



KNOWING GOD FROM THE PERSPECTIVES OF ‘ILM AL-KALĀM AND TAŞAWWUF

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ABSTRACT

The study of divinity constitutes a fundamental foundation in Islamic teachings, addressed through various scholarly disciplines, particularly kalam (Islamic theology) and tasawwuf (Islamic mysticism). Kalam emphasizes a rational and argumentative approach in understanding the existence, attributes, and actions of God, whereas tasawwuf focuses on inner realization and spiritual experience in knowing the Divine. This article aims to examine the concept of knowing God from the perspectives of kalam and tasawwuf, as well as to analyze the relationship between the two in constructing a comprehensive understanding of faith. This study employs a qualitative method with a library research approach, analyzing both classical and contemporary sources in the fields of kalam and tasawwuf. The findings reveal that kalam plays a significant role in establishing the rational foundations of faith through the concepts of tawhid, iman, and the divine attributes, while tasawwuf serves as a complementary dimension by introducing the experiential aspects of ihsan, muraqabah, and ma‘rifatullah. The relationship between iman (faith) and ihsan (spiritual excellence) emerges as the primary point of convergence between kalam and tasawwuf, where faith is not only understood conceptually but also embodied in moral and spiritual consciousness. Thus, the integration of kalam and tasawwuf is essential to ensure that the understanding of God does not remain confined to a rational-dogmatic level, but rather develops into a profound spiritual realization that shapes ethical conduct and holistic religious behavior.

Keywords: Knowing God (Ma‘rifatullah), Tawhid, Tasawwuf.

Introduction

The development of Islam shows that various religious disciplines have been studied to support the implementation of worship, such as fiqh (Islamic law), aqidah (Islamic theology), akhlak (ethics), and mantiq (logic), among others (Imanbayeva, 2020; Intan, 2022; Muhammad et al., 2022). In the early phase, branches of science such as fiqh, aqidah, and akhlak were still within the same fiqh study group. With the rapid development of Islamic studies, the discussion of all these aspects was no longer effective when combined within a single discipline, resulting in specialization and separation into more focused fields of knowledge. Thus, each discipline has a unique role and contribution to the broader body of Islamic knowledge (Sudrajat & Sufiyana, 2023).

As a monotheistic religion, Islam possesses a well-established and comprehensive concept of divinity, rendering its fundamental principles beyond dispute. However, debates among scholars of tawhid do not concern the essential nature of this concept itself, but rather revolve around specific interpretations derived from the Qur'an and Hadith (Jamaluddin & Anwar, 2020). The discipline concerned with divinity and human belief is referred to by various terms, such as 'aqidah, 'ilm al-kalam, usul al-din, 'ilm al-tawhid, and theology. Despite these differing terminologies, they essentially address the same core subject matter (Sabil, 2024; Syahrikal & Nureni, 2025).

Ilm al-kalam is a field of study within Islamic scholarship that examines theological questions based on the Qur'an, Hadith, and rational inquiry. It serves as the foundation of individual or collective belief systems in addressing questions concerning the existence and nature of God such as how God is understood, what God is like, and other related inquiries pertaining to faith in the Divine (Jamrah, 2015).

In addition to the rational-theological approach developed within 'ilm al-kalam, the Islamic intellectual tradition also recognizes a spiritual approach articulated through tasawwuf (Islamic mysticism) (Rahman, 2017). While 'ilm al-kalam seeks to affirm belief through logical argumentation and conceptual analysis, tasawwuf emphasizes the inward experiential dimension through the purification of the soul (tazkiyat al-nafs) and a direct awareness of the Divine presence (Knysh, 2019). In this context, knowing God (ma'rifatullah) is not understood merely as the outcome of an intellectual process, but also as the result of a profound spiritual journey. Therefore, tasawwuf offers an alternative path that complements the approach of kalam by emphasizing the experiential dimension of religious life.

