Tafsir Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb* and *Tafsir al-Kasysyāf*; and (2) how is the epistemological construction of the interpretation in the two tafsirs. This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive-comparative method. Primary data were obtained from the interpretation of Surah Al-‘Alaq in *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb* and *Al-Kasysyāf*, while secondary data came from literature related to Islamic epistemology and classical tafsir methodology. The analysis focused on the sources of knowledge, interpretive methods, and argumentative structures used by both commentators. The results of the study indicate that al-Rāzī built an integrative epistemological framework by combining theological rationalism, philosophy, and kalam argumentation, while al-Zamakhsharī emphasized linguistic analysis, rhetoric (*balāghah*), and Mu‘tazilite rationalism. These differences reflect their respective theological orientations and methodological backgrounds, while also demonstrating the intellectual dynamics within the classical tafsir tradition. This study concludes that Surah Al-‘Alaq is not only understood as the first revelation, but also as the foundation of Islamic epistemology, interpreted differently according to the intellectual and ideological frameworks of each commentator.

Key Words: Epistemology, QS. Al-‘Alaq, *Mafatih al-Ghayb*, *Al-Kasysyaf*, Construction of Interpretation.

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المخلص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل البناء الإستمولوجي في تفسير الآيات 1-5 من سورة العلق في عمليين من أعمال التفسير الكلاسيكي: مفاتيح الغيب لفخر الدين الرازي والكشاف للزمخشري. باعتبار أن سورة العلق أول ما نزل من الوحي، فهي تشكل نقطة انطلاق للنموذج المعرفي الإسلامي، خاصة حول العلاقة بين الوحي والعقل. تتناول الدراسة كيف تختلف التفسيرات في بناء الإستمولوجيا الإسلامية بحسب المنهج الفكري والأيدولوجي لكل مفسر، مركزة على مقارنة توظيف العقل والوحي في تفسير الآيات. تعتمد هذه الدراسة المنهج النوعي بأسلوب وصفي مقارنة بين مفاتيح الغيب والكشاف في تفسير سورة العلق. وقد استمدت البيانات الأولية من تفسير سورة العلق في مفاتيح الغيب والكشاف، في حين استمدت البيانات الثانوية من الأدبيات ذات الصلة بالإستمولوجيا الإسلامية ومنهجية التفسير الكلاسيكي. ويركز التحليل على مصادر المعرفة، ومناهج التفسير، وبنية الحجج، مع إبراز نقاط التشابه والاختلاف التي اعتمدها كلا المفسرين. وتظهر نتائج الدراسة أن الرازي قدّم إطاراً إستمولوجياً يجمع العقلانية اللاهوتية والفلسفة والحجاج الكلامي، بينما ركز الزمخشري على التحليل اللغوي والبلاغة والعقلانية المعتزلية. تكشف هذه الفروق كيف يؤثر المنهج الفكري لكل من المفسرين في تفسير سورة العلق وبناء النموذج المعرفي الإسلامي. تستنتج الدراسة أن اختلاف المناهج في تفسير أول الوحي يحدد طبيعة الإستمولوجيا الإسلامية لدى كل مفسر.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الإستمولوجيا، سورة العلق، مفاتيح الغيب، الكشاف، بناء التفسير



ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis konstruksi epistemologis dalam penafsiran QS. Al-‘Alaq ayat 1–5 pada dua karya tafsir klasik, yaitu Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb karya Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī dan Al-Kasysyāf karya al-Zamakhsharī. Sebagai wahyu pertama, Surah Al-‘Alaq memiliki posisi fundamental dalam membentuk paradigma keilmuan Islam, khususnya terkait wahyu, akal, dan epistemologi. Penelitian ini mengkaji dua rumusan masalah utama, yaitu: (1) bagaimana penafsiran QS. Al-‘Alaq ayat 1–5 dalam Tafsir Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb dan Tafsir al-Kasysyāf; dan (2) bagaimana konstruksi epistemologis dari penafsiran tersebut dalam kedua tafsir tersebut. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode deskriptif-komparatif. Data primer diperoleh dari penafsiran Surah Al-‘Alaq dalam Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb dan Al-Kasysyāf, sedangkan data sekunder berasal dari literatur terkait epistemologi Islam dan metodologi tafsir klasik. Analisis difokuskan pada sumber pengetahuan, metode penafsiran, dan struktur argumentasi yang digunakan oleh kedua mufassir. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa al-Rāzī membangun kerangka epistemologi integratif dengan menggabungkan rasionalisme teologis, filsafat, dan argumentasi kalam, sedangkan al-Zamakhsharī lebih menekankan analisis kebahasaan, retorika (balāghah), serta rasionalisme Mu‘tazilah. Perbedaan tersebut mencerminkan orientasi teologis dan latar belakang metodologis masing-masing, sekaligus menunjukkan dinamika intelektual dalam tradisi tafsir klasik. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa Surah Al-‘Alaq tidak hanya dipahami sebagai wahyu pertama, tetapi juga sebagai fondasi epistemologi Islam yang ditafsirkan secara beragam sesuai kerangka intelektual dan ideologis masing-masing mufassir.

Kata Kunci: Epistemologi, QS. Al-‘Alaq, Mafatih al-Ghayb, Al-Kasysyaf, Konstruksi Penafsiran.

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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Problem

Studies on QS. Al-‘Alaq verses 1–5 in academic literature have tended to focus on thematic aspects, particularly regarding the urgency of reading, education, and the development of knowledge in Islam. Such approaches are commonly found in both thematic exegesis studies and Islamic education research, which generally treat these verses as a normative foundation without conducting an in-depth analysis of the epistemological framework of the mufassir (exegete) underlying their interpretations.¹ As a result, the tafsir is treated as a final product of meaning rather than as the outcome of a complex epistemic process.

On the other hand, research on *Tafsir Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb* and *Tafsir al-Kasysyāf* has mostly focused on the methodological characteristics and theological tendencies of each mufassir, such as al-Rāzī’s philosophical rationalism and al-Zamakhsharī’s Mu‘tazilite linguistic rationalism. However, these studies generally discuss the two tafsirs separately or descriptively, without specifically linking them to the epistemological construction in the interpretation of particular verses, especially QS. Al-‘Alaq verses 1–5.

Thus, a research gap remains, as there has been no comparative study that explicitly analyzes how differences in sources of knowledge, the role of reason, linguistic authority, and the revelation–reason relationship shape the interpretation of QS. Al-‘Alaq verses 1–5 in *Tafsir Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb* and *Tafsir al-Kasysyāf*. This study seeks to fill that gap by positioning tafsir as a product of epistemological construction, thereby not only explaining what the verses mean according to the mufassir, but also how and why these meanings are constructed through a particular epistemological framework.²

¹ Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Dzahabī, “*Al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufasssīrūn*” (Kairo: Maktabah Wahbah, 2000), hlm. 7–10.

² Sahiron Syamsuddin, “*Hermeneutika dan Pengembangan Ulumul Qur’an*” (Yogyakarta: Pesantren Nawesea Press, 2017), hlm. 45–47



The verses read as follows:³

اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ (١) خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ (٢) اقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ (٣) الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ (٤) عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ (٥)

Although QS. Al-‘Alaq verses 1–5 have been extensively interpreted in various classical and contemporary tafsir works, these interpretations are generally treated merely as explanations of textual and thematic meaning. The focus of studies often stops at the interpretive outcome, such as the emphasis on the command to read or the urgency of knowledge, without critically examining the epistemological framework that underlies the emergence of these interpretations. As a result, differences in interpretation among mufasssir are often understood merely as variations of opinion, rather than as logical consequences of differences in sources of knowledge, the role of reason, and the methodological authority applied in the interpretive process.⁴ This situation underscores the importance of an epistemological analysis of the interpretation of QS. Al-‘Alaq verses 1–5, so that tafsir is understood as a product of scholarly construction, rather than merely a reproduction of the textual meaning.

