

## From Sectarianism to Scientific Naturalism? Rethinking Madhhab-Based Differences in the Exegesis of Q.S. Al-Mā'idah: 6

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**Abstract:** This study examines the interpretive differences in classical Qur'anic legal exegesis, which are often perceived as expressions of sectarian bias. Focusing on the interpretation of Q.S. al-Mā'idah [5]:6, the article aims to reassess whether madhhab-based differences reflect ideological division or epistemic variation. Using a qualitative, library-based approach, this study analyzes four major works of *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*—by al-Jaṣṣāṣ (Ḥanafī), al-Kiyā al-Ḥarrāsī (Shāfi'ī), Ibn al-'Arabī (Mālikī), and Ibn al-Jawzī (Ḥanbalī). The analysis employs Ibn Taymiyyah's framework of *Ikhtilāf al-Mufasssirīn* to classify types of interpretive differences, complemented by a discursive perspective inspired by power-knowledge analysis. The findings show that most differences among the exegetes fall within *ikhtilāf tanawwu'* (legitimate variation), rather than contradiction. These variations arise from linguistic interpretation, juristic reasoning, and methodological commitments, not from sectarian motives. This study argues that such diversity can be understood as a scientific naturalism of *tafsīr*, in which interpretive plurality emerges naturally from the internal dynamics of the Qur'anic text and the intellectual frameworks of the mufasir. This perspective contributes to Qur'anic studies by reframing madhhab-based differences as a form of disciplined epistemic diversity rather than ideological conflict, thereby offering a more balanced understanding of classical *tafsīr*.

**Keywords:** *Ikhtilāf al-Mufasssirīn*, *Tafsīr al-Aḥkām*, *Q.S. al-Mā'idah: 6*, *Madhhab-Based Interpretation*, *Scientific Naturalism*

**Abstrak:** Penelitian ini mengkaji perbedaan interpretatif dalam *tafsīr aḥkām* Al-Qur'an klasik, yang sering dianggap sebagai wujud bias sektarian. Dengan berfokus pada penafsiran Surah al-Mā'idah [5]:6, artikel ini bertujuan untuk mengevaluasi kembali apakah perbedaan yang didasarkan pada mazhab mencerminkan perpecahan ideologis atau variasi epistemologis. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif berbasis pustaka, penelitian ini menganalisis empat karya utama *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*—karya al-Jaṣṣāṣ (Hanafi), al-Kiyā al-Ḥarrāsī (Syafi'i), Ibn al-'Arabī (Maliki), dan Ibn al-Jawzī (Ḥanbalī). Analisis ini menggunakan kerangka kerja Ibn Taymiyyah tentang *Ikhtilāf al-Mufasssirīn* untuk mengklasifikasikan jenis-jenis perbedaan interpretatif, dilengkapi dengan perspektif diskursif yang terinspirasi oleh analisis *power-knowledge*. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa sebagian besar perbedaan di antara para mufasssir termasuk dalam *ikhtilāf tanawwu'* (perbedaan variatif), bukan kontradiktif. Variasi ini muncul dari penafsiran linguistik, penalaran yuridis, dan komitmen metodologis, bukan dari motif sektarian. Studi ini berpendapat bahwa keragaman tersebut dapat dipahami sebagai naturalisme keilmuan tafsir, di mana pluralitas penafsiran muncul secara alami dari dinamika internal teks Al-Qur'an dan kerangka pemikiran para mufasir. Perspektif ini berkontribusi pada studi Al-



Qur'an dengan memandang kembali perbedaan berbasis madzhab sebagai bentuk keragaman epistemologis yang terstruktur, bukan konflik ideologis, sehingga menawarkan pemahaman yang lebih seimbang terhadap tafsir klasik.

**Kata Kunci:** *Ikhtilāf al-Mufasssirīn, Tafsīr al-Aḥkām, Surat al-Ma'idah: 6, Mazhab Tafsir, Naturalisme Keilmuan*

## Introduction

Differences in the interpretation of Qur'anic legal verses (*āyāt al-aḥkām*) have historically been a socio-intellectual phenomenon that has provoked debate within the Muslim community.<sup>1</sup> In public discourse—particularly among Indonesian Muslims—diversity in interpretation is often perceived as a sign of division or sectarian fanaticism.<sup>2</sup> This perception is based on the assumption that classical exegetes interpreted the Qur'an to defend their respective legal schools (*madhhab*), rather than to seek the text's objective truth. As a result, classical exegeses, especially *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, are frequently regarded as products of juridical ideology or politics rather than expressions of genuine intellectual inquiry.<sup>3</sup>

The development of Qur'anic interpretation reached a significant level of maturity during the medieval period, marked by the emergence of diverse exegetical approaches, including *tasawuf*, *kalām*, and *fiqh*. This period represents a culmination phase in which interpretive activity expanded across multiple intellectual disciplines.<sup>4</sup> This diversity was closely linked to the parallel development of Islamic sciences, particularly *fiqh* and *uṣūl al-fiqh*, which established methodological foundations for exegetical reasoning.<sup>5</sup>

Within this historical trajectory, Haroen<sup>6</sup> have identified two broad patterns in the evolution of *tafsīr*. On one hand, interpretive differences arose naturally from the development of scholarly disciplines, reflecting methodological and epistemic diversity rather than ideological conflict. On the other hand, interpretation was sometimes influenced by political and institutional interests, leading to the dominance of specific doctrinal frameworks. In such instances, exegetical approaches often aligned with the paradigms of particular groups, as exemplified by the textual rigor of the Khawārij and the rational emphasis of the Mu'tazilah.

These interpretive differences should not be viewed as a sign of disunity but rather as manifestations of epistemic diversity within Islam. Qur'anic exegesis—especially concerning legal matters—should be understood as the outcome of dialogue between the text and the interpreter's intellectual framework, which is influenced by social, cultural, and scholarly traditions.<sup>7</sup> The tension between reductive social

<sup>1</sup> Hafiz Muhammad Asghar Shakir dan Dr. Mahmood Ahmad (Corresponding Author), "Apparent Contradictions in the Verses of Legal Rulings: An Analytical Study," *Journal of Religion and Society* 4, no. 01 (8 Agustus 2025): 508, <https://islamicreligious.com/index.php/Journal/article/view/235>.

<sup>2</sup> Lene Pedersen, "Religious Pluralism in Indonesia," *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology* 17, no. 5 (19 Oktober 2016): 387, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14442213.2016.1218534>.

<sup>3</sup> Fazlur Rahman, *Islam*, 1 ed. (New York Chicago San Francisco: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966).

<sup>4</sup> Fadhil Achmad Agus Bahari, Muslim Muslim, dan Farhan Afif Al-Kindi, "Dynamics and Periodization of Al-Qur'an Interpretation in the Ottoman Empire (1299-1923 AD)," *Mashdar: Jurnal Studi Al-Qur'an dan Hadis* 5 (Desember 2023): 114, <https://doi.org/10.15548/mashdar.v5i2.7670>.

<sup>5</sup> Arif Al Wasim, "Fanatisme Mazhab dan Implikasinya terhadap Penafsiran Al-Qur'an," *Syariati: Jurnal Studi Al-Qur'an dan Hukum* 4, no. 01 (1 Mei 2018): 14, <https://doi.org/10.32699/syariati.v4i01.1160>.

<sup>6</sup> Haroen Nasrun, *Ushul Fiqh 1* (Ciputat: Logos Wacana Ilmu, 1997), 7.

<sup>7</sup> Rahman, *Islam*, 79.

perceptions and the epistemological reality of exegesis constitutes the central issue that drives this research.

Several modern scholars have studied Qur'anic exegesis within its historical, social, and intellectual contexts. Figures such as Ignaz Goldziher<sup>8</sup>, Fazlur Rahman<sup>9</sup>, and Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd<sup>10</sup> have demonstrated that exegetical works are influenced, to varying extents, by broader intellectual traditions and socio-political environments. Their approaches do not necessarily reduce *tafsīr* to sectarian bias; rather, they highlight that interpretation is historically situated and often intertwined with authority and knowledge structures.

In this context, perspectives inspired by Michel Foucault—particularly his concept of power–knowledge—have been employed by some scholars to examine how knowledge is produced within discursive frameworks. “*What power needs is not science but a mass of information which its strategic position can enable it to exploit.*”<sup>11</sup> This approach suggests that exegesis functions as a hegemonic discourse that reinforces specific legal or political authorities. Within the field of legal exegesis, such an approach tends to conclude that interpretive differences are political rather than epistemic. Furthermore, exegetical activity may operate within systems that both enable and constrain interpretation, including legal schools, scholarly institutions, and political contexts. However, this line of analysis does not imply that interpretive differences are purely ideological; therefore, there remains significant scope to reinterpret classical legal exegesis through an epistemological rather than an ideological lens

Recent scholarship has increasingly focused on the epistemological aspects of Qur'anic exegesis. For example, Abdul Mustaqim<sup>12</sup> proposes a periodization of *tafsīr* that distinguishes between ideological and scientific modes of reasoning, thereby emphasizing the role of epistemic frameworks in shaping interpretation. Similarly, scholars such as Al-Fanīsān<sup>13</sup> and Al-Khālīdī<sup>14</sup> have examined *Ikhtilāf al-Mufasssīrīn* as a structured and methodologically grounded phenomenon, highlighting that interpretive differences often stem from linguistic and analytical diversity rather than doctrinal conflict.

However, these studies largely remain at a theoretical level and have not been systematically applied to specific domains of *tafsīr*, particularly *tafsīr al-aḥkām*. Existing research on *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* tends to focus on juridical outcomes rather than the epistemological processes underlying interpretive variation. For instance, studies

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<sup>8</sup> Ignaz Goldziher, *Madzhab Al-Tafsir Al-Islami*, trans. oleh Alaika Salamullah dan dkk (Yogyakarta: eLSAQ Press, 2006), 216.

<sup>9</sup> Rahman, *Islam*, 85.

<sup>10</sup> Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, *Critique of Religious Discourse, Naqd Al-Khitab Al-Dini*, trans. oleh Jonathan Wright (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006), 173.

<sup>11</sup> Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 1 ed. (Canada: The Harvester Press, 1977), 75.