These differing approaches do not indicate a contradiction; rather, they reflect the methodological richness of Islam in understanding the concept of divinity. 'Ilm al-kalam and tasawwuf can thus be positioned as two complementary approaches in constructing a comprehensive and integrated understanding of faith (Izza, 2020). 'Ilm al-kalam provides a solid rational foundation to ensure that belief is not confined to mere taqlid (uncritical imitation), while tasawwuf guides individuals toward the internalization of faith-based values through spiritual awareness and ethical practice. Therefore, the integration of both is essential in addressing the challenges of modernity, which demand a balance between rationality and spirituality in religious life.

However, with the advancement of human knowledge and experience, diverse modes and patterns of understanding divinity and belief have emerged. Consequently, the paths

through which individuals comprehend and affirm their faith also vary. Some approach it through reason, others through the Qur'an both its revealed verses and signs in the universe as well as through Hadith and the inner dimension of the heart.

This research offers a novel approach to conceptually integrating two epistemological approaches to Islamic divinity studies: the rational-theological 'ilm al-kalam' and the spiritual-intuitive 'tasawwuf', within a comprehensive analytical framework of knowledge of God. While previous studies have tended to separate the two disciplines or emphasize only one, this research asserts that they are not dichotomous, but rather complementary in forming a comprehensive understanding of faith, encompassing both rational and experiential aspects. Thus, this research broadens the perspective of Islamic theological studies, extending beyond logical argumentation to encompass spiritual internalization within the epistemic dimension.

Furthermore, this research's novelty lies in its analytical-comparative approach, which specifically positions the concept of knowledge of God as the meeting point between 'ilm al-kalam and tasawwuf within the context of the challenges of modernity. This research not only describes the differences between the two disciplines but also constructs a relevant integrative model to address the need for a contemporary understanding of faith, which demands a balance between rationality and spirituality. Thus, this research provides a contextual contribution in the development of Islamic studies that are more integrative, contextual, and applicable in modern religious life.

Method

This study employs a qualitative approach with a library research design (Mustafidz azmi & Musayyidi, 2022). This approach is selected because the focus of the study is directed toward a conceptual and theoretical analysis of knowing God (ma'rifatullah) from the perspectives of 'ilm al-kalam and tasawwuf. The data are derived from relevant classical and contemporary literature, including the works of mutakallimun (theologians) and Sufi scholars, particularly the thought of al-Ghazali, as well as normative sources such as the Qur'an and Hadith related to the concepts of iman, ihsan, and tawhid. In addition, this study utilizes academic books and journal articles as secondary sources to enrich the analysis and strengthen the conceptual framework.

Data collection is conducted through documentation study by selecting and critically examining literature that has direct relevance to the research theme. The collected data are then analyzed using a descriptive-analytical method, which involves systematically presenting the main concepts of 'ilm al-kalam and tasawwuf, followed by analyzing their relationships, differences, and points of convergence. The analysis also adopts a conceptual-comparative approach to demonstrate the complementary nature between the rational-theological approach of 'ilm al-kalam and the spiritual-experiential approach of tasawwuf in constructing a comprehensive and integrative understanding of faith.

Funding and Discussion

Literally, kalam means speech or discourse. Terminologically, 'ilm al-kalam refers to a discipline that discusses the existence of God, the attributes that must necessarily belong

to Him, those that are impossible for Him, and those that are possible for Him. It also examines the prophets of God in order to affirm the truth of their prophethood, including the attributes that must, must not, and may be ascribed to them. According to Husein Tripoli, 'ilm al-kalam is a discipline concerned with establishing religious beliefs through definitive and demonstrative proofs (Muhammad Hasbi, 2015).

Like other branches of Islamic scholarship, 'ilm al-kalam is grounded in the Qur'an, both in terms of its methodological approach and its substantive content. From a methodological perspective, rational thinking is by no means prohibited. The Qur'an encourages Muslims to employ reason and intellect, and conversely criticizes those who neglect the use of their cognitive faculties.