The selection of Tafsīr Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and Tafsīr al-Kasasyāf by al-Zamakhsharī in this study is not arbitrary, but is grounded in strong and representative epistemological considerations within the tradition of classical Qur’anic exegesis. Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb is widely recognized as a highly rational and philosophical commentary, in which al-Rāzī does not merely interpret the text linguistically, but also integrates theological discourse (kalām), philosophy, and logical reasoning in constructing meaning. This work is often regarded as an intellectual encyclopedia due to its expansive scope, extending beyond textual analysis to

³ <https://quran.kemenag.go.id/quran/per-ayat/surah/96?from=1&to=19>

⁴ Syamsuddin, *Op. Cit.*, hlm. 41-44

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engage deeply with epistemological questions in Islam.⁵ Therefore, its inclusion is particularly relevant for examining how the first revelation (QS. Al-‘Alaq 1–5) is interpreted within a framework that emphasizes the relationship between revelation and reason.

On the other hand, al-Kasysyāf by al-Zamakhsharī represents a distinct yet equally significant interpretative approach, characterized by its strong emphasis on linguistic analysis and rhetorical precision (*balāghah*), grounded in Mu‘tazilite rationalism. This tafsir is notable for its detailed exploration of the linguistic and stylistic features of the Qur’an, enabling a precise articulation of textual meaning.⁶ The theological divergence between al-Rāzī, who is associated with Sunni orthodoxy, and al-Zamakhsharī, who is rooted in the Mu‘tazilite tradition, positions these two exegetes as representatives of major intellectual currents in classical Islam. Consequently, a comparative study of their works provides a valuable opportunity to uncover diverse epistemological constructions in interpreting the first revelation, while also demonstrating the intellectual dynamism of the Qur’anic exegetical tradition, which is inherently pluralistic and dialogical rather than monolithic.

Building upon the identified research gap, this study places a central emphasis on the methodological dimensions of Qur’anic interpretation employed by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and al-Zamakhsharī. In the context of classical tafsir, methodology (*manhaj al-tafsīr*) is not merely a technical tool, but a reflection of deeper epistemological commitments that shape how meaning is produced. Al-Rāzī’s interpretative method is characterized by an expansive and discursive approach, often incorporating philosophical inquiry, dialectical reasoning, and theological debate within his exegesis. His tafsir demonstrates a tendency to problematize the text, raising multiple questions before arriving at a conclusion, thereby revealing a dynamic interaction

⁵ Manna’ al-Qaththan, *Mabāhith fī ‘Ulūm al-Qur’ān* (Beirut: Mu’assasah al-Risālah, 1976), p. 337; Muhammad Husain al-Dhahabi, *al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufasssīrūn*, Vol. III (kairo: Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī, 1976), hlm. 215.

⁶ Muhammad Husain al-Dhahabi, *al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufasssīrūn*, Vol. I (Cairo: Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī, 1976), p. 429; Nasaruddin Baidan, *Metodologi Penafsiran Al-Qur’an* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2005), hlm. 32.



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between revelation and rational inquiry.⁷ This methodological orientation allows the text to be understood not only as a source of guidance but also as an object of intellectual engagement, where meaning is constructed through a process of critical reasoning and synthesis.

In contrast, al-Zamakhsharī's methodological framework is grounded in a rigorous linguistic and rhetorical analysis of the Qur'anic text. His reliance on balāghah, syntax, and semantic precision reflects a commitment to uncovering meaning through the internal structure of the language itself. Unlike al-Rāzī, who often expands beyond the text into philosophical speculation, al-Zamakhsharī maintains a tighter focus on the textual and linguistic coherence of the verses.⁸ This approach is closely linked to his Mu'tazilite theological orientation, which prioritizes العقل (al-'aql) as a primary tool in understanding revelation, while still maintaining the authority of the text. Consequently, his tafsir exemplifies a methodological balance between rational analysis and linguistic discipline, where meaning emerges from the interplay between grammatical structure and rational interpretation.

The comparative analysis of these two methodologies reveals that differences in interpretation are not incidental, but are deeply rooted in distinct epistemological paradigms. Al-Rāzī's method reflects an integrative epistemology that accommodates multiple sources of knowledge, including revelation, reason, and philosophical discourse. In contrast, al-Zamakhsharī's method demonstrates a more text-centered epistemology, where linguistic authority and rational coherence play a dominant role.⁹ These methodological differences significantly influence how QS. Al-'Alaq verses 1–5 are understood, particularly in relation to concepts such as knowledge, learning, and the relationship between God and الإنسان (al-insān). By examining these

⁷ *Ibid*, hlm. 215

⁸ Muhammad Husain al-Dzahabi, *At-Tafsīr wa al-Mufasssirūn*, Vol I (Mesir: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1976), hlm. 429.

⁹ Manna' al-Qaththan, *Mabāḥith fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risālah, 1976), hlm. 337



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differences, the study moves beyond descriptive interpretation toward a critical analysis of the underlying structures that produce meaning.

Furthermore, this methodological focus enables the study to reconstruct the epistemological processes that underlie the tafsir of both mufassir. Rather than treating tafsir as a static product, this research approaches it as an active process of meaning-making shaped by specific intellectual traditions and methodological choices. In this sense, the interpretation of QS. Al-‘Alaq verses 1–5 becomes a site of epistemological negotiation, where different assumptions about knowledge, authority, and interpretation intersect.¹⁰ This perspective allows for a deeper understanding of how classical scholars engaged with the Qur’an, not only as a sacred text but also as a source of intellectual inquiry that invites continuous reinterpretation.

Ultimately, by foregrounding the methodological dimensions of tafsir, this study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of Qur’anic exegesis as an epistemological enterprise. It highlights that the diversity of interpretations found in classical tafsir literature is not merely a reflection of differing opinions, but rather the result of systematic and structured approaches to knowledge and interpretation. Through the comparative analysis of *Mafāṭih al-Ghayb* and *al-Kasysyāf*, this research demonstrates that methodological frameworks play a निर्णायक role in shaping interpretative outcomes, thereby reinforcing the importance of studying tafsir within its broader epistemological context.¹¹

B. Affirmation of Terms

1. Analysis

According to the Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), analysis is an activity of systematically examining an event, writing, or action in order to understand its actual condition, including its causes and the context of the

¹⁰ Nasaruddin Baidan, *Metodologi Penafsiran Al-Qur’an* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2005), hlm. 32.

¹¹ Abdurrahman Rusli Tanjung, “Analisis terhadap Corak Tafsir al-Adaby al-Ijtima’i,” *Analytica Islamica*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (2014), hlm. 174.



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problem at hand.¹² According to Irmayani Syafitri, analysis refers to observing the activities of an object by describing its composition and reorganizing its components to be examined or studied in detail.¹³ Meanwhile, the word *analysis* itself originates from the Ancient Greek ἀνάλυσις (*ana* meaning "up" or "again" and *lysis* meaning "to loosen, break apart, or release").¹⁴ Based on the definitions presented above, it can be concluded that analysis is an activity involving the observation of an object or event by breaking down its components in order to understand in detail the actual condition, the relationships between elements, and the underlying factors that contribute to the occurrence of the event.

2. Epistemology

The term *epistemology* originates from the Greek words *epistēmē* (ἐπιστήμη), meaning "true knowledge," and *logos* (λόγος), meaning "study" or "theory." Etymologically, epistemology refers to the science of knowledge or a branch of philosophy that examines the origin, sources, methods, and validity of knowledge. The term epistemology is often equated with *nazariyyat al-ma'rifah* (theory of knowledge).¹⁵ It is the study of the principles of knowledge, its assumptions, outcomes, and critical examination aimed at explaining its scientific foundations and objective values. Islamic thinkers such as al-Ghazālī, Ibn Sīnā, al-Fārābī, and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī have discussed epistemology in great depth, even though they did not always use the Greek term. They explored sources of knowledge such as the senses (*hawās*), reason (*'aql*), intuition (*ilhām* or *kashf*), and revelation (*wahy*) as the pinnacle of knowledge, which is absolute and indisputable.