<sup>12</sup> First, interpretations of the formative era with quasi-critical reasoning that occurred during the classical period (beginning in the time of the Prophet until approximately the second century of the Hijri calendar). Second, interpretations of the affirmative era with ideological reasoning that emerged in the Middle Ages. Third, interpretations of the reformative era with critical reasoning that developed in the modern-contemporary period. Abdul Mustaqim, *Epistemologi Tafsir Kontemporer* (Yogyakarta: LKIS, 2010), 34.

<sup>13</sup> Su'ūd bin 'Abdullāh Al-Fanīsān, *Ikhtilāf Al-Mufasssīrīn: Asbābuhū wa Āthāruhū* (Riyadh: Dār Ishbīliyyā, 1997).

<sup>14</sup> Ṣalāḥ Al-Khālīdī, *Ta'rīf Al-Dārisīn bi Manāhij Al-Mufasssīrīn* (Damaskus: Dār Al-Qalam, 2008), 92–94.

such as Ramdhani<sup>15</sup> highlight madhhab affiliation in the interpretation of al-Kiyā al-Ḥarrāsī but do not examine how methodological reasoning operates within that framework. This gap indicates the need for a more integrated analysis that applies the framework of *Ikhtilāf al-Mufasssīrīn* to concrete exegetical cases in legal verses. Accordingly, this study seeks to bridge the divide between theoretical discussions of interpretive diversity and their practical manifestation in *tafsīr al-aḥkām*. Therefore, there remains significant room to reread classical legal exegesis through an epistemological rather than ideological lens.

This article provides a new perspective by analyzing the exegesis of the ablution verse (Q.S. Al-Mā'idah: 6) across four major *Aḥkām Al-Qur'ān* commentaries—by Al-Jaṣṣāṣ (Hanafi), Al-Kiyā Al-Ḥarrāsī (Shāfi'ī), Ibn Al-'Arabī (Mālikī), and Ibn Al-Jawzī (Ḥanbalī)—through the analytical lens of Ibn Taymiyyah's *Ikhtilāf Al-Mufasssīrīn*. These commentaries were selected because they represent the four main Sunni legal schools and collectively illustrate the intersection of jurisprudential reasoning and Qur'anic exegesis. The study distinguishes between interpretive variation (*tanawwu'*) and contradiction (*taḍād*) to explore how differing school-of-thought reasoning influences interpretation. This approach suggests that exegetical differences can be viewed as manifestations of what this study terms scientific naturalism, rather than merely sectarian disagreements, thereby reshaping the understanding of classical legal exegesis.

This concept of scientific naturalism does not refer to positivistic empiricism<sup>16</sup> but to the natural epistemic tendency of Islamic scholarship, where interpretive diversity arises organically from methodological and contextual plurality. In this framework, *tafsīr al-aḥkām* is reinterpreted as an epistemological field governed by both intellectual autonomy and social conditioning. Such an approach repositions classical tafsīr as a dynamic scientific enterprise—one that negotiates between divine revelation, human reasoning, and structures of authority.

This study aims to reevaluate madhhab-based differences in classical Qur'anic exegesis by examining their epistemological foundations rather than viewing them solely as ideological phenomena. It applies the framework of *Ikhtilāf al-Mufasssīrīn* to *tafsīr al-aḥkām*, focusing on the interpretation of Q.S. al-Mā'idah: 6 across four major commentaries. Theoretically, this research contributes to ongoing discussions within tafsīr studies by challenging rigid distinctions between ideology and objectivity and proposing an epistemological approach to interpretive diversity. Practically, it seeks to provide a more balanced perspective for contemporary readers, understanding madhhab-based differences as part of a structured and methodologically grounded interpretive tradition.

The study employs a qualitative, library-based approach, primarily relying on textual analysis of the aforementioned commentaries. The primary data consist of exegetical discussions on Q.S. 5:6, including linguistic explanations, juristic deductions, and legal implications. Secondary data includes a journal article or a book that relates to the primary data. The analysis unfolds in three complementary stages: 1) The descriptive stage – mapping the interpretive patterns in each tafsīr, identifying

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<sup>15</sup> M. Ridho Ramdhani, "FANATIK MAZHAB DALAM PENAFSIRAN AL-QUR'AN (Studi Tafsir Atas Ayat-Ayat Ahkam Dalam Tafsir Ahkam Al-Qur'an Karya Al-Kiya Al-Harrasi Dan Karya Al-Jashash)," *Repository UIN SUSKA* (UIN Sultan Syarif Kasim, 2023), 28, <https://repository.uin-suska.ac.id/75944/>.

<sup>16</sup> Robin Collins, "Scientific Naturalism," *Philosophy Educator Scholarship*, 1 Januari 2000, [https://mosaic.messiah.edu/phil\\_ed/47](https://mosaic.messiah.edu/phil_ed/47).

terminologies, juristic principles, and evidentiary reasoning (*istidlāl*); 2) The critical stage – applying *Ikhtilāf al-Mufasssīrīn* to classify interpretive differences as *tanawwu'* (legitimate variation) or *taḍād* (contradiction), thereby determining the epistemic legitimacy of each reading. 3) The transformative stage – situating those interpretive acts within the discursive formations of *madhhab* authority through Foucault's *power-knowledge* framework. At this stage, interpretive diversity is reinterpreted as a dynamic interplay between intellectual autonomy and institutional conditioning.

## Result and Discussion

### General Framework

#### 1. *Ikhtilāf al-Mufasssīrīn* and Power-Knowledge in *Tafsīr*

Ibn Taymiyyah's *Muqaddimah fī Uṣūl Al-Tafsīr* provides one of the earliest and most insightful analyses of interpretive diversity in Qur'anic exegesis. He argues that the disagreement among *mufasssīrīn* originate from the variations of linguistic interpretations, differing transmitted reports, and discrepancies in rational derivation (*istinbāt*). These differences are categorized as *ikhtilāf tanawwu'* (legitimate variation) and *ikhtilāf taḍād* (contradiction). The former signifies the richness of interpretive possibilities, while the latter results from methodological errors or external biases. This classification allows Ibn Taymiyyah to frame interpretive disagreement as a scientific phenomenon rather than a reflection of sectarian division.<sup>17</sup>

There are four categories related to the aforementioned differences:<sup>18</sup>

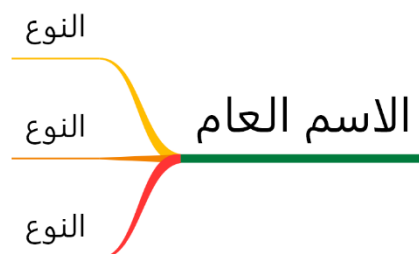
- Each exegete uses different phrases (*al-ibārah/al-lafadh*) to indicate various meanings (*al-ma'nā*). Still, the object (*al-zāt/al-musammā*) being interpreted remains the same.



<sup>17</sup> Taqiyyuddīn Aḥmad Ibn Taymiyyah, *Muqaddimah fī Uṣūl Al-Tafsīr* (Riyadh: Dār Al-Muḥdath, 2022), 99.

<sup>18</sup> Taymiyyah, 100–116.

- b. Each exegete employs expressions that elucidate the type (*al-naw'*) of a general object (*al-ism al-'ām*) by illustrating (*al-tamthīl*). This illustration does not necessarily limit to its hypernym (general category) or hyponym (specific category), but rather informs the reader about the nature of the general object.



- c. difference's The interpreted phrase may have two meanings, either due to similarities in the words used or because of the relationship between them, which common linguistic features may cause. One reason for the ambiguity is mutual interrelation or collusion between the elements. This means that within a single phrase, a pronoun may have an ambiguous antecedent, caused by the presence of two nouns appearing together in the sentence.
- d. The exegetes interpret a phrase using a semantically related phrase, rather than a synonymous one. According to Ibn Taymiyyah, synonyms in language are rare.

Subsequent scholars such as Al-Fanīsān<sup>19</sup> and Al-Hawrī<sup>20</sup>, further developed Ibn Taymiyyah's insights by systematically categorizing the causes of exegetical difference into linguistic, methodological, and epistemological groups. In this study, *Ikhtilāf Al-Mufasssīrīn* serves as the internal analytical framework that allows the researcher to trace how school-of-thought reasoning influences the hermeneutical process while preserving epistemic legitimacy.

Michel Foucault's theory of *Power-Knowledge*, as articulated in *Power/Knowledge*<sup>21</sup> and *The Archaeology of Knowledge*<sup>22</sup>, posits that knowledge is inseparable from power relations that define what can be said, thought, and legitimized as truth. In this view, knowledge is not merely discovered but produced within discursive regimes. Applying this idea to *tafsīr* does not mean denying its spiritual or theological foundations; rather, it enables us to analyze how interpretive authority and institutional frameworks—such as madhhab affiliations and scholarly hierarchies—shape the production of exegetical meaning.

Several scholars have applied Foucault's theory to Islamic studies to examine the historical conditions that shape religious reasoning. Talal Asad<sup>23</sup> and Saba

<sup>19</sup> Al-Fanīsān, *Ikhtilāf Al-Mufasssīrīn: Asbābuhū wa Āthāruhū*.

<sup>20</sup> 'Abd Al-Īlah Hawrī Al-Hawrī, "Asbāb Ikhtilāf Al-Mufasssīrīn fī Tafsīr Āyāt Al-Aḥkām" (University of Cairo, 2001).

<sup>21</sup> Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*.

<sup>22</sup> Michel Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, 2 ed. (London: Routledge, 2013), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203604168>.

<sup>23</sup> Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, 1 ed. (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1993).

Mahmood<sup>24</sup> demonstrate that religious knowledge functions through both discipline and devotion—operating via power that is productive rather than merely repressive. In this context, Foucault’s concept of discourse helps to illuminate the *external conditions* shaping *tafsīr*, while also acknowledging its internal epistemic logic. Therefore, in this study, Foucault’s theory is employed to examine the socio-intellectual environment of classical *Aḥkām Al-Qur’ān*.

The dialogue between Ibn Taymiyyah and Foucault emerges at the intersection of epistemology and discourse. Ibn Taymiyyah addresses why exegetes differ based on their linguistic and methodological commitments, and Foucault helps explain how structures of authority and knowledge condition those differences. This dialogical engagement enables a two-level analysis: the internal hermeneutic level, which examines interpretive reasoning and legitimacy, and the external discursive level, which reveals the dynamics of power and authority surrounding the exegetical enterprise.