Rational inquiry and dialectical debate commonly employed in 'ilm al-kalam therefore possess a strong foundation, or at the very least, do not contradict the teachings of the Qur'an. Similarly, in terms of its subject matter, the themes discussed in 'ilm al-kalam remain firmly rooted in the core tenets of Islamic creed as outlined and emphasized in the Qur'an, particularly concerning the nature of God and the doctrine of tawhid (Suryan A. Jamrah, 2015).

Therefore, when viewed from both its methodological and substantive dimensions, the existence of 'ilm al-kalam is not prohibited in Islam. On the contrary, it is indispensable for establishing a firm faith grounded in strong evidence and sound argumentation. In simple terms, without 'ilm al-kalam and its rational methods, Muslims would find it difficult to defend and articulate the truth of Islamic creed, particularly in engaging with non-Muslims who are accustomed to rational modes of thinking.

From this understanding, it can be inferred that 'ilm al-kalam is a discipline concerned with the study of God in terms of His essence (dhat), attributes (sifat), actions (af'al), and names. Meanwhile, tasawwuf is a discipline that focuses on the inner dimension of the human heart, enabling individuals to experience the presence of God and to comprehend the Divine will. However, it cannot be denied that throughout the history of 'ilm al-kalam, various sects have emerged, each with differing theological perspectives. According to al-Shahrastani, there is no single agreed-upon opinion among scholars regarding the criteria used to classify a particular doctrine as belonging to a specific sect or school. He ultimately systematized these criteria into several key issues (Haif et al., 2025):

1. The issue of the divine attributes and the oneness of God, including His eternal (*azali*) attributes, where some theological schools affirm their existence while others deny them. This also includes discussions on the attributes that are necessary (*wajib*), possible (*ja'iz*), and impossible (*mustahil*) for His essence.
2. The issue of *qada'* (divine decree), *qadar* (predestination), and divine justice, including debates on determinism (*jabr*) and acquisition (*kasb*), the human capacity for good and evil actions, matters beyond human capability, and those that are clearly known.
3. The issue of *wa'd* (divine promise), *wa'id* (divine threat), and the names of God. This also encompasses discussions on divine rulings related to faith (*iman*), *tawhid*, hope and warning, disbelief, and misguidance.
4. The issue of revelation and reason, prophethood, divine will concerning what is good and what is better, the concept of *imamah*, the nature of divine grace and

punishment, the infallibility of the prophets, and the conditions of leadership (*imamah*).