¹² <https://kbbi.web.id/analisis> diakses pada 12 Januari 2026 Pukul 23.52 WIB

¹³ I. Syafitri, "Pengertian Analisis, Fungsi dan Tujuan, Jenisnya Beserta Contoh Analisis," NesaBamedia.com, 2020, diakses 13 Januari 2026, pukul 00.16 WIB.

¹⁴ Douglas Harper, "Analysis," Etymonline.com, 2001–2012, diakses 13 Januari 2026, pukul 00.20 WIB.

¹⁵ Jamil Shaliba, : "Mu'jam al-falsafi bi alfazh al-arabiyyah wa al-faransiyyah wa al-injilīziyyah wa al-labiniyyah", (Beirut: Dar Al-kutub Al-'alimiy, 1994), hlm.33



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3. Interpretation

Interpretation is a communication process, either orally or through gestures, that occurs between two or more speakers who have different language backgrounds. This activity is also known as oral translation. According to the Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), a person who performs interpretation or oral translation is called an *interpreter* or *penafsir*.¹⁶ Etymologically, the term *interpretation* comes from the English word *interpretation*, which is derived from the Latin *interpres*, meaning an interpreter or explainer. Conceptually, interpretation is literally understood as the process of explaining or the act of interpreting. Interpretation is closely related to a person's ability to understand and explain a form of representation. Such representations serve as expressions of meaning or embodiments of specific ideas. Through the process of interpretation, the ideas contained in these representations are not only understood but can also be further developed, giving rise to new perspectives, understandings, or concepts.¹⁷ Therefore, interpretation requires adequate cognitive skills and understanding so that the explanations produced can be scientifically justified.

C. Identification of Problem

Based on the title "Epistemological Construction Analysis of the Interpretation of QS. Al-‘Alaq in Tafsir Mafatih al-Ghayb and Tafsir al-Kasysyaf," the problems can be identified as follows:

1. Methodological Differences: There is a fundamental difference in the interpretive methods used by Ar-Razi in *Mafatih al-Ghayb* (which is encyclopedic and philosophical) and Al-Zamakhsyari in *al-Kasysyaf* (which is linguistic and rhetorical) when explaining the first revelation (QS. Al-‘Alaq).

¹⁶ Arti kata interpretasi - *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (KBBI) Online, diakses 13 Januari 2026, pukul 00.34 WIB

¹⁷ Ling Mustain, "Kemampuan Membaca dan Interpretasi Grafik dan Data: Studi Kasus Pada Siswa Kelas 8 SMPN", *Scientiae Educatia*, 2 (2015), Vol. 5: 5.



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2. Sources of Knowledge: The underlying tension between the use of *Aql* (reason) and *Naql* (tradition/revelation) as the primary epistemological source in interpreting the concept of "reading" (*Iqra*) and "creation" in Surah Al-‘Alaq.
3. Theological Influence: The influence of Ar-Razi’s Ash’arite theology versus Al-Zamakhshari’s Mu’tazilite rationalism on their respective epistemological constructions, specifically how these ideologies shape their understanding of human knowledge and God’s power in QS. Al-‘Alaq.
4. Epistemological Framework: The lack of a clear comparison regarding the *Bayani* (linguistic), *Burhani* (demonstrative/rational), and *Irfani* (intuitive) structures within the two commentaries concerning the beginning of prophethood.
5. Contextual Validity: How both scholars justify the validity of their interpretations and how their 12th-13th century epistemological frameworks remain relevant in understanding the educational and ontological messages of Surah Al-‘Alaq today

D. Scope of the Study

To ensure that the discussion in this thesis remains focused and does not diverge from the main topic, it is necessary to define the scope of the study. This research is limited to the analysis of epistemological construction in the interpretation of QS. Al-‘Alaq verses 1–5, without including other verses of the Qur’an. The tafsir objects examined are restricted to *Tafsir Mafātīh al-Ghayb* by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and *Tafsir al-Kasysyāf* by al-Zamakhsharī, thus excluding other tafsir works outside these two. The epistemological analysis focuses on the sources of knowledge, interpretive methods, and the cognitive frameworks underlying the interpretations of both mufassir regarding QS. Al-‘Alaq verses 1–5. The discussion of linguistic aspects and verse context is conducted only to the extent necessary to understand the epistemological construction of the interpretations, and it is not

intended to evaluate the correctness of the tafsir results, but rather to map and analyze the epistemological characteristics that shape each mufassir's interpretation.

E. Problem Formulation

Based on the background described above, the research questions can be formulated as follows:

1. How are QS. Al-‘Alaq verses 1–5 interpreted in *Tafsir Mafātīh al-Ghayb* and *Tafsir al-Kasysyāf*?
2. How is the epistemological construction of the interpretation of QS. Al-‘Alaq verses 1–5 presented in *Tafsir Mafātīh al-Ghayb* and *Tafsir al-Kasysyāf*?

F. Purposes and Benefits of Research

1. Purposes of Research

This study aims to conduct an in-depth examination of the interpretation of Surah al-‘Alaq verses 1–5 from an epistemological perspective, based on the views of two prominent mufassir: al-Zamakhsharī through *al-Kashshāf* and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī through *Mafātīh al-Ghayb*. Specifically, the study seeks to describe how both mufassir understand the concept of knowledge, its sources, and the processes of acquiring it as contained in these verses. Furthermore, the research aims to compare the similarities and differences in their interpretations, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of Islamic epistemology. In this way, the study is expected to contribute to the development of tafsir studies while also highlighting the relevance of Qur’anic epistemology in the context of contemporary scholarship.

2. Theoretical Benefits

Theoretically, this study is expected to contribute to the development of Qur’anic exegesis (tafsir) studies, particularly from the perspective of epistemology in interpretation. It is anticipated to enrich the

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body of knowledge regarding the understanding of QS. Al-‘Alaq verses 1–5 through an analysis of epistemological construction in *Tafsir Mafātih al-Ghayb* and *Tafsir al-Kasysyāf*. In addition, this research can serve as an academic reference for future studies related to the relationship between epistemology, interpretive methods, and the outcomes of Qur’anic interpretation.

3. Practical Benefits

Secara praktis, penelitian ini diharapkan dapat memberikan pemahaman yang lebih komprehensif bagi mahasiswa, akademisi, dan pemerhati studi Al-Qur’an mengenai perbedaan dan persamaan pendekatan epistemologis dalam penafsiran QS. Al-‘Alaq ayat 1–5. Hasil penelitian ini juga diharapkan dapat menjadi bahan pertimbangan dalam kegiatan pembelajaran tafsir, kajian keislaman, serta penelitian lanjutan, khususnya dalam memahami keragaman metode dan landasan berpikir para mufasir klasik dalam menafsirkan Al-Qur’an.

G. Systematic of Writing

To facilitate a better understanding of this work, the author has arranged a systematic organization of the discussion, covering all main ideas and sub-chapters used in this thesis. The organization of the discussion is structured as follows:

Chapter I Introduction : This chapter serves as the entry point of the study. It explains the background of the problem, highlighting the importance of Surah al-‘Alaq verses 1–5 as the first revealed verses, which contain epistemological values concerning knowledge, reading, and the pen. The background also emphasizes how two prominent mufassir, al-Zamakhsharī with his Mu‘tazilite approach and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī with his Ash‘ari-philosophical approach, interpret these verses from different perspectives. Furthermore, this chapter presents the identification of the problem, the scope, research questions, research objectives, and both theoretical and practical benefits of the study.



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Chapter II Theoretical Framework: This chapter provides the theoretical foundation for the analysis. First, it presents a detailed explanation of the concept of epistemology, including definitions, forms, and relevant theories. Second, it discusses the concept of construction in depth, elaborating on its meaning, forms, and theoretical basis. Third, it covers the two primary tafsir works used as references in this study: *Tafsir Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb* by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and *Tafsir al-Kasysyāf* by al-Zamakhsharī, including their biographies, interpretive approaches, and the methods underlying their exegesis.