### a. Differences in *Tafsīr* as an Inherent Intellectual Phenomenon

The Qur’an, by its very nature, allows for multiple interpretive possibilities (*ta’addud al-tafsīr*), making it entirely expected that scholars of exegesis (*mufasssīrūn*) would develop various, and at times diverging, understandings of its verses. These interpretive differences do not arise arbitrarily; rather, they are strongly influenced by the socio-cultural environment and political circumstances in which each exegete exists. Additionally, the personal inclinations of a *mufasssīr*—shaped by their specific academic training or disciplinary specialization—also affect the conclusions they reach. Consequently, although the Qur’anic text itself remains constant, the interpretations vary, illustrating that *tafsīr* is inherently non-monolithic.<sup>25</sup>

Wasim Fathullah<sup>26</sup> defines *ikhṭilāf* (interpretive disagreement) within Qur’anic exegesis as the variance among exegetes in understanding the meaning of a specific Qur’anic word or verse, particularly in discerning the divine intent embedded within it. Such divergence occurs when one *mufasssīr* adopts a conclusion that another does not. From this definition, it follows that any difference—regardless of its magnitude—in interpreting the Qur’an may be categorized as *ikhṭilāf*. However, as will be further elaborated, not all forms of difference carry the same implications. Classical scholars distinguish *ikhṭilāf* into two major types:<sup>27</sup>

- 1) *Ikḥtilāf tanawwu’*, a variation-based divergence in which differing interpretations do not contradict each other but instead offer complementary perspectives;
- 2) *Ikḥtilāf tadādd*, a contradiction-based divergence in which interpretations oppose each other and cannot coexist.

To understand what drives such *ikhṭilāf* in *tafsīr*, Ibn Taymiyyah identifies two primary sources: divergences rooted in *naṣṣ* (textual evidences) and those arising from *ra’y* (individual reasoning). Essentially, the causes of disagreement

<sup>24</sup> Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 1 ed. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005).

<sup>25</sup> Astuti, “DISKURSUS TENTANG PLURALITAS PENAFSIRAN AL-QUR’AN,” *Hermeneutik* 8, no. 1 (2014): 117.

<sup>26</sup> Wasim Fathullah, “Al-Ikhtilaf fi Al-Tafsir,” *Saiid.net*, 2, diakses 6 September 2025, <https://saaid.org/book/open.php?book=966>.

<sup>27</sup> Musā’id Al-Ṭayyār, *Fuṣūl Fi Uṣūl Al-Tafsīr*, 3 ed. (Riyadh: Dār Ibn Al-Jawzī, 1999), 55.

differ depending on whether one employs *tafsīr bi al-ma'sūr* (narration-based exegesis) or *tafsīr bi al-ra'y* (reason-based or *ijtihād*-based exegesis).<sup>28</sup> Within *tafsīr bi al-ma'thūr*, interpretive differences occur due to the transmission-based nature of this method—different narrations may offer divergent explanations of a single verse. For example, multiple reports may exist regarding the interpretation of one verse, each proposing a distinct, and sometimes seemingly conflicting, meaning. Ibn Taymiyyah further elaborates on specific causes underlying this type of divergence, including:

- 1) Differences in the interpretation of a single lexical item (*lafz*): A single word within the Qur'an may carry multiple layers of meaning, all of which remain semantically valid, leading exegetes to favor one meaning over another.
- 2) Interpreting general expressions through particular instances: At times, the Qur'an articulates a general concept; however, exegetes may highlight a specific application—not to confine its meaning, but to illustrate one of its possible manifestations.<sup>29</sup>

Beyond these two factors, variations in *tafsīr* may be broadly attributed to two overarching categories:<sup>30</sup>

- 1) Internal factors related to the nature of the text (*sīmā al-naṣṣ*): These pertain to linguistic structure or inherent textual features. Since language naturally permits multiple interpretive pathways, the emergence of varied understandings is both legitimate and expected. Al-Khālīdī expressed a similar view<sup>31</sup>, who stated that the factors of pretext that create such divergent:
  - a) Differences in *qirā'āt* (variant readings of the Qur'an).<sup>32</sup>
  - b) Variations in the meanings of Arabic words due to semantic ambiguity (*musytarak*), which allows exegetes (*mufasssīrūn*) to have different interpretive preferences.<sup>33</sup>
  - c) Differences that arise from whether verses are *muqayyad* (restricted) or *muṭlaq* (unrestricted).
  - d) Variations resulting from whether verses are *ḥaqīqah* (literal) or *majāz* (metaphorical).
  - e) Differences caused by whether a verse involves *idmār* (ellipsis or the implied omission of words estimated for proper understanding) or *istiqlāl* (independence from such).
- 2) External factors stemming from the interpreter's "pre-text" (*al-nuṣūṣ al-sābiqah*) include elements outside the Qur'anic text, such as the *mufasssīr*'s personal background, intellectual training, worldview, and socio-cultural environment. These factors significantly influence the interpretive perspective through which the text is analyzed. This "pre-text" also reflects

<sup>28</sup> Aḥmad Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Ibn Taimiyyah, *Al-Majmū' Al-Fatāwā*, vol. 20 (Madinah: Mujamma' Al-Malik Fahd, 2004), h. 185.

<sup>29</sup> Taimiyyah, 20:180.

<sup>30</sup> Astuti, "DISKURSUS TENTANG PLURALITAS PENAFSIRAN AL-QUR'AN," 121–25.

<sup>31</sup> Al-Khālīdī, *Ta'rīf Al-Dārisīn bi Manāhij Al-Mufasssīrīn*, 92–94.

<sup>32</sup> Concerning this topic, Wafiuddin and Bahari already explained it. See for more detail in M Afif Wafiudin dan Fadhil Achmad Agus Bahari, "Fenomena Fonologis Qiraat al-Yazidi dan implikasinya dalam Penafsiran," *Ta'wiluna: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an, Tafsir dan Pemikiran Islam* 5, no. 3 (16 Desember 2024): 523–24, <https://doi.org/10.58401/takwiluna.v5i3.1693>.

<sup>33</sup> Muḥammad bin 'Alī Al-Shawkanī, *Fath Al-Qadīr Al-Jāmi' Bayna Fannay Al-Riwāyah Wa Al-Dirāyah min 'Ilm Al-Tafsīr* (Dār Al-Wafā', 2019), 569.

the diversity among exegetes and highlights each interpreter's intellectual distinctiveness. Therefore, interpretive plurality should be viewed not as a weakness, but as an inherent and enriching characteristic of the Qur'anic exegesis tradition. It demonstrates both the natural flexibility of divine discourse and the dynamic engagement of human intellect across different times and contexts.

#### b. Differences in Interpretation as a Sectarian Phenomenon

The type of divergence discussed earlier—arising naturally from differences in scholarly background and interpretive predispositions—may be described as *interpretive naturalism*. Although such variation is diverse, it generally remains constructive and does not inherently lead to fragmentation or communal rupture. While some argue that these early variations laid the groundwork for subsequent religious conflicts, from Michel Foucault's perspective on the relationship between power and knowledge,<sup>34</sup> such differences cannot yet be classified as profanation or ideological distortion of sacred discourse. This threshold is only crossed when exegetical activity is influenced by political motives, as Ignaz Goldziher emphasizes,<sup>35</sup> who states that interpretation becomes profaned when external power interests infiltrate and manipulate divine revelation.

Sectarian exegesis arises precisely under such circumstances—when the Qur'an is not interpreted to uncover divine guidance but rather to legitimize doctrinal, ideological, or group agendas.<sup>36</sup> In such cases, sacred verses serve as instruments of justification rather than as universal sources of ethical and spiritual enlightenment. Consequently, the Qur'an's message—intended to be inclusive, equitable, and unifying—becomes narrowed into exclusivist or discriminatory interpretations.<sup>37</sup>

A prominent example of sectarian exegetical divergence can be seen in the interpretation of *Surah al-Mā'idah* [5]:55:

إِنَّمَا وَلِيُّكُمُ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا الَّذِينَ يُتِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَهُمْ رُكْعُونَ

“Only Allah is your ally, and His Messenger, and those who believe—those who establish prayer and give zakāt while bowing down.”<sup>38</sup>

Shia scholars frequently cite this verse as evidence for the divinely ordained leadership (*wilāyah*) of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib. They base their interpretation on a narration stating that 'Alī gave charity while in the state of bowing (*rukū*). This verse becomes a foundational proof in their doctrine of *imāmah*, which asserts that leadership belongs exclusively to the *ahl al-bayt*. In contrast, Sunnī exegetes interpret the verse more generally—as a directive to show loyalty to God, His Messenger, and the collective community of believers—without assigning it to

<sup>34</sup> Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 75.

<sup>35</sup> Goldziher, *Madzahib Al-Tafsir Al-Islami*, 216.

<sup>36</sup> Mawardi Mawardi, “Subjektivitas Dalam Penafsiran Al-Quran: Fenomena Tafsir Bercorak Sektarian,” *JURNAL At-Tibyan: Jurnal Ilmu Alquran dan Tafsir* 3, no. 1 (9 Agustus 2018): 127, <https://doi.org/10.32505/tibyan.v3i1.483>.

<sup>37</sup> Hasan Basri, “Mitigasi Intoleransi Melalui Pendidikan Islam Inklusif Perspektif Al-Qur'an,” *Repository Institut PTIQ Jakarta* (Institut PTIQ Jakarta, 2023), 219, <https://repository.ptiq.ac.id/id/eprint/1597/>.