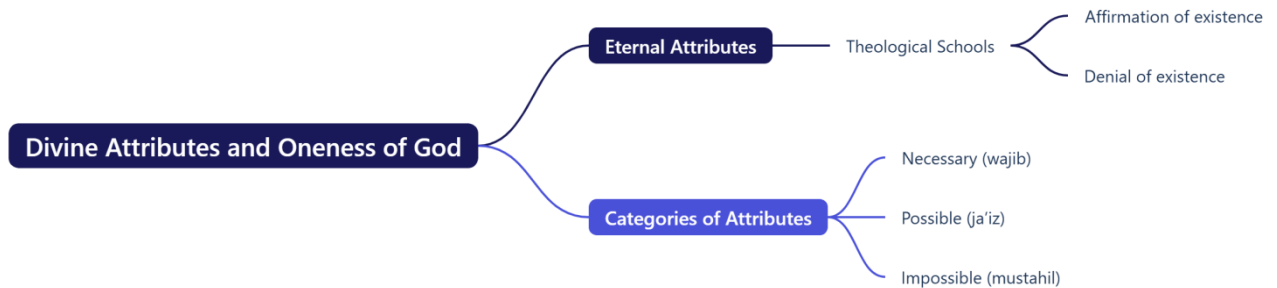


Figure 1. Al-Shahrastani Perspective

Philip K. Hitti classifies al-Ghazali as one of the most influential figures in shaping the course of Islamic history and Muslim civilization. In the realm of thought and the formulation of Islamic teachings, al-Ghazali is even positioned second only to the Prophet Muhammad. He was not only a profound thinker but also highly prolific, producing numerous significant works (Shogar, 2012). Al-Ghazali argued that truth “lies between the literalism of the Hanbali school and the liberalism of the philosophers.” While he accepted the use of metaphorical interpretation in understanding sacred texts, as employed by the philosophers, he maintained that truth is not derived solely from traditional authority. Rather, it is also grounded in the divine light bestowed by God upon the human heart, which serves as a معيار (criterion) for accepting or rejecting tradition (Sabil, 2024).

Thus, the Muslim community has a significant need for ‘ilm al-kalam. Several theoretical perspectives explain this necessity (Jamaluddin & Anwar, 2020). As a distinct discipline, ‘ilm al-kalam emerged to address various issues faced by the Muslim community in its historical context. First, it developed as a form of religious advocacy in response to social inequalities, functioning as a theological axiology relevant to its time. Second, after serving as a response to social concerns, its subsequent development was marked by the consolidation and affirmation of textual references related to theological discourse. Third, another perspective suggests that in all religious life, there exists an inherent tension arising from religious consciousness itself namely, the distinction between the Divine as the object of worship and humans as worshippers, as well as the tension between the sense of sanctity and the awareness of sin. Fourth, ‘ilm al-kalam also emerged as a result of external influences that shaped its development (Khairunisa et al., 2025).

In other contexts, discussions frequently highlight the differences between tasawwuf and ‘ilm al-kalam. However, at the time of their emergence, the two were difficult to distinguish from one another. In other words, tasawwuf and ‘ilm al-kalam were originally unified, and only later were they differentiated and separated into distinct fields of study a development which, in the author’s view, has contributed to an increasing distance between the two.

The Relationship between Kalam and Sufism

In this context, Islam is commonly likened to a tree, whose ideal and complete form consists of roots, a trunk, and fruit. Aqidah (creed) serves as the roots, ibadah (worship) as the trunk, and akhlaq or tasawwuf (ethics/spirituality) as the fruit. The correlation among these three elements faith (iman), worship, and ethics is mutually reinforcing and reflects a systematic, causal relationship (Jamrah, 2015). In Sufi terminology, Islam is understood as the outward dimension (zahir), iman (faith) as the inner dimension (batin), and ihsan as the state of muraqabah (spiritual awareness of God's presence).

'Ilm al-kalam is an Islamic discipline that primarily emphasizes discussions on theological issues concerning the "discourse" of God. These discussions often develop into in-depth debates grounded in both rational ('aqliyah) and textual (naqliyah) arguments. However, 'ilm al-kalam does not explain how a servant can directly experience that God hears and sees them, nor does it address the inner feelings that arise when one recites the Qur'an, or how an individual perceives that all creation is a manifestation of divine power. Such questions are difficult to resolve solely through the framework of 'ilm al-kalam.

It is tasawwuf that engages with these experiential dimensions, addressing the internalization and cultivation of spiritual awareness within the human soul. This discipline explores not only what is to be believed, but how belief is to be felt and lived. While 'ilm al-kalam discusses faith (iman) and its definitions, disbelief (kufr) and its manifestations, as well as hypocrisy (nifaq) and its boundaries, tasawwuf offers practical methods and spiritual paths through which certainty, tranquility, and experiential conviction can be attained.

In relation to 'ilm al-kalam, tasawwuf serves the following functions (Said Aqil Siroj, 2006):

1. As a provider of spiritual insight in the understanding of *kalam*, *tasawwuf* enables a deeper internalization through the heart, making theological knowledge more profoundly experienced and reflected in behavior. In this sense, *tasawwuf* functions as a complement and completion of *'ilm al-kalam*.
2. As a source of spiritual awareness within theological debates, *tasawwuf* balances the predominantly rational ('aqliyah) and textual (naqliyah) dimensions of *'ilm al-kalam*. Given that *kalam* can sometimes develop into a purely intellectual and dialectical exercise, *tasawwuf* introduces a spiritual dimension that prevents it from becoming merely abstract discourse, ensuring that it remains connected to inner awareness and heartfelt experience.