Chapter III Research Methodology : This chapter explains the research approach and methods used. Since the study is qualitative-descriptive with a comparative approach, data were collected and analyzed through library research. The primary data sources are *Tafsir al-Kasysyāf* by al-Zamakhsharī and *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb* by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī. Secondary data include supporting literature on epistemology, tafsir, and other academic studies. Data collection techniques involve documentation from tafsir books and academic sources, while data analysis is conducted using content analysis to explore the epistemological meanings in the interpretations of the two mufassir

Chapter IV Research Findings and Discussion : This chapter is the core of the study, presenting the research findings along with comparative analysis. First, it explains how al-Zamakhsharī interprets Surah al-‘Alaq verses 1–5, focusing on his understanding of the command *iqra*’, the symbol of the pen (*qalam*), and the concept of knowledge within a Mu‘tazilite framework emphasizing rationality. Second, it discusses how Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī interprets the same verses within an Ash‘ari and philosophical framework, emphasizing theological, metaphysical aspects, and the revelation–reason relationship. Subsequently, a comparative analysis of the epistemological constructions emerging from both mufassir’s interpretations is presented.

Bab V Conclusion: This chapter presents the conclusions and recommendations of the study, addressing the research questions formulated in Chapter I. The conclusions summarize the epistemological constructions of each mufassir, the fundamental similarities and differences in their interpretations, and the relevance of the findings for the development of tafsir studies and Islamic epistemology. In addition, this chapter provides recommendations for future research, such as expanding the study to other mufassir or verses with significant epistemological content, as well as their relevance in addressing contemporary scientific challenges. Thus, this chapter serves as a closing that emphasizes the study's contribution to the body of Islamic knowledge.

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CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A. Theoretical Foundation

1. Epistemology

Runes explains that epistemology is a branch of philosophy that examines the sources, structure, methods, and validity of knowledge. Furthermore, in *Epistemologi Dasar*, Rescher emphasizes that epistemology is evaluative, normative, and critical. It is called evaluative because it assesses whether a belief, opinion, or theory has a foundation of truth that can be rationally justified. It is normative because it provides standards and parameters for the use of reasoning as a basis for evaluating truth. The critical nature of epistemology is evident in its effort to question and test both the processes and outcomes of human knowledge. Therefore, epistemology examines various assumptions, methods, approaches, and conclusions produced in human thinking activities.

In its historical development, epistemology began to emerge during the medieval period, when various forms of *doxa* (opinions) gradually evolved into knowledge.¹⁸ In the philosophical tradition, epistemology was also once known as *gnoseology*, derived from the Greek word *gnosis*, which carries a meaning similar to *epistēmē*. The term *epistemology* itself was first introduced by J.F. Ferrier in 1854.¹⁹

Epistemology can also be understood as the theory or philosophy of knowledge, as its study focuses on the nature of knowledge, the process of knowing, and the ways of acquiring true knowledge.²⁰ Through epistemology, it is discussed how knowledge is structured and justified

¹⁸ Fariz Pari, "Epistemologi dan Pengembangan Ilmu Pengetahuan," *Ilmu Ushuluddin*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (2018): 142-145.

¹⁹ Arthur Thomson, "The Philosophy of J. F. Ferrier," *Philosophy*, Vol. 39, No. 147 (January 1964): 46-62.

²⁰ Rahimin Affandi Abdul Rahim, "Epistemologi: Teori, Konsep dan Sumber-Sumber Ilmu dalam Tradisi Islam," *Dakwatul Islam*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (Desember 2020): 15.



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rationality. Each form of knowledge has its own characteristics, encompassing ontological aspects (what is known), epistemological aspects (how it is known), and axiological aspects (for what purpose the knowledge is used).

From the perspective of its object of study, epistemology can be divided into two main forms. First, individual epistemology, which focuses on knowledge by emphasizing the cognitive status and the process of acquiring knowledge based on the activities of the individual as a subject, regardless of social context. Second, social epistemology, which is a philosophical study that views knowledge as a sociological phenomenon. From this perspective, social relations, collective interests, and social institutions are understood as important factors influencing the process, methods, and outcomes of knowledge acquisition.²¹

Essentially, epistemology is the theory of scientific knowledge. As such a theory, epistemology functions to critically analyze the procedures used by science in the formation of knowledge itself. Scientific knowledge is dynamic and constantly evolving, so previous findings are often criticized, rejected, or refined by subsequent discoveries. This demonstrates that scientific truth is tentative that is, not absolute and always open to revision. A finding is considered true as long as it has not been overturned by stronger evidence.

Differences in research outcomes on the same issue can occur due to variations in the scientific procedures employed by researchers. By examining these procedures, epistemology can explain the process of forming scientific knowledge. Ultimately, epistemology plays a role in determining the most effective scientific methods for obtaining knowledge whose truth can be justified. Additionally, epistemology serves a critical function toward existing concepts or theories. In the philosophical tradition, the ideas of various philosophers are often sharply critiqued by other thinkers through an epistemological approach, particularly

²¹ Steve Fuller, "Social Epistemology", Vol. 1, No. 1 (1987), hlm.5-6.



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concerning methods of acquiring knowledge. Thus, epistemology encourages the ability to conduct both external criticism of others' ideas and internal criticism of one's own thinking.

Based on its mode of operation, epistemology can be classified into three main types;²² First, metaphysical epistemology is an epistemological approach that starts from certain metaphysical assumptions about reality. This approach begins with a particular view of the nature of reality and then explains how humans can come to know that reality. For example, Plato believed that true reality exists in the world of ideas, while the reality experienced by humans in the empirical world is temporary and only a shadow of the world of ideas. The act of knowing is understood as a process of recollecting (anamnesis) the true reality once witnessed by the soul in the realm of ideas. Within this framework, knowledge (*epistēmē*) is considered objective, universal, and unchanging, whereas opinion (*doxa*) is subjective, particular, and relative.

Second, skeptical epistemology is an approach that demands proof beforehand regarding what can be known with certainty. Anything that still contains doubt is considered invalid until its truth is verified. The challenge of this approach lies in the difficulty of finding certainty if skepticism is applied consistently and without limits. The skepticism developed by Descartes is known as methodological skepticism, which is a systematic doubt used as an initial step to discard all questionable beliefs, with the ultimate goal of reaching an indubitable truth.

Third, critical epistemology does not stop at metaphysical assumptions or total doubt, but instead examines reflectively and rationally the assumptions, procedures, and conclusions of both common-sense knowledge and scientific knowledge. Various beliefs, opinions, and theories are subjected to evaluation to test their rational foundations and validity. This approach allows for external criticism of others' ideas and

²² René Descartes, "*Meditations on First Philosophy*", diterjemahkan oleh John Cottingham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), *Meditasi I*, hlm. 12–14



internal criticism of one's own thinking, thereby promoting the correction and advancement of knowledge.

In Islamic philosophy, epistemology holds an important position as it serves as the foundation for understanding the relationship between reason and revelation. Muslim philosophers such as al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, and al-Ghazālī extensively discussed epistemological issues, both in relation to metaphysics and to Islamic law (*sharī'ah*).

Al-Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār systematically and thoroughly formulated the concept of epistemology in his work *Al-Mughni fī al-Naẓr wa al-Ma'ārif*. In this work, he comprehensively discusses the limits of knowledge, the ways of acquiring it, its methods and nature, including techniques for determining criteria of truth, the dynamics of doubt, levels of conjecture (*ẓann*), and certainty (*yaqīn*). In addition, he examines the role of rational evidence (*'aqlī*) and textual evidence (*naqlī*) as the primary foundations for the existence and validity of knowledge.²³

In line with the thought of Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār, which emphasizes the comprehensive integration of knowledge and science, Rajih al-Kurdy conducted an in-depth comparative study of epistemology from the perspective of the Qur'an and philosophy. He began his discussion with the sources of knowledge and their types and hierarchy, including sensory knowledge, rational knowledge, *ladunī* or immediate knowledge, and prophetic knowledge derived from revelation.²⁴

In Qur'anic terminology, knowledge is often expressed using the terms *al-ma'rifah* and *al-'ilm* along with their various derivatives. Raghīb al-Asfahani considers *al-'ilm* to have a higher rank than *al-ma'rifah*, because *al-'ilm* refers to knowledge of the essence and substance of something, whereas *al-ma'rifah* is more specific and particular. In contrast, Ibn Qayyim emphasizes a conceptual distinction between the

²³ Al-Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār, "*Al-Mughni fī Abwāb al-Tawhīd wa al-'Adl*", jil. 12 (Kairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyyah, 1965), hlm. 3–15.