<sup>38</sup> Q.S. Al-Maidah: 55 Lajnah Pentashih Mushaf Al-Qur'an LPMQ, “Qur'an Kemenag,” Kementerian Agama RI, 2022, <https://quran.kemenag.go.id>.

any specific individual.<sup>39</sup> This divergence is rooted not only in linguistic differences but also in sectarian doctrinal structures. The Shia tradition relies heavily on narrations transmitted through the Imams of the *ahl al-bayt*, whereas the Sunnī tradition favors reports from the Prophet, his Companions, and the *tābi'ūn*.<sup>40</sup>

Methodologically, sectarian exegesis often neglects key interpretive principles, such as considerations of *asbāb al-nuzūl*, linguistic conventions, and overall Qur'anic coherence. Instead, it tends to selectively extract verses that support preexisting doctrines while ignoring others that could provide balance or nuance. Extremist movements, for instance, frequently cite verses on *jihād* without referencing those that emphasize peace, mercy, and restraint.<sup>41</sup>

Mawardi<sup>42</sup> and Huda<sup>43</sup>, in their analytical studies, have identified several defining characteristics of sectarian-political exegesis:

- 1) Subjectivism and Dogmatism – Interpretations are compelled to conform to rigid doctrinal frameworks, often neglecting broader textual contexts.
- 2) Selective Use of *Ta'wīl* – Verses conflicting with group ideology are allegorically reinterpreted or dismissed as *mansūkh* (abrogated) to preserve doctrinal coherence.
- 3) Suppression of Critical Thought and Tolerance – Sectarian interpretations discourage intellectual openness, thereby fostering fanaticism and exclusivist attitudes.
- 4) Obscuring the Qur'an's Message of *Raḥmatan li al-'Ālamīn* – A scripture meant to promote universal compassion is often weaponized to justify exclusion or hostility.
- 5) Cultivation of Fanaticism and *'Aṣabiyyah* – Sectarian exegesis fosters blind group solidarity, leading to intolerance and refusal of dialogue.
- 6) Alignment with Political Interests – Interpretation is used as a tool to secure power or legitimize domination, including discrimination and violence.
- 7) Neglect of Socio-Historical Context – Verses are decontextualized from their historical background and forcefully reinterpreted to serve sectarian agendas.
- 8) Monopolization of Truth – Sectarian ideology claims exclusive access to divine guidance, denying legitimacy to others and undermining principles of *tawḥīd* and communal unity.

In summary, while interpretive plurality resulting from individual scholarly perspectives enhances the intellectual richness of Qur'anic studies, sectarian exegesis constitutes a distortion where revelation is subordinated to

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<sup>39</sup> Sheila Aprianti, Muh. Amri, dan Abdullah Thalib, "Sunni dan Syiah: Titik Perbedaan, Persentuhan, dan Kemungkinan Harmonisasinya," *Jurnal Alwatzikhoebillah : Kajian Islam, Pendidikan, Ekonomi, Humaniora* 11, no. 1 (22 Februari 2025): 337, <https://doi.org/10.37567/alwatzikhoebillah.v11i1.3436>.

<sup>40</sup> Mutiara Ramadhani, Kerwanto, dan Putri Hafizatul Aini, "Memahami Corak dan Metode Penafsiran Tafsir Syiah," *El-Adabi: Jurnal Studi Islam* 3, no. 2 (10 Februari 2025): 1–13, <https://doi.org/10.59166/el-adabi.v3i2.159>.

<sup>41</sup> Wely Dozan, "Telaah Asbāb Al-Khatā' Fi Al-Tafsīr (Sebab-sebab Kesalahan dalam Tafsir)," *el-'Umdah* 4, no. 1 (2021): 28–29, <https://doi.org/10.20414/el-umda.v4i1.2549>.

<sup>42</sup> Mawardi, "Subjektivitas dalam Penafsiran Al-Quran: Fenomena Tafsir Bercorak Sektarian," 137.

<sup>43</sup> Ahmad Nurul Huda, "Genealogi dan Perkembangan Sektarianisme dalam Islam," *SAFINA: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 8, no. 2 (2023), <https://journal.madinatulilmi.ac.id/index.php/safina/article/view/38>.

factional interests. The former enriches the tradition, whereas the latter fragments it.

## 2. Patterns of Differences in the Interpretation of Q.S. Al-Maidah: 6 in the Tafsir Al-Jaṣṣāṣ, Ilkiyā Al-Harrāsī, Ibn Al-‘Arabī, and Ibn Al-Jawzī

The verse of ablution (*āyat al-wuḍū’*) begins:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا قُمْتُمْ إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ فَاغْسِلُوا وُجُوهَكُمْ وَأَيْدِيَكُمْ إِلَى الْمَرَافِقِ وَامْسَحُوا بِرُءُوسِكُمْ وَأَرْجُلَكُمْ إِلَى الْكَعْبَيْنِ ...

*O you who have believed, when you rise to [perform] prayer, wash your faces and your forearms to the elbows and wipe over your heads and wash your feet to the ankles.*

Q.S. al-Mā'idah: 6 is one of the primary textual foundations for the jurisprudence of purification (*tahārah*) in Islam. It establishes the legal framework for *wuḍū’* (ablution), specifying its obligatory components, causes, and procedural boundaries. This verse not only delineates the ritual acts of washing and wiping but also functions as a locus of theological, linguistic, and legal reasoning among classical exegetes. Each interpretation reflects the madhhab and methodological inclination of the commentator in reconciling the textual command (*amr*) with jurisprudential principles of obligation (*wujūb*) and worship (*‘ibādah*).

Some scholars have even claimed that this verse encompasses a thousand legal issues (*masā'il*). To examine this assertion, a group of scholars from our madhhab conducted a systematic study in Baghdad, historically known as *Madīnat al-Salām*). Their research identified 800 distinct jurisprudential matters derived from the verse. However, they acknowledged that they had not yet reached the thousand issues claimed by earlier scholars. Undertaking such an exhaustive investigation is most appropriately entrusted to those who specialize in *istinbāt* methodology—scholars dedicated to uncovering the intricate legal nuances and details embedded in the Qur’anic text.<sup>44</sup> The following are topics related to this verse:

### a. The Obligation of Wudu After Waking Up

The phrase “*izā qumtum ilā al-ṣalāh*” (“when you rise to perform the prayer”) in Q.S. al-Mā'idah: 6 has been a focal point of debate concerning the circumstances that necessitate *wuḍū’*. Classical exegetes differ on whether the command to perform ablution applies to each pray one prepare for prayer or only when one is in a state of *ḥadaṣ* (ritual impurity).

Al-Jaṣṣāṣ interprets the command not as a literal obligation to perform *wuḍū’* after waking up or before every prayer, but rather as conditional upon the occurrence of *ḥadaṣ*.<sup>45</sup> He argues that the expression “*izā qumtum*” is elliptical, implying an omitted term — namely, “*min al-nawm wa antum ḥadaṣ*” (“when you rise from sleep while in a state of impurity”).<sup>46</sup> This understanding is supported by several *ḥadīth* which demonstrate that the Prophet ﷺ sometimes prayed multiple times with one *wuḍū’*, such as during the conquest of Makkah when he performed five prayers with a single ablution.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Ibn Al-‘Arabī, *Aḥkām Al-Qur’ān*, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 2003), 47.

<sup>45</sup> Aḥmad bin ‘Alī Al-Jaṣṣāṣ, *Tafsīr Al-Aḥkām*, vol. 3 (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā’ Al-Turāth Al-‘Arabī, 1985), 330.

<sup>46</sup> Al-Jaṣṣāṣ, 3:331.

<sup>47</sup> Al-Jaṣṣāṣ, 3:333.

Al-Jaṣṣāṣ further affirms that the Prophet's practice functions as *bayān* (clarification) of the verse, confirming that *wuḍū'* is not required solely by standing for prayer but only by *ḥadaṣ*. He dismisses a literal reading of "rising for prayer" as incompatible with both linguistic usage and the Prophet's Sunnah. Instead, he contends that the true intent of the verse is juridical — specifying the condition (*syarṭ*) under which purification becomes obligatory.<sup>48</sup>

Ilkiyā al-Ḥarrāsī similarly maintains that the cause (*'illah*) of *wuḍū'* is *ḥadaṣ*, not the physical act of standing for prayer.<sup>49</sup> He employs a methodological principle of *uṣūl al-fiqh*:

والحكم يتكرر بتكرر العلة والسبب

'The law will be repeated if the cause is repeated.'<sup>50</sup>

Thus, although the verse employs a conditional form ("when you rise for prayer"), the linguistic construction does not imply that each act of standing triggers the obligation of ablution. Instead, the condition applies only in cases of *ḥadaṣ*, as confirmed by consensus (*ijmā'*).

To clarify this interpretation, Al-Ḥarrāsī uses an analogy from *fiqh al-aḥkām*: if someone states, "When you enter the house, you are divorced," multiple entries do not result in multiple divorces because the condition (*syarṭ*) does not multiply the ruling. Similarly, the obligation of *wuḍū'* does not renew with each act of standing but with the recurrence of its legal cause—*ḥadaṣ*.

Ibn al-'Arabī concurs with both scholars that the verse's command pertains to *ḥadaṣ*, not merely the act of rising for prayer.<sup>51</sup> However, he emphasizes the *maqṣad* (legal purpose) behind the command: purification serves as both a physical and spiritual preparation for prayer. According to him, sleep itself is not an impurity, but it signifies potential loss of consciousness and, consequently, possible *ḥadaṣ*. Therefore, the obligation of *wuḍū'* applies when there is *ẓann al-ḥadaṣ* (presumption of impurity) rather than sleep.<sup>52</sup>

Ibn al-Jawzī presents both interpretations — literal and conditional — but concludes that the more supported view, endorsed by consensus, is that the obligation of *wuḍū'* arises only in the state of *ḥadaṣ*.<sup>53</sup> He categorizes "rising for prayer" as *majāz 'an al-ḥadaṣ* (metonymy for impurity) and highlights the pedagogical wisdom in this expression, as it reminds believers that approaching prayer requires not only bodily readiness but also ritual purity.<sup>54</sup>

Across the four exegeses, there is substantial agreement that the verse's imperative for *wuḍū'* is conditioned by impurity rather than by the act of standing for prayer. However, their interpretive methods differ: Al-Jaṣṣāṣ and al-Ḥarrāsī employ linguistic and *uṣūlī* reasoning, Ibn al-'Arabī adds a purposive (*maqāṣidī*) dimension; and Ibn al-Jawzī synthesizes these approaches by combining linguistic precision with theological considerations.

### b. The Role of Intention (*Niyyah*) in Wudu

The question of whether *niyyah* (intention) constitutes a necessary condition for the validity of *wuḍū'* has long been a point of disagreement among classical

<sup>48</sup> Al-Jaṣṣāṣ, 3:330.

<sup>49</sup> Ilkiyā al-Ḥarrāsī, *Aḥkām Al-Qur'ān*, vol. 3 (Beirut: Dār Al-Kutub Al-'Ilmiyyah, 1985), 31.

<sup>50</sup> Al-Ḥarrāsī, 3:31.

<sup>51</sup> Al-'Arabī, *Aḥkām Al-Qur'ān*, 2:49.