From the perspective of the core dimensions of Islam Islam, iman, and ihsan and when examined through the lens of tasawwuf, a close and inseparable relationship becomes evident. The studies of 'ilm al-kalam and tasawwuf share a significant and essential point of convergence, particularly in the discourse on iman and ihsan, or the inner dimension (batin) and ethical conduct (akhlaq). The treatment of these themes within 'ilm al-kalam is generally not as in-depth, and thus their deeper elaboration is more fully developed within tasawwuf. Employing inward (batiniyah) methods and emphasizing individual spiritual experience, tasawwuf provides a more profound engagement with these aspects. Therefore, the relationship between 'ilm al-kalam and tasawwuf is not one of opposition or contradiction, but rather one of complementarity and mutual

reinforcement (Imanbayeva, 2020).

Al-Ghazali is more widely recognized as a Sufi than as a theologian, as he critically engaged with the structures of both philosophical thought and 'ilm al-kalam. According to M. Amin Abdullah, al-Ghazali did not entirely reject 'ilm al-kalam; rather, he highlighted its limitations and concluded that it cannot serve as the ultimate foundation for seekers of truth. In his view, kalam is insufficient to bring individuals closer to God, whereas the Sufi path provides the means through which one can attain true proximity to the Divine (Abdullah, 2020).

Statements concerning God and human existence are difficult to resolve solely on the basis of 'ilm al-kalam. The experiential and psychological internalization of such matters is more appropriately addressed within tasawwuf. This discipline explores how the values of aqidah are to be felt and lived, recognizing that the question of "how to experience" faith extends beyond merely fulfilling formal obligations.

Within 'ilm al-kalam, discussions typically focus on faith (iman) and its definitions, disbelief (kufr) and its manifestations, as well as hypocrisy (nifaq) and its boundaries. In contrast, tasawwuf provides practical methods and spiritual pathways for cultivating certainty and inner tranquility. It also addresses the process of safeguarding oneself from hypocrisy. Merely knowing the conceptual limits of hypocrisy is insufficient, as individuals may understand these boundaries yet still fall into such behavior. Therefore, the relationship between 'ilm al-kalam and tasawwuf is almost impossible to separate, as both are fundamentally interconnected in shaping a complete and lived understanding of faith.

The Relationship between Iman and Ihsan

The term *īmān* is derived from the Arabic root *āmana-yu'minu-īmānan*, which denotes belief or faith. In Indonesian, the term *percaya* (to believe) signifies a conviction or assurance that something believed is indeed true or real. *Īmān* may also be understood as *i'tirāf* (affirmation), *taṣḍīq* (verification or assent), and acknowledgment constituting a particular form of justificatory affirmation. In their efforts to formulate a terminological definition of *īmān*, Muslim theologians (*mutakallimūn*) have generally emphasized three principal aspects: *taṣḍīq* (inner assent or affirmation of the heart), *taqrīr* (verbal profession through speech), and *'amal* (righteous action manifested through bodily conduct) (Jamrah, 2015).

However, Muslim theologians (*mutakallimūn*) differ in their emphasis on the two aspects of *taṣḍīq* and *'amal*. Some theologians particularly those associated with the Ash'arite school place primary emphasis on *taṣḍīq* (inner assent). In contrast, other groups, such as the Khārijites and the Mu'tazilites, maintain that *īmān* must encompass both *taṣḍīq* and *'amal*. According to this view, *īmān* consists of affirmation in the heart, verbal profession through the tongue, and enactment through bodily deeds. When *'amal* is regarded as an integral component, faith may increase or decrease, and may even be lost entirely (Zeha & Sutono, 2022).