²⁴ Rajih al-Kurdy, "*Al-Ma'rifah bayna al-Qur'ān wa al-Falsafah*" (Beirut: Dār al-Hādī, 2001), hlm. 27–35

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two: *al-ma'rifah* is understood as a process of conceptualization or initial understanding (*taṣawwur*), while *al-'ilm* refers to verification or the assessment of truth and falsehood (*taṣdīq*) regarding the relationship between two or more propositions.²⁵

In the context of Islamic epistemology, *al-ma'rifah* is often associated with a stage of knowledge that has not yet fully produced inner certainty. Through repetition and deepening, this knowledge develops into *al-ma'rifah* in a more established sense. Thus, the opposite of *al-ma'rifah* is *al-inkār* (denial), while the opposite of *al-'ilm* is *al-jahl* (ignorance). Both are outcomes of preceding cognitive processes.

On this basis, Islamic epistemology differs in context and substance from Western epistemology. The Western tradition tends to focus primarily on the development of knowledge from an epistemological perspective alone, examining the structure of knowledge, methods, sources, and criteria of truth from an anthropocentric viewpoint. In contrast, in Islam, the study of knowledge does not stop at sources and methods but also emphasizes the axiological dimension that is, the extent to which knowledge benefits human life broadly and aligns with the will and pleasure of God, making it essentially theocentric..

The structure of Islamic epistemology can be mapped into five main circles;²⁶ First, the primary sources of Islam, namely the Qur'an and Hadith, which are absolute, sacred, comprehensive, and relevant across all times and places. Second, the disciplinary sciences that interpret these primary sources, such as *ulum al-Qur'an*, *ulum al-Hadith*, fiqh, *uṣūl al-fiqh*, including Qur'anic exegesis (tafsir). Third, auxiliary sciences that support understanding and the development of knowledge, including Arabic language, philology, linguistics, semantics, history, law, economics, and the arts. Fourth, supporting sciences that strengthen

²⁵ Rāghib al-Aṣḥāhānī, "Al-Mufradāt fī Gharīb al-Qur'ān" (Beirut: Dār al-Qalam, 2009), hlm. 580–581.

²⁶ Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, "Miṣṭāḥ Dār al-Sa'ādah fī Ma'rifat al-'Ilm wa al-Ḥikmah" (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1997), hlm. 45–48.



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creativity and Islamic civilization, such as mathematics, physics, astronomy, geometry, health sciences, pharmacy, agricultural engineering, and architecture. Fifth, developmental sciences, which encompass theology, philosophy, Sufism, various Islamic intellectual movements, as well as Islamic political and organizational activities.

According to Zainuddin, knowledge is not limited to the experimental domain alone but encompasses three main dimensions.²⁷ First, the metaphysical dimension, which is derived from revelation and refers to the reality of God as the All-Knowing, aimed at answering fundamental questions about the nature, origin, purpose, and continuity of life. Second, the humanistic dimension, which relates to human life and its relationship with space and time. Third, the material dimension, which encompasses the study of the universe, directed toward the welfare and well-being of humanity.

This concept of epistemology is highly relevant to the study of tafsir, especially when discussing the opening verses of Surah al-‘Alaq, which emphasize the command to read (*iqra*) and mention the pen (*qalam*) as a symbol of the process of transmitting knowledge. The interpretations of the two prominent mufassir, al-Zamakhsharī and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, demonstrate how their epistemological frameworks influenced their understanding of these verses.

2. The Book of Mafatih Al-ghayb

Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ‘Umar ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Rāzī (544–606 H / 1149–1209 CE) was one of the great scholars in the classical Islamic intellectual tradition, with wide-ranging influence in tafsir (Qur’anic exegesis), theology, philosophy, logic, and kalam (Islamic scholastic theology). He was born in the city of Rayy (near modern Tehran), an important intellectual center during the Seljuk dynasty. Al-Rāzī came from a family of scholars; his father, Ḍiyā’ al-Dīn ‘Umar, was a

²⁷ Muhammad Tahir Mansur, “Struktur Ilmu dan Epistemologi dalam Perspektif Islam” (Jakarta: Kencana, 2015), hlm. 45–50..



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Shafī'i jurist and Ash'ari theologian who played a significant role in shaping al-Rāzī's early intellectual development.²⁸

Al-Rāzī's education reflected the breadth of his knowledge. He studied religious sciences such as tafsir, hadith, fiqh, and usul al-fiqh, while also mastering Greek philosophy, Aristotelian logic, mathematics, and natural sciences. This cross-disciplinary mastery made al-Rāzī a central figure in integrating rational sciences (al-'ulūm al-'aqliyyah) with textual sciences (al-'ulūm al-naqliyyah).²⁹ In theology, he is recognized as a key Ash'ari scholar, defending Sunni doctrinal beliefs through rational arguments.

Al-Rāzī was also known as an active intellectual engaged in scholarly debates. He frequently participated in discussions and polemics with various intellectual groups, including the Mu'tazilah, Peripatetic philosophers, and Batiniyah circles. This tradition of debate strongly influenced the writing style and argumentation in his works, including his tafsir *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*.³⁰

Al-Rāzī authored numerous works across disciplines. Among his notable works are *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb* (tafsir), *Al-Maḥṣūl fī 'Ilm Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, *Al-Maṭālib al-'Āliyah* (theology), and *Asās al-Taqdīs*. Among these, *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb* is considered his magnum opus, representing the depth of his intellect and his epistemological construction comprehensively.

Methodologically, *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb* cannot be easily classified under a single tafsir approach. Generally, it employs the tafsir tahlīlī method, interpreting Qur'anic verses sequentially according to the arrangement of the mushaf, with highly detailed and argumentative discussions. Each verse is examined from multiple perspectives, including language, meaning, and theological and philosophical implications.

²⁸ Muḥammad Ḥusayn Al-Dzahabī, "*Siyar A'lām al-Nubalā'* (Beirut: *Mu'assasah al-Risālah*", 2001), jil. 21, hlm. 500–503.

²⁹ George Makdisi, "*The Rise of Colleges*" (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981), hlm. 277–279.

³⁰ Majid Fakhry, "*Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Mysticism*" (Oxford: Oneworld, 2004), hlm. 121–123.



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Al-Rāzī combined tafsir bi al-ma'tsūr (based on transmitted reports) with tafsir bi al-ra'yi (rational interpretation). He referred to the Qur'an, hadith, and the opinions of the Companions and Tabi'in, while giving considerable weight to rational analysis, logic, and philosophical argumentation. In many cases, he proposed multiple possible interpretations of a verse, then discussed and critiqued each before concluding with his own view.

A distinctive feature of al-Rāzī's method is the problem-oriented, argumentative approach. He often presents questions (masā'il), objections (i'tirādāt), and answers (ajwibah) when explaining verses. This method shows that tafsir is not understood as a one-way explanation but as an intellectual dialogue reflecting a rational epistemological construction.³¹

In terms of style, Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb is generally categorized as a kalamī-philosophical (theological-philosophical) tafsir. This is evident from its focus on Ash'ari theology, debates on the attributes of God, free will, and the relationship between intellect and revelation.³² Al-Rāzī used tafsir as a platform to defend and articulate rational Sunni theological views. Besides the kalamī style, the tafsir also exhibits a strong rational-analytical character. Al-Rāzī employed formal logic, philosophy, and natural sciences in explaining Qur'anic verses. It is not uncommon for the discussions to expand into lengthy philosophical debates, which led some scholars to describe the tafsir as an encyclopedia of knowledge.