<sup>52</sup> Al-'Arabī, 2:50.

<sup>53</sup> Ibn Al-Jawzī, *Zād Al-Masīr*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Arabī, 2010), 102.

<sup>54</sup> Al-Jawzī, 1:103.

jurists and exegetes. The Qur’anic command in *Q.S. al-Mā'idah: 6* — “*fa’ghsilū wujūhakum*” (“wash your faces”) — does not explicitly mention intention, leading to a hermeneutical divide between those who regard it as an essential element of worship and those who consider it extraneous to the legal performance of ablution.

Al-Jaṣṣāṣ<sup>55</sup> holds that *wuḍū’* is valid without *niyyah*, arguing that the verse’s imperative verb “*fa’ghsilū*” commands a physical act, not a spiritual one. He contends that adding the requirement of intention constitutes an addition to the divine text (*ziyādah ‘alā al-naṣṣ*), which is impermissible without explicit evidence. For Al-Jaṣṣāṣ, *wuḍū’* is a means to remove the legal state of impurity (*raf’u al-ḥadaṣ*), and since the removal occurs through physical washing, intention plays no determining role in its validity.

Furthermore, he bases his argument on the legal principle that *aḥkām al-tahārah* (rules of purification) are *ma’qūl al-ma’nā* — rational in cause and effect — and therefore differ from purely devotional acts (*ta’abbudiyyāt*) such as prayer and fasting, which intrinsically require *niyyah*. Accordingly, a person who washes the prescribed limbs for cleanliness alone would simultaneously achieve ritual purity, whether or not he consciously intended *wuḍū’*.

Ilkyā al-Ḥarrāsī<sup>56</sup> takes the opposite stance, asserting that *niyyah* is indispensable in *wuḍū’*, as it transforms a habitual act into an act of worship. He emphasizes that the command to perform ablution is tied to prayer, a quintessential form of devotion, and therefore inherits the condition of *niyyah*. Citing the general prophetic maxim, “*Innamā al-a’māl bi-n-niyyāt*” (“Actions are judged by intentions”), he concludes that the absence of intention invalidates *wuḍū’* as a ritual act, even if the physical process is complete.

Al-Ḥarrāsī also draws a linguistic argument from the Qur’an’s structure: the command to wash the limbs is embedded within a spiritual context — preparation for *ṣalāh*. Hence, the act is not merely hygienic but symbolic of inner purification. Through this, he combines *fiqhī* precision with spiritual meaning, asserting that *niyyah* is the essence that distinguishes worship (*‘ibādah*) from routine (*‘ādah*).

Ibn al-‘Arabī<sup>57</sup> adopts a mediating position. He argues that *niyyah* is not a condition for the *validity* (*ṣiḥḥah*) of *wuḍū’*, but it is a condition for its *acceptance* (*qabūl*). In other words, the ablution may fulfill the outward legal requirement, but without *niyyah*, it fails to achieve its spiritual purpose. His reasoning reflects the *Mālikī* concern with *maqāṣid al-syarī‘ah* (objectives of the law): while the ritual itself has an apparent form (*ṣūrah*), its true significance lies in aligning the worshipper’s inner state with divine intent.

Ibn al-Jawzī<sup>58</sup>, writing from a *Ḥanbalī* perspective, reconciles these views by emphasizing both textual and spiritual considerations. He affirms that *niyyah* is integral to *‘ibādah*, citing the hadith “*Actions are judged by intentions*”, but he stops short of declaring that its absence nullifies the legal validity of *wuḍū’*. Instead, he classifies *niyyah* as a requisite for reward and spiritual efficacy, not for the technical removal of impurity. His commentary thus reflects a balanced hermeneutic — respecting both the juristic rigor of textual analysis and the devotional depth of spiritual understanding.

<sup>55</sup> Al-Jawzī, 3:335-336.

<sup>56</sup> Al-Ḥarrāsī, *Aḥkām Al-Qur’ān*, 3:36–37.

<sup>57</sup> Al-Ḥarrāsī, 49.

<sup>58</sup> Al-Jawzī, *Zād Al-Masīr*, 1:103.

All four exegetes agree that intention distinguishes *wuḍū'* as a religious act from ordinary washing. However, they diverge on whether this distinction affects its legal validity. Al-Jaṣṣāṣ views *niyyah* as nonessential; Al-Ḥarrāsī deems it obligatory; Ibn al-‘Arabī sees it as necessary for acceptance rather than validity; and Ibn al-Jawzī harmonizes the juristic and spiritual aspects by adopting a nuanced middle ground.

### c. Washing and Wiping (*Ghasl* and *Mash*)

The distinction between *ghasl* (washing) and *mash* (wiping) in Surah al-Mā'idah: 6 represents one of the most linguistically and jurisprudentially intricate discussions in the law of *ṭahārah*. The verse explicitly commands believers to “wash their faces and hands up to the elbows, wipe their heads, and wash their feet up to the ankles.” The different verbs used — *fa'ghsilū* and *wa'msaḥū* — have led scholars to examine whether the differences in expression entail differences in legal ruling, scope, and ritual symbolism.

Al-Jaṣṣāṣ<sup>59</sup> offers a precise linguistic and legal distinction between *ghasl* and *mash*. He defines *ghasl* as the act of pouring or flowing water over the surface of the body part until the water runs off, while *mash* is merely passing a wet hand over a part of the body without water flow. For him, these terms are legally distinct (*mukhtalif al-ma'nā*) and cannot be substituted for one another. The command to wash the face, hands, and feet thus requires actual water flow, and wiping (*mash*) over these parts would not fulfill the Qur'anic requirement.

In emphasizing this distinction, Al-Jaṣṣāṣ draws attention to the verse's careful sequencing — washing, wiping, then washing again — which, in his view, confirms that each action has its own legal status. The inclusion of *mash* only for the head (*bi-ru'usikum*) indicates that wiping is exceptional and symbolic, not a general method of purification. He further supports this view through linguistic reasoning and juristic consensus (*ijmā'*) that only the head is subject to wiping, while other limbs require washing.

Ilkyā al-Ḥarrāsī<sup>60</sup> agrees with Al-Jaṣṣāṣ in differentiating *ghasl* and *mash*, yet he offers an additional theological layer to the interpretation. For him, the alternation between washing and wiping reflects a divine balance between physical purification and spiritual renewal. Washing symbolizes the removal of tangible impurity (*raf'u al-khabāṣ*), while wiping represents the remembrance of divine blessing (*tajdīd al-ni'mah*).

He interprets the Qur'anic expression “*bi-ru'usikum*” as indicating partial wiping (*tab'īd al-mash*), citing prophetic reports in which the Prophet Saw wiped the front portion of his head. Thus, Ilkyā's interpretation combines linguistic precision with spiritual meaning, aligning physical ritual with metaphysical purpose.<sup>61</sup>

Ibn al-‘Arabī<sup>62</sup> situates the distinction between *ghasl* and *mash* within a broader framework of *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*. According to him, *wuḍū'* serves dual purposes: purification and worship. The acts of washing — being rational and perceptible — address the physical aspect of purity, whereas wiping, which lacks visible cleansing, symbolizes obedience to divine instruction beyond rational comprehension.

<sup>59</sup> Al-Jawzī, 3:334.

<sup>60</sup> Al-Ḥarrāsī, *Aḥkām Al-Qur'ān*, 3:37–38.

<sup>61</sup> Al-Ḥarrāsī, 3:38–39.

<sup>62</sup> Al-‘Arabī, *Aḥkām Al-Qur'ān*, 2:51.

He thus classifies *mash* as an act of pure worship (*'ibādah maḥdah*), whose legitimacy lies solely in revelation (*sam'iyāt*), not in rational deduction. This perspective reconciles legal and spiritual dimensions, explaining why the command to wipe the head is distinct yet integrated within the larger sequence of purification.

Ibn al-Jawzī<sup>63</sup> underscores the verse's linguistic clarity in separating the two acts. He explains that the Qur'an's use of *fa'ghsilū* and *wa'msaḥū* follows precise verbal logic, ensuring that each limb's command aligns with its nature and ritual function. For the face, hands, and feet, which commonly encounter external impurities, washing is required; for the head — a locus of intellect and dignity — wiping suffices as a token of reverence.

He warns, however, against interpretive confusion arising from variant Qur'anic readings (*qirā'āt*) — particularly in the phrase “*wa arjulikum*” (accusative) versus “*wa arjulikum*” (genitive). Ibn al-Jawzī clarifies that both readings complement rather than contradict each other: washing applies when the feet are uncovered, while wiping is permissible when wearing *khuffayn* (leather socks). His exposition thus harmonizes linguistic subtlety with juristic practicality.

Across the four exegetes, there is unanimous recognition that *ghasl* and *mash* are distinct ritual actions, each with unique symbolic and legal significance. Al-Jaṣṣāṣ and Ilkyā al-Ḥarrāsī emphasize the linguistic and juristic demarcation, Ibn al-'Arabī interprets the difference in light of divine wisdom and spiritual obedience, and Ibn al-Jawzī unites both through linguistic precision and practical synthesis of *qirā'āt*. Together, their views articulate the multifaceted depth of Islamic purification law.

#### d. Washing of Specific Body Parts

The command in *Q.S. al-Mā'idah: 6* delineates specific limbs for washing and wiping during *wuḍū'*: the face, hands up to the elbows, the head, and the feet up to the ankles. Each part has been examined by exegetes not only in terms of its legal boundaries but also in terms of linguistic precision and prophetic exemplification.

##### 1) Washing the Face (*Ghasl al-Wajh*)

Al-Jaṣṣāṣ defines the *wajh* (face) as the portion extending vertically from the hairline to the chin and horizontally from earlobe to earlobe.<sup>64</sup> He asserts that the mouth (*maḍmaḍah*) and nose (*istinshāq*) are not included in the Qur'anic term *wajh* since they are situated within the body's internal cavities. Therefore, rinsing the mouth and nose, although practiced by the Prophet ﷺ, is considered *sunnah* rather than *fard*. His legal reasoning relies on the distinction between explicit Qur'anic injunctions and prophetic elaboration (*bayān*).