Abū Bakr Jābir al-Jazā'irī states that *īmān* is to affirm and firmly believe in Allah as the sole Lord who possesses and is worthy of worship. Faith, in essence, constitutes a pathway for ennobling the human intellect, by accepting all of God's decrees concerning all things both visible and unseen, ordained and revealed. Furthermore, *īmān* entails an

active pursuit of divine guidance, a continuous effort to draw nearer to God, and engagement in conduct befitting that of His beloved servants the righteous (Abu Bkar Jabir al-Jazairi, 1978).

Indeed, *īmān* is not merely a verbal declaration by a person claiming to be a believer (*mu'min*), for there are many hypocrites who profess faith with their tongues while their hearts do not truly believe. If we examine the usage of the term *īmān* in the Qur'an, we find that it is employed in two fundamental senses, namely (Yusuf Al-Qardhawy, 2006):

1. *Īmān* in the sense of affirmation (*taṣdīq*) refers to affirming the truths conveyed by Allah and His Messenger. In an authentic hadith, it is narrated that when the Prophet was asked by Gabriel about *īmān*, he explained that it is to believe in Allah, His angels, His books, His messengers, the Day of Judgment, and to believe that divine decree (*qadar*), both good and evil, is from Allah the Exalted.
2. *Īmān* in the sense of action or commitment to deeds (*al-iltizām bi al-'amal*) refers to all acts of righteousness that are in accordance with the legal prescriptions established by the Sharī'ah.

Al-Ghazālī classifies the درجات (levels) of faith—or the *tajallī* (unveiling) of the Divine experienced by individuals—as articulated in his *Iḥyā'*, as follows. First, the faith of the common people (*'awām*), namely those with limited knowledge; this represents a form of *taqlīd* (unreflective adherence). Second, the faith of the theologians (*mutakallimūn*), whose belief is grounded in rational reflection and argumentation; this level is not significantly distant from that of the common believers. Third, the faith of the gnostics (*'ārifūn*), namely those who attain a level of faith through *nūr al-yaqīn* (the light of certainty) (Asmaran, 2016).

However, in its deeper dimension, *īmān* is not sufficiently realized through an inner attitude of belief alone; rather, it requires outward manifestation and externalization in concrete actions. In a well-known hadith, the Prophet explains that *iḥsān* is “to worship Allah as though you see Him, and if you do not see Him, then indeed He sees you. Thus, *iḥsān* represents the teachings concerning a heightened spiritual awareness of God's presence in one's life, cultivated through the experiential consciousness of standing before Him and being in His presence during acts of worship.

According to Imām al-Ghazālī, *iḥsān* is understood as *murāqabah* (the awareness of being constantly observed by God). *Murāqabah* refers to a state of vigilant self-awareness grounded in the recognition of divine supervision, wherein the heart becomes oriented toward God. It is a condition of the heart that arises from knowledge, and from which various actions both inward and outward emanate. With regard to divine oversight in relation to human actions, al-Ghazālī outlines two perspectives: first, the awareness prior to the performance of an act, and second, the awareness during the execution of the act itself (Jamaluddin al-Qasimi, 2010).

The essence of *iḥsān* lies in “perfecting one's deeds.” The degree of *iḥsān* recommended in worshipping Allah comprises two levels. First is the level of *murāqabah*, in which a believer constantly feels observed and attended to by God in all of his or her activities. At this level, even if one is unable to fully contemplate the divine attributes, one remains certain that God is watching. This is the level attained by most people. Second is the level of *mushāhadah*, which is higher than the first. At this stage, a person

continuously contemplates the divine attributes and relates all actions to them. This represents the realization of the Prophet's saying: "to worship Allah as though you see Him (Lazuady et al., 2022).