However, the rational approach in al-Rāzī's tafsir does not negate revelation. Rather, reason is positioned as an epistemological tool to understand revelation more deeply. This makes Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb highly relevant for studying epistemological construction in tafsir, as it explicitly demonstrates the relationship between text, reason, and the scholar's system of knowledge.

³¹ W. Montgomery Watt, *Islamic Philosophy and Theology* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1985), hlm. 97–100.

³² Ignaz Goldziher, *Schools of Koranic Commentators* (Leiden: Brill, 1970), hlm. 180–182.



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3. The Book of Al-Kassyaf

Abū al-Qāsim Maḥmūd ibn ‘Umar al-Zamakhsharī (467–538 H / 1075–1144 CE) was one of the foremost mufassir (Qur’anic exegetes) and Arabic linguists in Islamic intellectual history. He was born in Zamakhshar, in the region of Khwarazm (now part of Uzbekistan), an area renowned as a center of scholarship and linguistics in the 5th century H. He earned the title *Jār Allāh* (“Neighbor of God”) due to his extended stay in Mecca, where he deepened his studies and wrote many of his works.³³

Al-Zamakhsharī had a strong intellectual background in Arabic language, *balāghah* (rhetoric), and literature. He was also one of the leading figures of the Mu‘tazilah theological school of his time, which significantly influenced his approach to interpreting the Qur’an. Nevertheless, his mastery of linguistic sciences ensured that his works received wide recognition, even among Sunni scholars, particularly due to his sharp linguistic analyses.³⁴

Al-Zamakhsharī pursued his education through scholarly journeys (*rihla*), visiting various centers of learning. He studied language, tafsir, hadith, and theology, interacting with numerous prominent scholars. Among his important works are *al-Kashshāf ‘an Ḥaqā’iq Ghawāmiḍ al-Tanzīl* (tafsir), *Asās al-Balāghah* (lexicography), and *al-Mufaṣṣal* (grammar). His tafsir *al-Kashshāf* is considered his magnum opus, representing his methodological and epistemological excellence in Qur’anic exegesis.

The tafsir method employed in *al-Kashshāf* is generally categorized as *tafsir tahlīlī*, interpreting verse by verse according to the mushaf. However, unlike al-Rāzī, al-Zamakhsharī emphasized linguistic (*lughawī*)

³³ Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar A‘lām al-Nubalā’* (Beirut: Mu’assasah al-Risālah, 2001), jil. 20, hlm. 155–158.

³⁴ Ignaz Goldziher, *Schools of Koranic Commentators* (Leiden: Brill, 1970), hlm. 170–172.



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and rhetorical (*balāghī*) analysis, making mastery of language the primary epistemological tool for understanding the Qur'an.³⁵

He extensively utilized Arabic grammar (*nahwu*), morphology (*sharaf*), and rhetoric (*balāghah*) to uncover the beauty and structure of the Qur'anic language. He held that true understanding of the meaning of verses could only be achieved through profound knowledge of Arabic. As a result, *al-Kashshāf* has become a primary reference in Qur'anic linguistic studies.³⁶

Although known as a Mu'tazilite mufassir, al-Zamakhsharī still employed transmitted reports (*riwayat*) in his tafsir, but he was highly selective and often interpreted verses in ways that aligned with rational and theological principles of the Mu'tazilah. This shows that reason and language functioned as epistemological filters in his interpretive process.³⁷

In terms of style, *al-Kashshāf* is classified as a linguistic-rhetorical (*lughawī-balāghī*) tafsir with strong Mu'tazilite theological undertones. Linguistic analysis dominates most of the discussion of verses, including sentence structure, word meanings, and rhetorical style.³⁸

Additionally, the tafsir also carries a rational-theological aspect, where al-Zamakhsharī interprets Qur'anic verses according to fundamental Mu'tazilite principles, such as divine justice (*al-'adl*) and rationality in divine law. This style exemplifies how theological ideology shapes the epistemological construction of tafsir.³⁹

Despite receiving criticism from some Sunni scholars due to his theological leanings, *al-Kashshāf* remains one of the most influential tafsir works in Islamic history. Many later Sunni mufassir wrote commentaries,

³⁵ Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Dhahabī.....hlm. 298–301.

³⁶ *Ibid*, hlm. 302–304.

³⁷ Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, *Mafhūm al-Naṣṣ*.....hlm. 88–90.

³⁸ Al-Zarkashī..... hlm. 163–165.

³⁹ W. Montgomery Watt.....hlm. 74–76.



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summaries, or critiques of this tafsir, highlighting its central position in the classical tafsir tradition. Therefore, *al-Kashshāf* is highly relevant for analysis within the framework of epistemological construction in tafsir, particularly in examining the roles of language and reason in Qur'anic interpretation.

B. Literatur Rievew

In this study, it is important to review previous works that are relevant to the theme of Qur'anic epistemology and tafsir studies, particularly those related to al-Zamakhsharī and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī. This literature review aims to examine the extent to which previous research has been conducted and to highlight the novelty of the present study.

1. The book of *Islam dan Ilmu Pengetahuan* by M. Amin Abdullah⁴⁰ discusses the epistemological relationship between revelation, reason, and empirical reality within the Islamic intellectual tradition. This work emphasizes that Islamic epistemology is integrative and dialogical, where revelation is not opposed to reason and empirical experience. The similarity with this thesis lies in the focus on Islamic epistemology, particularly the relationship between revelation and reason as the foundation of knowledge. However, the difference is that Amin Abdullah operates at a general philosophical level and does not examine the epistemological construction of tafsir textually. Additionally, his work does not analyze QS al-‘Alaq verses 1–5, nor does it compare Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb and al-Kashshāf. This thesis specifically investigates how epistemological construction is manifested in the concrete interpretive practices of two classical mufassir regarding the first revealed verse.
2. The dissertation titled *Epistemologi Tafsir Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī* by Asep Saefullah (UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, 2017)⁴¹ examines the epistemology of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's tafsir, emphasizing the integration

⁴⁰ M. Amin Abdullah, “*Islam dan Ilmu Pengetahuan*” (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2012).

⁴¹ Asep Saefullah, “*Epistemologi Tafsir Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī*” (Disertasi, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, 2017).



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of Asy'ariyah theology and philosophy in *Mafātīh al-Ghayb*. The similarity with this thesis lies in the focus on al-Rāzī's tafsir epistemology and the use of *Mafātīh al-Ghayb* as the primary source. However, the difference is that Saefullah's dissertation is general in scope and does not limit the analysis to QS al-'Alaq verses 1–5. Furthermore, it does not include a comparative study with al-Zamakhsyarī's *al-Kashshāf*. This thesis complements that study by providing a thematic and comparative analysis to highlight the differences in epistemological construction between the two classical mufassir.

3. The article by Nurhayati in *Jurnal Studi al-Qur'an* (2020) titled “*Epistemologi Penafsiran Ayat-Ayat Ilmu dalam Tafsir Klasik dan Kontemporer*”⁴² compares the epistemology of classical and modern mufassir. The study examines the epistemology of interpreting verses related to knowledge in both classical and contemporary tafsir. The similarity with this thesis lies in the focus on tafsir epistemology, particularly in analyzing verses associated with knowledge. However, the difference is that the article does not specifically study QS al-'Alaq verses 1–5, nor does it compare the tafsir of al-Rāzī and al-Zamakhsyarī. This thesis specifically analyzes the epistemological construction of two classical mufassir on the first revelation, providing a level of focus and depth of analysis not present in the article.
4. The article by Saeed Fayzul Hayat et al., in *Jurnal Tasamuh* titled “*Epistemologi Al-Qur'an: Integrasi Wahyu dan Akal*”⁴³ positions QS al-'Alaq verses 1–5 as the foundation of Islamic epistemology, emphasizing the activities of reading and learning. The similarity with this thesis lies in the selection of QS al-'Alaq as the epistemological object of study. However, the difference is that the article is conceptual in nature and does not analyze classical tafsir in depth. This thesis differs by examining how

⁴² Nurhayati, “*Epistemologi Penafsiran Ayat-Ayat Ilmu dalam Tafsir Klasik dan Kontemporer*,” *Jurnal Studi al-Qur'an: Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 16, no. 2 (2020): 175–194

⁴³ Saeed Fayzul Hayat, dkk., “*Epistemologi Al-Qur'an: Integrasi Wahyu dan Akal*” *Jurnal Tasamuh* 5, no. 2 (2021): 45–60



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these verses are interpreted in *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb* and *al-Kashshāf*, and how the epistemological construction of the two mufassir is formed through their interpretive methods and perspectives.