Ilkyā al-Ḥarrāsī<sup>65</sup> agrees with this anatomical boundary but elaborates on its spiritual significance. He interprets the washing of the face as symbolic of moral visibility — purifying the part of the body that most directly reflects human character. Nevertheless, he emphasizes adherence to the Prophet's example in including *maḍmaḍah* and *istinshāq* as acts of completion (*kamāl al-wuḍū'*).

Ibn al-'Arabī<sup>66</sup> affirms that the boundaries of the face are determined by linguistic convention and prophetic practice. However, he criticizes excessive

<sup>63</sup> Al-Jawzī, *Zād Al-Masīr*, 1:104.

<sup>64</sup> Al-Jaṣṣāṣ, *Tafsīr Al-Aḥkām*, 3:340.

<sup>65</sup> Al-Ḥarrāsī, *Aḥkām Al-Qur'ān*, 3:36–37.

<sup>66</sup> Al-'Arabī, *Aḥkām Al-Qur'ān*, 2:53–54.

rationalization, warning that legal clarity should not diminish the spiritual intent of cleansing the part through which one encounters both God and creation.

Ibn al-Jawzī<sup>67</sup> harmonizes the linguistic and practical perspectives: the obligatory area is limited to the externally visible face, while cleansing of the mouth and nose remains recommended. He cites multiple *aḥādīth* from *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Muslim* to support this distinction, emphasizing the Prophet's consistency in performing these acts as *sunnah mu'akkadah*.

## 2) Washing the Hands (*Ghāsl al-Yadayn*)

All four exegetes agree that the expression "*ilā al-marāfiq*" ("up to the elbows") includes the elbows within the washing limit, based on the Prophet's demonstration. Al-Jaṣṣāṣ asserts that the preposition *ilā* here denotes inclusion (*dākhil fī al-ghāyah*), as evidenced by the Prophet ﷺ washing up to and including his elbows.<sup>68</sup> Ilkayā al-Ḥarrāsī supports this view and draws an analogy to *ṣawm* ("complete fasting until nightfall") to argue that *ilā* in Arabic can indicate inclusivity depending on context.<sup>69</sup> Ibn al-'Arabī interprets the inclusion of the elbows as part of divine precision — the command ensures thorough purification without ambiguity.<sup>70</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī confirms the consensus and notes that any omission of the elbows invalidates *wuḍū'*.<sup>71</sup>

## 3) Wiping the Head (*Mash' al-Ra's*)

The Qur'ānic command "*wa'msaḥū bi-ru'ūsikum*" ("and wipe your heads") in *Q.S. al-Mā'idah: 6* has been the subject of detailed discussion among classical exegetes. The main point of contention centers on the extent of the head that must be wiped and the function of the prepositional particle *bā'* in the phrase *bi-ru'ūsikum*. The interpretation of this single letter carries significant legal implications, as it determines whether *mash'* requires full coverage of the head or only a portion thereof.

Al-Jaṣṣāṣ<sup>72</sup> interprets the expression "*bi-ru'ūsikum*" as an indication that wiping only a portion of the head (*tab'īd al-ra's*) is sufficient. He supports this by analyzing the linguistic usage of *bā'* in Arabic, which may denote *tab'īd* (partiality) rather than *ilṣāq* (direct contact). He further cites the *ḥadīth* of *al-Mughīrah ibn Shu'bah*, which narrates that the Prophet ﷺ wiped only the front part of his head during ablution. For Al-Jaṣṣāṣ, this demonstrates that the Qur'ānic formulation allows partial wiping and that full coverage is not obligatory. His argument is grounded in the Ḥanafī juristic method that emphasizes linguistic precision and the literal scope of legal expressions.

Al-Ḥarrāsī<sup>73</sup> examines in depth the linguistic and grammatical function of the *bā'* in "*bi-ru'ūsikum*." Some scholars, he notes, interpret the *bā'* as indicating *ilṣāq* (attachment), implying that the act of wiping must involve direct contact between the hand and the head. This view is compared to the expression "*marartu bi-l-jidār*" ("I passed by the wall"), where *bā'* signifies the connection between the subject and the object.

<sup>67</sup> Al-Jawzī, *Zād Al-Masīr*, 1:104.

<sup>68</sup> Al-Jaṣṣāṣ, *Tafsīr Al-Aḥkām*, 3:344.

<sup>69</sup> Al-Ḥarrāsī, *Aḥkām Al-Qur'ān*, 3:37–38.

<sup>70</sup> Al-Ḥarrāsī, 58-59.

<sup>71</sup> Al-Jawzī, *Zād Al-Masīr*, 1:104.

<sup>72</sup> Al-Jaṣṣāṣ, *Tafsīr Al-Aḥkām*, 3:344–47.

<sup>73</sup> Al-Ḥarrāsī, *Aḥkām Al-Qur'ān*, 3:38–39.

Others, however, interpret *bā'* as expressing *tab'īd* (partiality), reasoning that the addition of *bā'* changes the scope of the verb from total to partial action. For example, while “*masaḥtu al-jidār*” (“I wiped the wall”) implies wiping the entire wall, “*masaḥtu bi-l-jidār*” means wiping only a part of it.<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, these scholars infer that “*bi-ru'ūsikum*” permits wiping a portion of the head rather than the whole.

Al-Ḥarrāsī, however, criticizes this distinction, asserting that the difference arises not from grammatical structure (*al-lughah*) but from customary usage (*al-'urf*).<sup>6</sup> He explains that Arabic commonly employs general expressions to refer to partial actions—for instance, one may say “*ra'aytu fulānan*” (“I saw so-and-so”) even when only part of the person was seen, or “*ra'aytu madīnata kadha*” (“I saw that city”) while having seen only a small portion of it.<sup>7</sup>

Based on this reasoning, al-Ḥarrāsī concludes that when someone says “*masaḥtu ra'sī*” (“I wiped my head”), the phrase remains literal even if only a small portion of the head was wiped, since in ordinary linguistic convention, in ordinary linguistic conventions, such an expression is acceptable. Thus, wiping any part of the head satisfies the Qur'ānic command.

He further supports his argument by citing *ijmā'* (consensus) among scholars that wiping part of the head is valid, without specification of which part or how large the portion must be. Consequently, there is no fixed measure to be preferred, and any portion of the head represents a valid act of *mash' al-ra's* as long as it fulfills the linguistic and customary understanding of the term.

Ibn al-'Arabī<sup>74</sup>, however, rejects such semantic reasoning in the context of *wuḍū'*. He maintains that *mash' al-ra's* forms part of an act of worship intended for purification (*tathīr*), not as a mere symbol. Therefore, the command must be understood as an obligation to wipe the entire head, following the absolute meaning of the expression. He explains that phrases such as “*masaḥtu ra'sī kullahu*” (“I wiped my whole head”) demonstrate that the term *ra'sī* alone does not necessarily imply full coverage, hence the addition of *kullahu* serves to reinforce completeness. This indicates that, in the context of ritual worship, the command is intended to mean complete coverage.

Ibn al-'Arabī<sup>75</sup> also critiques those who permit leaving a small part of the head uncovered, arguing that this leniency rests on the incorrect assumption that it is difficult to ensure full coverage—unlike the face, which has defined boundaries. He refutes this claim, affirming that wiping the entire head is physically and customarily feasible, and thus constitutes the proper fulfillment of the divine command. Ibn al-Jawzī aligns with the permissibility of partial wiping but also acknowledges the practice of wiping over the turban (*imāmah*), provided that some part of the actual head is also touched. He interprets this as evidence of the Qur'an's conciseness and the Prophet's Sunnah as an explanatory supplement. In his analysis, *mash' al-ra's* encompasses both the textual instruction and the Prophet's practical demonstration, thereby reflecting the complementary relationship between revelation and prophetic action.

The exegetes differ primarily on the extent of *mash' al-ra's*. Al-Jaṣṣāṣ and al-Ḥarrāsī support the sufficiency of partial wiping; the former emphasizes linguistic function, while the latter grounds his argument in *'urf* and *ijmā'*. Ibn al-'Arabī rejects these semantic arguments and insists on full coverage, while Ibn

<sup>74</sup> Al-Ḥarrāsī, 59.

<sup>75</sup> Al-Ḥarrāsī, 60.

al-Jawzī mediates between textual and practical dimensions. Collectively, these interpretations reveal the depth of juristic-linguistic engagement within the discourse of purification law.

#### 4) Washing the Feet (*Ghasl al-Rijlayn*)

The final part of the verse *Q.S. al-Mā'idah: 6* reads: “*wa arjulakum ilā al-ka'bayn*” (“and wash your feet up to the ankles”). The principal discussion among exegetes concerns the correct reading (*qirā'ah*) of the word *arjulakum*—whether in the accusative form (*naṣb*, indicating washing) or in the genitive form (*jarr*, implying wiping). The existence of these two canonical readings has generated extensive juristic debate over whether the feet must be washed or may instead be wiped.

Al-Jaṣṣāṣ<sup>76</sup> strongly supports the accusative reading (*arjulakum*), which requires the washing of the feet. He rejects the interpretation that permits wiping, asserting that the *qirā'ah* of *jarr* (genitive) should be understood as a matter of grammatical proximity (*jarr bi-l-mujāwarah*) to the preceding phrase “*bi-ru'ūsikum*” (“your heads”), rather than as a genuine syntactic connection implying the same ruling. In other words, the grammatical association does not alter the legal requirement that the feet be washed.

He further argues that the command to wash the feet is consistent with the overall logic of *wuḍū'*, which involves washing the body parts most exposed to external impurities. The inclusion of the feet among these parts thus reflects their parallel function in physical purification. Additionally, Al-Jaṣṣāṣ cites *ḥadīth* reports affirming that the Prophet ﷺ washed his feet in ablution, thereby confirming that washing is the legally established practice.

Al-Harrāsī<sup>77</sup> acknowledges both canonical readings (*naṣb* and *jarr*) of the term *arjulakum* and approaches the issue by seeking reconciliation between them. He explains that washing (*ghasl*) is obligatory for uncovered feet, whereas wiping (*mash*) is required when the feet are covered by *khuffayn* (leather socks). This synthesis preserves the validity of both readings without discarding either form.

He further observes that the alternation of readings demonstrates the comprehensive nature of the Qur'anic expression, which encompasses different practical circumstances. The accusative form establishes the general rule (*'umūm al-ḥukm*), whereas the genitive form indicates the permissible exception under specific conditions, such as wearing *khuffayn*.