The integration of *īmān* and *iḥsān* is clearly reflected in the Prophet's saying that a person who commits adultery is not a believer at the moment of committing adultery; one who consumes intoxicants is not a believer while drinking; one who steals is not a believer while stealing; and a person would not cause a frightening public disturbance if he truly possessed faith. The absence of *īmān* in such acts is understood as faith being lifted from the individual's soul and hovering above the head like a shadow. This illustrates the relationship between faith and righteous conduct or noble character (Intan, 2022).

The position of *ʿaqīdah* (*īmān*) in Islam, as agreed upon by scholars, is that it constitutes the foundation, while acts of worship (*ʿibādah*) are its branches. In a causal relationship, *ʿaqīdah* or *īmān* necessarily gives rise to *ʿibādah*, whereas acts of worship performed without a foundation of faith are rendered meaningless. Furthermore, sound *ʿaqīdah* and *ʿibādah* give rise to moral conduct or *akhlāq* (*iḥsān*). Moral character is thus the outcome or fruit of a proper understanding and internalization of the values of faith and worship. This is further reinforced by the principle that every Muslim is encouraged to embody the *اخلاق* of God (*al-takhalluq bi akhlāq Allāh*).

Maʿrifatullah

The term *maʿrifah* is derived from the verb *ʿarafa*, which means "to know" or "to recognize." Al-Ghazālī explains that, linguistically, *maʿrifah* refers to "knowledge that admits no doubt." In another formulation, this notion of *maʿrifah* as knowledge free from doubt is described in his work *al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl* as "certain knowledge" (*al-ʿilm al-yaqīnī*). Regarding what is meant by "certain knowledge," al-Ghazālī states that it is the unveiling of a reality with such clarity that no room remains for doubt, error, or uncertainty; the heart no longer entertains the possibility of mistake or hesitation (Asmaran, 2016).

There are three types of *maʿrifah*: (1) the *maʿrifah* of the common people, (2) the *maʿrifah* of theologians (*mutakallimūn*) and philosophers, and (3) the *maʿrifah* of the saints (*awliyāʾ*) and those brought near to God (*muqarrabūn*). The first refers to recognizing the oneness of God through the declaration of the *shahādah*; the second entails recognizing divine unity through logic and rational reasoning; and the third denotes recognizing the oneness of God through the inner heart or spiritual consciousness (*qalb*) (Harun Nasution, 1973).

Indeed, *maʿrifah* in the first and second senses does not yet constitute a true or essential knowledge of God. Both are categorized as knowledge (*ʿilm*), rather than *maʿrifah*. It is *maʿrifah* in the third sense that represents genuine knowledge of God, and this is what is properly termed *maʿrifah*. Such *maʿrifah* is attributed to the Sufis, who are capable of perceiving God through their inner hearts (*qalb*).

Meanwhile, within the discipline of *kalām*, there are several dimensions of the doctrine of *tawḥīd*. The first is *tawḥīd al-dhāt* (the unity of the Divine Essence). Belief in God as the sole Creator of the universe constitutes a fundamental principle of monotheistic religions. Islam articulates clearly and simply the oneness of Allah,

presenting a conception of God that is far removed from anthropomorphic tendencies and mythological or polytheistic constructs. As stated in the Qur'an, the understanding of God begins from the affirmation that Allah truly exists and is absolutely One. Allah declares in Sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ (112 : 1-4). From these verses, it can be interpreted that the first verse refers to the Divine Essence (dhāt; aḥadiyyah), the second to the Divine Attributes (ṣifāt; indicating transcendence beyond spatial limitation), the third to the Divine Names (asmā'; affirming that He neither begets nor is begotten), and the fourth to the Divine Acts (af'āl; emphasizing that nothing is comparable to Him).