5. The article by Tarto in *Jurnal El-Mu'jam* titled “*Epistemologi ar-Rāzī dalam Tafsir Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*”⁴⁴ examines al-Rāzī’s epistemology through an analysis of the sources of knowledge in *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*. The similarity with this thesis lies in the focus on al-Rāzī’s epistemology. However, the difference is that the article is not thematic and does not analyze QS al-‘Alaq verses 1–5. In addition, it does not provide a comparison with al-Zamakhsyarī’s tafsir. This thesis complements that study by employing a comparative approach between the two mufassir and focusing on specific verses.
6. The article by Anas Shafwan Khalid in *Jurnal Al-Tadabbur* titled “*Metodologi Tafsir Fakhrudin al-Rāzī: Tela’ah Tafsir QS. Al-Fatihah Dalam Mafātīḥ Al-Ghayb*”⁴⁵ examines Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s tafsir methodology with a focus on the rational and philosophical character in his interpretation. Using a descriptive-analytical approach, the article emphasizes al-Rāzī’s rational-philosophical methodology. The similarity with this thesis lies in the analysis of al-Rāzī’s tafsir method and epistemology. However, the difference is that the article limits its study to QS al-Fātiḥah. This thesis expands the application of that methodology to QS al-‘Alaq verses 1–5 and compares it with al-Zamakhsyarī’s tafsir method.
7. The article by Muhammad Alwi HS in *Jurnal Substantia* titled “*Epistemologi Tafsir: Filsafat dan Al-Qur’an*”⁴⁶ discusses the development of tafsir epistemology within the Islamic tradition, highlighting the relationship between philosophy and the Qur’an. The

⁴⁴ Tarto, “*Epistemologi ar-Rāzī dalam Tafsir Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*” *Jurnal El-Mu’Jam* 7, no. 2 (2020): 55–72.

⁴⁵ Anas Shafwan Khalid, “*Metodologi Tafsir Fakhrudin al-Rāzī*” *Jurnal Studi Al-Qur’an dan Tafsir* 4, no. 1 (2021): 33–50.

⁴⁶ Muhammad Alwi HS, “*Epistemologi Tafsir: Filsafat dan Al-Qur’an*” *Jurnal Substantia* 6, no. 2 (2022): 101–118.



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author explains that the emergence of rational tafsir was a response to the intellectual dynamics of the Muslim community, particularly in facing philosophical and theological challenges. The article focuses on rational tafsir in the context of Islamic philosophy. The similarity with this thesis lies in the attention to classical rational tafsir, including the works of al-Rāzī and al-Zamakhsyarī. However, the difference is that the article is historical-theoretical and does not examine QS al-‘Alaq or specific tafsir texts in depth. This thesis applies the epistemological framework to the analysis of concrete tafsir interpretations.

8. The article by Muhammad Hasyim & Nashrullah in *Jurnal Ulul Albab: Jurnal Studi Islam* titled “*Tafsir Maqasidi dan Epistemologi Pendidikan dalam QS Al-‘Alaq: Visi Al-Qur’an untuk Pembelajaran*”⁴⁷ interprets QS al-‘Alaq from the perspective of Islamic educational epistemology. The similarity with this thesis lies in the focus on the same verses, namely QS al-‘Alaq ayat 1–5. However, the difference is that the article does not examine classical tafsir nor analyze the epistemological constructions of the mufassir. This thesis fills that gap by studying the tafsir of al-Rāzī and al-Zamakhsyarī.
9. The thesis by Khaidir titled “*Sistem Pengetahuan dalam Tafsir Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī*”⁴⁸ examines the system of knowledge in al-Rāzī’s tafsir from a philosophical perspective. The similarity with this thesis lies in the focus on al-Rāzī’s epistemology. However, the difference is that Khaidir’s thesis does not analyze QS al-‘Alaq ayat 1–5 and does not compare it with al-Zamakhsyarī’s tafsir. This thesis complements that study by applying a thematic and comparative approach.
10. The article by Alniatul Fadhillah in the *Jurnal At-Turas* titled “*Reason and Revelation in Tafsir al-Kashshāf: Mu’tazilah’s Study of the Verses of*

⁴⁷ Muhammad Hasyim & Nashrullah, “*Epistemologi Pendidikan dalam QS Al-‘Alaq*” *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 10, no. 1 (2023): 45–62.

⁴⁸ Khaidir, “*Sistem Pengetahuan dalam Tafsir Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī*” (Tesis, Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga, 2021), hlm. 40–65.



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*Tanzih I'tiqodiyah*⁴⁹ discusses the dominance of rationality in al-Zamakhsyārī's tafsir. The similarity with this thesis lies in the focus on the epistemology of Tafsir al-Kashshāf. However, the difference is that the article does not compare it with Tafsir Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb and does not analyze QS al-ʿAlaq ayat 1–5. This thesis contributes novelty by providing a comparative analysis of two classical tafsirs on the first revelation verse.

Based on a review of relevant literature, it can be concluded that previous studies have extensively discussed Islamic epistemology, the relationship between revelation and reason, as well as the epistemological characteristics of classical tafsir, particularly the exegeses of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and al-Zamakhsyārī, from conceptual, methodological, and theological perspectives. However, these studies are generally partial in nature, focusing on only one mufassir, examining tafsir epistemology in general without focusing on a specific verse, or discussing QS al-ʿAlaq verses 1–5 without a comparative analysis of classical tafsir. Therefore, this study offers an advantage by presenting a comparative analysis of the epistemological construction in the interpretation of QS al-ʿAlaq verses 1–5 in *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb* and *al-Kashshāf*, thereby not only examining the interpretation results but also uncovering the sources of knowledge, reasoning methods, and the theological-philosophical frameworks that shape the way both mufassirs understand the first revelation. The novelty of this research lies in its effort to bring together two classical tafsir epistemological traditions the rational-integrative Asy'ariyah approach of al-Rāzī and the rational-theological Mu'tazilah approach of al-Zamakhsyārī into a single thematic analysis.

⁴⁹ Alniatul Fadilah, (2025). "Reason and Revelation in the Tafsir Al-Kashshaf: Mu'tazilah's Study of the Verses of *Tanzih I'tiqodiyah*". *AT-TURAS: Jurnal Studi Keislaman*, 12(2), 68-84.

CHAPTER III RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. Type of Research

This study uses qualitative research with a library research approach. Qualitative research was chosen because the focus of this study is to examine the thoughts and interpretations of two major figures in the tradition of interpretation, namely al-Zamakhshari and Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, on Surah al-'Alaq verses 1–5. In qualitative research, data is not presented in the form of statistical figures, but rather through description, analysis, and interpretation of the meaning of the text.⁵⁰ Thus, this study attempts to capture the depth of thought of both exegetes, particularly in relation to the epistemological aspects contained in their interpretations..

Literature research was chosen because the main data sources for this study were classical tafsir books and other relevant academic literature. The research objects were not taken from empirical phenomena in the field, but rather from written texts that have scientific authority. Using the literature method, researchers can trace, compile, and analyse classical texts that are authoritative representations in Islamic scientific discourse. Therefore, this type of research is considered the most appropriate for revealing how the epistemology of science is understood in the interpretation of Surah al-'Alaq by the two exegetes.

B. Research Approach

The approach used in this study is comparative. The comparative approach is used to examine the differences and similarities between two great figures, al-Zamakhshari and Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, in interpreting Surah al-'Alaq verses 1–5. Through this approach, researchers can uncover the methods, arguments, and epistemological frameworks developed by each

⁵⁰ Moleong, Lexy J., “*Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif*” (Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya, 2017), hlm. 6–8.



mufassir. By comparing these two figures, the study will obtain a complete picture of the diversity of tafsir traditions and how both developed their epistemological conceptions of interpreting the early verses that were revealed.