Ibn al-'Arabī<sup>78</sup> provides a similar reconciliatory explanation. He maintains that the Qur'an's use of two readings signifies divine flexibility (*tawassu' ilāhī*) in ritual practice. According to him, washing is the default obligation when the feet are bare, while wiping applies as a legitimate alternative when wearing protective coverings sanctioned by the Sunnah.

He underscores that both actions serve the same objective of purification (*taḥīr*), differing only in form. The presence of dual readings, therefore, is not contradictory but complementary, embodying the Qur'an's capacity to encompass multiple valid rulings within one expression.

Ibn al-Jawzī's<sup>79</sup> commentary integrates the linguistic, juristic, and practical perspectives. He acknowledges the existence of the two readings but concludes

<sup>76</sup> Al-Jaṣṣāṣ, *Tafsīr Al-Aḥkām*, 3:348–50.

<sup>77</sup> Al-Harrāsī, *Aḥkām Al-Qur'ān*, 3:42–43.

<sup>78</sup> Al-'Arabī, *Aḥkām Al-Qur'ān*, 2:70.

<sup>79</sup> Al-Jawzī, *Zād Al-Masīr*, 1:105.

that the stronger interpretation, based on the Prophet's consistent practice, is that the feet must be washed. For Ibn al-Jawzī, the reconciliation of both readings reflects the Qur'an's stylistic and legal eloquence. The accusative form corresponds to the normal state of purity, while the genitive form accommodates a specific condition, thereby demonstrating the Qur'an's inclusiveness and precision in legislative language.

The four exegeses converge on the principle that washing the feet constitutes the general rule of *wuḍū'*. Al-Jaṣṣāṣ emphasizes the grammatical and legal consistency of the accusative reading, al-Ḥarrāsī and Ibn al-'Arabī highlight the complementary function of both readings to encompass different circumstances, and Ibn al-Jawzī unites these perspectives by anchoring the legal requirement in prophetic practice. Together, their analyses illustrate the integration of grammatical, juristic, and practical considerations within Qur'anic exegesis.

## Analysis

### 1. Interpretive Differences as Scientific Naturalism

#### a. *Ikhtilāf Al-Mufasssīrīn: Internal Hermeneutic Analysis (Ibn Taymiyyah)*

Al-Jaṣṣāṣ tends toward a rational-linguistic methodology, giving weight to coherence (*nazm*), *qiyās* (analogical reasoning), and lexical consistency in his *tafsīr*. In his commentary on verse 6, he emphasizes how the command to wash the face and hands must be read in light of wider Qur'anic usage of "washing" and "cleansing" — thus integrating linguistic parallels and rational coherence in his exegesis. He locates the meaning of *wuḍū'* within a network of Qur'anic uses of *ghusl*, *tayammum*, and *riḍā'* (clothing), arguing that the lexical boundaries shape the legal contours of ablution.

Al-Ḥarrāsī's commentary demonstrates a more *uṣūlī* and grammatical rigor characteristic of *Shāfi'ī* thought. He analyzes key particles such as *ilā* ("to") and the prepositional *bā'* in *bi-ru'ūsikum* ("wipe over your heads") to determine legal scope. By treating these linguistic elements as indicators of *ḥukm* (legal ruling), al-Ḥarrāsī fuses syntax and jurisprudence. His reliance on linguistic logic shows a methodological commitment ensuring that legal rulings correspond precisely to textual expressions. Thus, his *tafsīr* reflects an epistemic belief that divine law manifests through linguistic precision rather than juristic speculation.

Ibn al-'Arabī tends to read *āyāt* through the lens of legal objectives (*maqāṣid*) and thematic coherence, emphasizing justice, compassion, and the spirit rather than mechanical literalism. In his *tafsīr* of verse 6, he highlights that the command to wash and wipe (i.e., *mash*) must be understood in light of the underlying purpose of ritual purity, which is *tas-hīr* (purification) of both the body and the intention. He interprets the optional wiping over the head (i.e., *mash al-ra's*) not merely as a textual reading but through how ritual ease and human incapacity factor into what God legislates. For Ibn al-'Arabī, the interpretive flexibility in *mash* vs. *washing* is consistent with the Qur'an's broader concern for *rukhsah* (facilitation) and not contradicting the command of full washing in other contexts.

Ibn al-Jawzī offers a synthesis: he maintains a strict adherence to transmitted reports (*naql*) while also permitting reasoned harmonization (*'aql*) when narrations appear ambiguous or contradictory. In his work *Za'd al-Masār fi 'ilm at-Tafsīr*, he collects variant readings and interpretive opinions, then evaluates them in light of the broader Qur'anic context. For verse 6, he affirms that washing to the elbows is normative but concedes that *mash* over the head is acceptable under certain

conditions, such as illness or hardship. His approach demonstrates both fidelity to the textual tradition and pragmatic sensitivity to human constraints.

Several interpretive divergences among the *mufassirīn* can be classified as *tanawwu'*. For instance, the question of whether *mash' al-ra's* is obligatory or optional does not necessarily contradict the core command to wash the face and hands; rather, it reflects different hermeneutic weightings of linguistic ambiguity, prior tradition, and context. Al-Kiyā al-Ḥarrāsī's insistence on strict linguistic logic ("*ilā*" as limitation) and Ibn al-ʿArabī's flexibility in balancing purpose (*maqṣid*) both cohere with the central command once allowances are made for exceptional circumstances.

There are places where divergence seems more serious, for example, if a *mufasir* claims *mash'* always suffices in place of washing regardless of circumstances. However, careful reading shows that none of the four rejects full washing in the absence of hardship. Even Ibn al-Jawzī, though more permissive, maintains washing as the primary form. Thus, none of the divergences reach the level of *taḍād* (flat contradiction), as each remains compatible with the fundamental command structure.

### **b. Power/Knowledge: External Discursive Analysis (Michel Foucault)**

Whereas Ibn Taymiyyah's hermeneutic explains *how* exegetical variation arises epistemically, Michel Foucault's theory of *power/knowledge* clarifies *why* particular readings become authoritative within historical and institutional contexts. Foucault conceives of power not as domination but as a productive network that "produces domains of objects and rituals of truth."<sup>80</sup> In classical Islamic scholarship, *tafsīr* functioned precisely within such discursive regimes: the *madhhab* system, *madrasah* hierarchies, and patronage of juristic authority all constituted the infrastructure that determined which interpretations were canonized or marginalized.

From this angle, al-Jaṣṣāṣ, al-Kiyā al-Ḥarrāsī, Ibn al-ʿArabī, and Ibn al-Jawzī operated within overlapping but differentiated epistemic fields—each shaped by the institutional authority of his legal school and by broader socio-political dynamics of Abbasid and post-Abbasid scholarship. Their *tafsīr* practices were thus not merely linguistic expositions but acts of knowledge production embedded in regimes of scholarly legitimacy.

The *madrasah* institution, emerging from the 5th century H/11th century CE onward, played a crucial role in standardizing interpretive authority. Each *madhhab* developed its own exegetical curriculum, thereby naturalizing certain hermeneutic methods as "orthodox." Al-Jaṣṣāṣ' Hanafī training at the Baghdad school of jurisprudence privileged rational-legal coherence; al-Kiyā al-Ḥarrāsī, a Shāfi'ī jurist of Nīshāpūr, embodied the post-Ghazālian synthesis of *uṣūl al-fiqh* and linguistic analysis. Ibn al-ʿArabī's Mālikī orientation emerged from Andalusian intellectual pluralism, shaped by Mālikī dominance yet exposed to philosophical and mystical trends. Finally, Ibn al-Jawzī, situated in the late Abbasid Ḥanbalī revival, wrote within a network that valued *ḥadīth* verification and moral pedagogy.

Each institutional environment thus exercised a disciplinary power: constraining interpretive excess while providing social validation. In Foucauldian terms, their exegetical discourse exemplified a regime of truth—a historically contingent formation through which knowledge claims gain legitimacy. A Foucauldian lens helps correct the reductionist view that *madhhabic* influence is

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<sup>80</sup> Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 131.

equivalent to sectarian coercion. Power in these exegetical settings was productive, not merely repressive. It generated norms, disciplines, and interpretive techniques that enabled scholarly reasoning. The *madhhab* functioned as a discursive apparatus that both enabled and limited what could be said about divine law.

In practical terms, al-Kiyā al-Ḥarrāsī's adherence to Shāfi'ī *uṣūl* was not subservience but a disciplined epistemic method. Similarly, Ibn al-'Arabī's integration of ethical teleology into jurisprudence reflects a positive interplay between knowledge and authority—the capacity of a structured tradition to cultivate innovation within boundaries. Such a view aligns with Talal Asad's argument that “power is not external to religious reasoning but constitutes its conditions of intelligibility.”<sup>81</sup>

Understood this way, the four *mufasssīr* become participants in what Foucault calls a “discursive formation,” where statements (*tafsīr* arguments) circulate according to institutional validation. The authority to interpret was gained not by political imposition but by scholarly recognition—through *ijmā'*, citation, and transmission chains. Thus, rather than viewing classical *tafsīr* as a battleground of sectarian domination, the Foucauldian analysis reframes it as a structured dialogue between interpretive freedom and disciplinary order. The same structures that could limit innovation also guaranteed the continuity and reliability of Qur'ānic exegesis as a scientific enterprise.<sup>82</sup>

When combined with the internal hermeneutic analysis, this external reading shows that interpretive diversity in *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* arises not from rivalry but from historically conditioned systems of knowledge. The *madhhab* acts as both a framework of method and a social institution of power. Consequently, *tafsīr al-aḥkām* exemplifies what may be called a disciplinary autonomy—a balance between submission to tradition and creative rationality. This corresponds to what the present study terms *scientific naturalism in tafsīr*: knowledge evolving organically within, yet beyond, its institutional structures.