Second, tawḥīd al-ṣifāt (the unity of the Divine Attributes). This denotes that nothing resembles God in His attributes. When the Qur'an attributes to God qualities such as hearing, seeing, speaking, and others, the doctrine of tawḥīd affirms that these attributes belong exclusively to Him, in a manner that is incomparable and without equal. As the existence of God is absolute and ultimate, so too are His attributes absolute (Alibe, 2022; Azani & Harahap, 2025; Sopian, 2021). Thus, although such attributes may linguistically resemble those attributed to human beings, within the framework of tawḥīd they must be understood as fundamentally distinct from the attributes of created beings (Harahap & Dewi, 2025).

Third, tawḥīd al-af'āl (the unity of divine acts). This denotes that God's actions are unique, incomparable, and beyond the capacity of any created being to replicate. Divine acts are majestic and imbued with profound power, proceeding from His omnipotence (qudrah) and will (irādah) in an ordered and purposeful manner. God's actions operate according to the highest wisdom. He created the heavens and the earth and all that they contain as manifestations of purposeful design referred to in the philosophy of religion as a teleological order (Alibe, 2022). The reality of the universe imbued with wisdom, harmony, and goodness reflects the nature of God, who creates all things without error or deficiency. He governs the course and order of the cosmos in a harmonious and balanced manner, without conflict or irregularity in its operation.

Fourth, tawḥīd al-ulūhiyyah. The term ulūhiyyah derives from ilāh, meaning "deity" or "god." Thus, tawḥīd al-ulūhiyyah signifies affirming God as the sole being worthy of divinity and worship. He alone is to be taken as God by humankind. Islam teaches that there is only one God who is truly deserving of worship; He alone possesses the rightful claim to divinity, while no other being regardless of its nature may be deified. This constitutes the deepest meaning of tawḥīd al-ulūhiyyah, namely the negation of any deity other than Him (Syahrikal & Nureni, 2025).

Fifth, tawḥīd al-rubūbiyyah. The term rubūbiyyah is derived from the word rabb, which literally means to nurture or to educate. From this root also emerge meanings such as to guide, supervise, elevate, mature, and perfect. It further conveys the notions of governing, possessing, leading, and exercising authority (Azani & Harahap, 2025).

All existence and phenomena in the universe are creations of God, and it is He who governs their course and operation. For if there were another being that also created and regulated the cosmos alongside Him, disorder and chaos would inevitably ensue. There are only two conceivable yet logically untenable possibilities in the absence of tawḥīd al-rubūbiyyah, or if God were not absolutely One. First, multiple deities might cooperate in creating and governing the universe. Such cooperation would imply that each deity is

incapable of acting independently, which clearly contradicts the notion of divine omnipotence. Second, these multiple deities might oppose one another in creating and governing the cosmos. In such a case, the universe would either never come into existence or would collapse into destruction due to conflicting wills.

Conclusions

This study emphasizes that the quest for understanding God in Islam cannot be fully understood through a single disciplinary approach. Kalām (Islamic theology) and tasawwuf (Sufism) are two fields of knowledge with different methodological orientations, yet they complement each other in building a comprehensive understanding of the Divine. Kalām plays a crucial role in establishing the rational foundation of faith through rational (‘aqlī) and textual (naqlī) arguments regarding the nature, attributes, and deeds of God, including the concepts of imān and tawhīd in their various dimensions, thus becoming an intellectual foundation that maintains the purity of ‘aqīdah. However, this approach has limitations in reaching the dimensions of human inner experience and spirituality, so tasawwuf exists as a path to deepening faith through strengthening ihsān, murāqabah, and purification of the heart that internalizes the values of faith in behavior, morals, and daily religious experiences. Thus, the integration of kalam and tasawwuf becomes an important need in building a more complete and balanced understanding of divinity, because the synergy of the two enables Muslims to know God rationally and spiritually, thus giving birth to authentic ma‘rifatullāh supported by a balance between reason, revelation, and inner spiritual experience.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest in the conduct, authorship, and publication of this study. The research was carried out independently, without any financial, commercial, or personal relationships that could be interpreted as influencing the findings, interpretations, or conclusions presented in this article.

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