C. Data Source

To ensure data accuracy and reliability, this study will triangulate data with:

1. Primary Source

Primary sources are the main sources that form the core of the study, namely the exegesis works of al-Zamakhshari and Fakhr al-Din al-Razi. The first book is al-Kashshaf ‘an Ḥaḡā’iq Ghawāmiḡ al-Tanzīl wa ‘Uyūn al-Aḡāwīl fī Wujūh al-Ta’wīl by al-Zamakhshari, known as one of the Mu‘tazilah school of exegesis with very strong linguistic and rhetorical characteristics. The second book is Mafātīḡ al-Ghayb, more popularly known as Tafsīr al-Kabīr by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, which is a rational and philosophical tafsir. These two tafsir books will be the main sources for exploring the interpretation of Surah al-‘Alaq verses 1–5.

2. Secondary Source

Secondary sources are supporting literature that helps researchers further understand the context of interpretation and epistemology discussed. These secondary sources include other tafsir books that mention Surah al-'Alaq, books that discuss Islamic epistemology and tafsir methodology, journal articles that examine the thoughts of al-Zamakhshari and Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, as well as other academic literature relevant to the research theme. With these secondary sources, the analysis of the two mufassirs' interpretations will be more comprehensive, as it can be placed within a broader framework of thought.

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D. Data Collection Techniques

The data collection technique in this study was carried out using the documentation method. Documentation is a technique used to collect written data from various sources, both primary and secondary.⁵¹ In the context of this study, documentation was carried out by collecting the main tafsir works of al-Zamakhshari and Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, then intensively reading their interpretations of Surah al-'Alaq verses 1–5. From this reading, the researcher noted the concepts, methods, and epistemological frameworks that emerged in the interpretations of the two mufasssirs.

In addition, documentation techniques were also carried out by compiling secondary literature such as books, journal articles, and previous research. The researcher utilised physical and digital libraries (including online databases such as JSTOR, Google Scholar, the National Library of Indonesia, and other scientific portals) to access these sources. All of this literature was not only collected but also classified and organised according to the research theme. Relevant data was then sorted and coded to facilitate the analysis process. In this way, the researcher could ensure that the data used was valid, accurate, and relevant to the epistemological focus of Surah al-'Alaq verses 1–5.

Next, an intensive and selective reading of the collected sources was conducted. The researcher did not just skim through the texts, but read them deeply, annotating them, noting important quotations, underlining key arguments, and identifying the relationships between ideas. This process was very important because the main data in this study was not only the literal content of the texts, but also the implicit meanings and logical relationships between the ideas that appeared in them.

The data collection process also involves contextualising the text, which means understanding the text not only from its content but also from the historical, social, political, and intellectual context in which it was written. All

⁵¹ Sugiyono, “*Metode Penelitian Pendidikan: Pendekatan Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, dan R&D*” (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2017), hlm. 223–225.

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data collected from these readings is then organised, classified, and codified based on key research themes. From this, researchers obtain raw material that will later be analysed further using philosophical approaches.

E. Data Analysis Techniques

Data obtained from primary and secondary sources were analysed using content analysis and comparative analysis. Content analysis was used to reveal the meaning contained in the interpretation of Surah al-‘Alaq verses 1–5, particularly in relation to epistemology. Through content analysis, researchers can trace how al-Zamakhshari and Fakhr al-Din al-Razi understood the concepts of science, revelation, and the process of human recognition of knowledge. This analysis was conducted by critically reading the interpretive texts, noting the main ideas, and interpreting the epistemological meanings implied in the explanations of the two interpreters.

Furthermore, comparative analysis is used to compare the interpretations of the two exegetes. This analysis is important to find similarities and differences in their methods and styles of interpretation. By comparing them, the study can show how the Mu'tazilah tradition of tafsir represented by al-Zamakhshari differs from or is similar to the rational-philosophical tradition of tafsir represented by Fakhr al-Din al-Razi. Ultimately, this analytical technique is expected to provide a clearer picture of the contributions of both exegetes to Islamic epistemological discourse, while also opening up space for the relevance of their interpretations in the context of contemporary scholarship.

1. Content Analysis

Content analysis is a technique used to interpret the meaning of the text being studied. In this context, researchers examine the interpretations of al-Zamakhshari in al-Kashshāf and Fakhr al-Din al-Razi in Mafātīh al-Ghayb on Surah al-‘Alaq verses 1–5. This method allows researchers to trace the main ideas that emerge in the interpretations of both mufassir, both explicit and implicit. The focus is not only on the literal explanation

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of the verses, but also on the epistemological concepts contained therein, such as the nature of knowledge, the process of recognition, and the role of revelation in shaping the structure of knowledge.

In its application, content analysis is carried out by classifying data based on the main themes found, such as the themes of creation, the importance of reading, or the relationship between humans and knowledge. From this classification, the researcher then conducts a more in-depth interpretation to discover the epistemological framework of each mufassir. Thus, content analysis helps this study to explore the intellectual dimensions contained in classical tafsir in a systematic and focused manner.

2. Comparative Analysis

Comparative analysis is used to examine the similarities and differences between two styles of interpretation that are the subject of research. This approach is important because al-Zamakhshari and Fakhr al-Din al-Razi were born from different intellectual backgrounds. Al-Zamakhshari is known for his rational-linguistic tendencies characteristic of Mu'tazilah, while Fakhr al-Din al-Razi emphasises a rational-philosophical approach with broad intellectual speculation. By comparing the two, this study reveals the diversity of Islamic interpretive traditions while highlighting their points of convergence and divergence.

The comparison process was carried out by identifying the structure of argumentation, methods of interpretation, and epistemological concepts put forward by each mufassir. After the data from the two primary sources were analysed in depth, the researcher compiled a thematic comparison. The results of this analysis are expected to provide a clearer picture of the contributions of al-Zamakhshari and Fakhr al-Din al-Razi to Islamic epistemological discourse, as well as the relevance of their methodological differences to the development of the science of interpretation.

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CHAPTER V CLOSING SECTION

A. Conclusion

Fakhruddin al-Razi, in his work *Mafātīḥ al-Ghaib*, employs a theological-philosophical approach to QS. Al-‘Alaq 1–5, emphasizing the supremacy of revelation and the epistemic dependence of humans on God. He interprets the command *iqra’* and the symbol of the *qalam* (pen) as evidence that knowledge is a divine gift created within the human soul, positioning reason as an instrument subordinate to transcendental authority. In contrast, az-Zamakhsyari’s *Al-Kashshāf* utilizes a linguistic-rational framework that grants humans a more active rational role. He views these verses as a legitimation of literacy and the development of civilization, fostering a balance where revelation and reason function in a dialogical rather than strictly hierarchical relationship.

The fundamental difference between these two scholars lies in their epistemological constructions; al-Razi develops a theocentric-transcendental model where Allah is the absolute source, whereas az-Zamakhsyari proposes a rational-participatory epistemology that acknowledges human rational capacity in developing knowledge. Despite these methodological variances, both exegetes agree that the first revelation in Islam carries a profound epistemological dimension. Their interpretations illustrate the rich diversity within the classical exegetical tradition, while both remain firmly rooted in the principle of *tawhid*, acknowledging Allah as the primary source of all knowledge.

B. Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, the author offers the following recommendations: *First*, future research could expand the comparative study to include other mufassir in order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the epistemology of the exegesis of QS. Al-‘Alaq verses 1–5.

Second, studies on the epistemology of Qur’anic interpretation should be further developed using a more integrative approach that combines ‘ilm al-kalam (Islamic theology), philosophy, and modern theories of knowledge. *Third*, in the context of Islamic education, it is important to integrate the theocentric and rational approaches proportionally, so as to establish a balanced paradigm of knowledge that harmonizes spirituality and rationality.

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