### c. From Sectarianism to Scientific Naturalism

The preceding analyses reveal that the interpretive differences among al-Jaṣṣāṣ, al-Kiyā al-Ḥarrāsī, Ibn al-'Arabī, and Ibn al-Jawzī cannot be reduced to either linguistic accidents or sectarian rivalry. From the internal hermeneutic viewpoint, Ibn Taymiyyah's typology demonstrates that these divergences fall within *ikhṭilāf tanawwu'*—a legitimate, method-based variety. From the external discursive perspective, Foucault's concept of power/knowledge shows that their authority emerged within institutional frameworks that simultaneously constrained and enabled interpretation. Bringing the two together shows that the classical *tafsīr* tradition developed through a dialectic between epistemic autonomy and disciplinary order rather than through sectarian domination.<sup>83</sup>

This synthesis suggests that difference (*ikhṭilāf*) was both a methodological necessity and a social product. The Qur'ān's linguistic openness invited interpretive plurality, while the structures of *madhhab* learning provided the grammar of its articulation. What modern readers often label “sectarian bias” thus appears, under

<sup>81</sup> Talal Asad, “The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam,” *Qui Parle* 17, no. 2 (1 Desember 2009): 1–30, <https://doi.org/10.5250/quiparle.17.2.1>.

<sup>82</sup> Talal Asad et al., *Is Critique Secular?* (Fordham University Press, 2013), <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1c5cjtj>.

<sup>83</sup> Andrew F. March, “Genealogies of Sovereignty in Islamic Political Theology,” *Public Law Working Paper* 80, no. 1 (25 Oktober 2012): 298–320, <https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=2166953>.

epistemological scrutiny, as a sophisticated form of scientific pluralism operating within the bounds of revelation.<sup>84</sup>

The term scientific naturalism here does not imply positivist empiricism. Still, it refers to a natural epistemic tendency within Islamic scholarship—where interpretive diversity arises organically from the interaction between text, intellect, and tradition. Classical *mufassirīn* treated the Qur’ān not as a static code but as a dynamic field of meanings unfolding through linguistic, juristic, and spiritual inquiry. This aligns with what Abdul Mustaqim calls the epistemological naturalism of *tafsīr*: “differences of interpretation are inherent to the Qur’an’s semantic depth and to the interpreter’s cognitive context.”<sup>85</sup>

Viewed in this light, al-Jaṣṣāṣ’s analogical coherence, al-Ḥarrāsī’s linguistic precision, Ibn al-‘Arabī’s purposive teleology, and Ibn al-Jawzī’s transmitted synthesis together form a microcosm of Islamic scientific reasoning. Their differences do not weaken the tradition; they demonstrate its internal capacity for self-renewal. Hence, what earlier Orientalist readings regarded as evidence of *ta’aṣṣub madhhabī* (sectarian bias) should instead be recognized as *ta’aṣṣub ‘ilmī* (scientific commitment)—a disciplined adherence to methodological integrity.<sup>86</sup>

Reframing *tafsīr* through this epistemological lens produces what might be called a hermeneutic of intellectual co-existence. Diversity among classical exegetes emerges as a sign of epistemic vitality rather than religious fragmentation. Just as linguistic variation in the Qur’ān (*ikhtilāf al-qirā’āt*) enhances rather than disrupts meaning, juristic diversity enhances the precision and applicability of divine law. This understanding aligns with contemporary Qur’ānic hermeneutics, which emphasize *contextual rationality*—that interpretation is both historically situated and divinely oriented.

Ultimately, the synthesis of Ibn Taymiyyah’s internal epistemology and Foucault’s external discourse theory transforms the discussion from ideology to epistemology. *Tafsīr al-aḥkām* thus stands as a scientific civilization of meaning—a tradition that negotiates between revelation and reason, continuity and critique, authority and creativity.

Here below the table concerning the aforementioned discussion:

<sup>84</sup> Al-Fanīsān, *Ikhtilāf Al-Mufasssirīn: Asbābuhū wa Āthāruhū*, 22–23.

<sup>85</sup> Abdul Mustaqim, *Epistemologi Tafsir Kontemporer*, 58.

<sup>86</sup> David Moshfegh, “Ignaz Goldziher and the Rise of Islamwissenschaft as a ‘Science of Religion’” (2012), 285.

| Theme / Issue                                   | Al-Jaṣṣāṣ (Ḥanafī)  | Al-Kiyā al-Ḥarrāsī (Shāfi‘ī)  | Ibn al-‘Arabī (Mālikī)  | Ibn al-Jawzī (Ḥanbalī)  | Type of Difference (Ikhtilāf)  | Epistemic Category (per Article)  |
|---|---|---|---|---|--|---|
| <b>1. Obligation of Wudu After Waking Up</b>    | Interprets “ <i>idhā qumtum ilā ṣ-ṣalāh</i> ” as elliptical, implying impurity ( <i>ḥadaṣ</i> ) not literal waking. Wudu is only required when <i>ḥadaṣ</i> occurs. | Agrees that the cause (‘illah) is <i>ḥadaṣ</i> , using <i>uṣūl al-fiqh</i> principle “the ruling repeats with the cause.” Linguistic precision through analogy. | Emphasizes <i>maqṣad</i> : purification as preparation for prayer. Sleep indicates <i>ẓann al-ḥadaṣ</i> . | Presents both literal and conditional views; prefers conditional (based on consensus).    | <b>Tanawwu’</b> – rational-linguistic variation.                           | <b>Scientific Naturalism</b> ( <i>ta‘aṣṣub ‘ilmī</i> ): differences from epistemic reasoning, not sectarian motive. |
| <b>2. The Role of Intention (Niyyah)</b>        | Excludes <i>niyyah</i> as a requirement; wudu is valid without intention since it removes impurity physically ( <i>ma‘qūl al-ma‘nā</i> ).                           | Requires <i>niyyah</i> ; transforms a habitual act into worship; cites <i>ḥadith</i> “actions are judged by intentions.”  | Mediating stance: <i>niyyah</i> needed for acceptance ( <i>qabūl</i> ), not validity ( <i>ṣiḥḥah</i> ).   | Balances text and spirit: <i>niyyah</i> essential for reward, but not for legal validity. | <b>Tanawwu’</b> – complementary distinctions, not contradictions.          | <b>Scientific Naturalism:</b> methodological and spiritual diversity as legitimate hermeneutic pluralism.           |
| <b>3. Washing vs. Wiping (Ghasl &amp; Mash)</b> | Differentiates legally: washing = flowing water, wiping = touching with moisture. Each has distinct function; washing for limbs, wiping for head.                   | Agrees; adds symbolic reading: washing = purification, wiping = renewal of blessing ( <i>ni‘mah</i> ).  | Views <i>mash</i> as ‘ <i>ibādah maḥḍah</i> ’ (pure worship) symbolizing submission to divine law.        | Confirms both actions’ legitimacy; explains <i>qirā’āt</i> differences harmoniously.      | <b>Tanawwu’</b> – linguistic and symbolic variety within unity of command. | <b>Scientific Naturalism:</b> interplay of linguistic logic and spiritual teleology.                                |
| <b>4. Wiping the Head</b>                       | Supports partial wiping ( <i>tab‘īd</i> ) via   | Accepts partial wiping; argues  | Insists on full wiping; <i>ra’s</i>   | Allows partial wiping or over   | <b>Tanawwu’</b> – legitimate   | <b>Scientific Naturalism:</b>   |

|   |  |  |   |   |   |  |
|---|--|--|---|---|---|--|
| <b>(Mash al-Ra's)</b>                         | the particle <i>bā'</i> ; cites <i>hadith</i> of al-Mughīrah.  | through <i>'urf</i> (custom) and <i>ijmā'</i> ; rejects over-literalism.           | implies completeness in ritual context; opposes leniency.                       | turban; balances text and <i>Sunnah</i> .   | grammatical and juristic variation.                                     | hermeneutic discipline within madhhab reasoning, not ideological rift.                       |
| <b>5. Washing the Feet (Ghasl al-Rijlayn)</b> | Favors accusative reading ( <i>arjulakum</i> ) → washing; rejects genitive as <i>jarr bi-l-mujāwarah</i> . | Reconciles both readings: wash when bare, wipe when covered with <i>khuffayn</i> . | Same synthesis: two readings show divine flexibility ( <i>tawassu' ilāhī</i> ). | Affirms washing as stronger according to the <i>Sunnah</i> ; integrates both forms for inclusivity. | <b>Tanawwu'</b> – syntactic variation expressing complementary rulings. | <b>Scientific Naturalism:</b> dynamic interpretation shaped by textual-linguistic plurality. |

## Conclusion

This study examined the interpretive diversity of four major mufassir—al-Jaṣṣāṣ, al-Kiyā al-Ḥarrāsī, Ibn al-‘Arabī, and Ibn al-Jawzī—in their interpretations of Q.S. al-Mā'idah [5]:6. The analysis shows that most differences among these exegetes fall within *ikhtilāf tanawwu'*, representing legitimate variation grounded in linguistic interpretation, juristic reasoning, and methodological preference. These findings indicate that interpretive diversity in *tafsīr al-aḥkām* is largely epistemic in nature rather than contradictory.

At the same time, the study finds that exegetical activity is shaped by broader structures of authority, including madhhab affiliation, scholarly traditions, and pedagogical contexts. These factors both constrain and enable interpretation, situating exegetical reasoning within specific socio-historical settings. By bringing together the framework of Ibn Taymiyyah and Michel Foucault's perspective, this study argues that interpretive diversity should be understood as the result of an interaction between epistemic reasoning and discursive conditions. In this light, variation in classical *tafsīr* reflects intellectual vitality rather than sectarian fragmentation.

This research contributes to the field of Qur'ānic studies by advancing what can be termed a scientific naturalism of *tafsīr*—the idea that interpretive diversity emerges naturally from the Qur'ān's polysemic structure and the interpreter's situated epistemology. It reframes *tafsīr al-aḥkām* not as a battleground of doctrinal rivalries but as a disciplined arena of epistemic experimentation governed by shared textual and rational norms. By integrating classical Islamic epistemology with modern discourse theory, the study underscores that religious knowledge is simultaneously revealed, reasoned, and socially produced.

This synthesis responds to long-standing academic calls to move beyond the binary of *taqlīd* (imitation) and *ijtihād* (independent reasoning), toward a more fluid understanding of interpretive authority as historically and discursively constructed. It also extends Foucault's theory of knowledge-power into the Islamic intellectual context, demonstrating how pre-modern religious institutions functioned not as sites of coercion but as laboratories of disciplined reasoning. In contemporary Qur'ānic discourse—often polarized between literalism and relativism—the legacy of these *mufassir* offers an enduring lesson: difference does not negate truth; it refines it. Cultivating *adab al-ikhtilāf* (the ethics of disagreement) thus becomes essential to sustaining an open yet principled hermeneutic culture.

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