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**THE PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPT OF *AL-HAWA* FROM THE  
ISLAMIC RESEARCH PERSPECTIVE**

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***Abstract***

Ethical issues in research are unavoidable. Therefore, the American Psychological Association (APA), for example, has released ethical guidelines to avoid problems that probably rise when studies involving human or animals are done. There are even scholars with views that advocate researchers to be guided by the value-free ideal in research. The question is, can ethical issues in research be solved without looking at the root of the problem? Hence, this paper argues that Islamic teachings has explained the root of bad ethics, among them is indulging in *al-hawa* (lust or desire), which was mentioned as much as 30 times in the Qur'an. Therefore, this article has two objectives. Firstly, to identify the concept of *al-hawa* in the Qur'an philosophically. By "philosophically", this paper intends to categorise the verses of Qur'an about *al-hawa* into four elementary categories in philosophy i.e. ontology, epistemology, axiology, and teleology. Secondly, this paper analyses the concept from the perspective of Islamic research philosophy. To achieve these objectives, method of content analysis was applied to the selected verses of the Qur'an, its exegesis, and Islamic philosophy and research methodology books. As a result, *al-hawa* which is seen from the Qur'anic perspective can be conceptualised into four aspects of philosophy, i.e. ontology, epistemology, axiology, and teleology. *Al-hawa* is the key to avoid dishonesty and bias in doing research. Therefore, the conduct of Islamic research must be free from influences of *al-hawa*.

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**Keywords:** *Al-hawa*, value-free research, philosophy, research ethics, Islamic research philosophy.



## 1. Introduction

One of the aspects in research methodology which is often discussed is research ethics (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Babbie, 2013; Flick, 2009). Ethics is one of the most important standpoints in research. According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009), research ethics can be defined as:

The appropriateness of your behaviour in relation to the rights of those who become the subject of your work, or are affected by it... relates to questions about how we formulate and clarify our research topic, design our research and gain access, collect data, process and store our data, analyse data and write up our research findings in a moral and responsible way (p. 183-184).

Generally, the discussion involving research ethics is very close to issues that arise whether it is from the researchers themselves or the objects of research (Marican, 2005). To overcome this issue, there have been research paradigms<sup>1</sup> that recommend researchers to conduct their value-free research. Value-free research also appears to solve problems to achieve objectivity in research (Neuman, 2011). It is based on the reference to scientific research which is said to be most objective and neutral towards any self-judgement towards the object of research (Betz, 2011).

## 2. Problem Statement

Even so, science does not escape from ethical issues in research. According to Machlup (2000), there have been a number of cases involving deception of scientific 'facts' by the scientists themselves. For example, one was committed by physical anthropologists who designed the human skeleton Piltdown and spread the discovery to support Darwin's evolution theory. Besides, science which is said to be value-free was also driven by individual agenda of some parties. According to Couvalis (1997), after the bombing of Hiroshima, many scientists were given large grants by the government to conduct research and produce weapons. Some governments funded the study of fundamental particles so that the knowledge gained can be used to produce better nuclear weapons. While the effects of the studies produced better atomic and hydrogen bombs, it was clearly harmful to humankind (Russell, 1968).

According to Greenberg (1999), the scientists funded by the United States government during the World War II believed receiving huge grants to conduct their research was an incredible experience for them. Some of the large countries in the world competed amongst themselves to produce big science as a sign of prestige for their countries. Consequently, the motive for generating the Big Science advocated by these countries suggests a non-neutrality of value in scientific research (Letherby, Scott, & Williams, 2013; Muhammad, 2011).

Even in social science, there have been fraud cases on calculation of the country's growth rate by economists with statistical 'facts.' Statistical series is used differently in accordance to the ruling political party (Douglas, 2007). Besides that, Babbie (2013), Berg (2001), Neuman (2011), Marican (2005), also Rubin and Babbie (2011) agreed that there are two main controversial issues in relation to research in social science that continues until today. The first is the issue of sociology research conducted by Laud Humphreys which applied participant observation on informants with homosexual orientation. He also disguised as one of them to know the informants' backgrounds that he was able to provide detailed information of the informants and indirectly invading their privacy. The second one was a laboratory psychology study

conducted by Stanley Milgram to observe students' obedience towards teachers. The experiment was conducted to punish disobedient students with electric shock by the researcher pretending to be a disobedient student. This experiment resulted in psychological distress on the other students.

Overall, the issues that arise in research ethics involve fraud and individual-interest. Looking at the roots, the problems will not be resolved unless we go back to basics. Therefore, to deal with ethical issues in conducting Islamic research, this article will observe the basic element that is the cause of the demise of ethics or *akhlaq* in research which is *al-hawa* (lust or desire). Research is an act of developing and generating knowledge for the mankind. In other words, the purpose of research is to seek the truth and attain knowledge (Ross, 1974). Allah has explained in the Qur'an (23:71) that truth will not follow *al-hawa*, and even if it does follow *al-hawa*, it will destroy all that there is in the universe.

### 3. Research Questions

The problem stated previously has raised a few questions. Firstly, what is the actual concept of *al-hawa* in Islam? Secondly, how does the concept of *al-hawa* relate to the philosophy of Islamic research?

### 4. Purpose of the Study

To address the above questions, this article has the purpose of achieving two objectives. The first is to identify the concept of *al-hawa* in the Qur'an; and the second is to analyse the concept from the philosophy of Islamic research point of view.

### 5. Research Methods

The data collection method used in this research was library research. Specifically, the sources for the data in this study were grouped accordingly and detailed into four sections. The group of data from the first and main source was the verses from the Qur'an. The second section was the Qur'anic exegesis or the *tafsir* written by Ibn Kathir (2000). The third section was the Islamic philosophy and research methodology books. Lastly, the fourth section was systematic studies like theses and journal articles as well as seminar papers produced by previous researchers.

Since the data was collected from sources such as Divine revelations, theses, books and journals, which are archival documents, hence, the data was analysed using the content analysis method. This is in accordance with what Neuman (2011) stated about content analysis, which refers to a type of systematic analysis involving communicated documents. Content analysis also implicates the measurement of structure, content and literature sources (Masri, 2005).

### 6. Findings

In the Qur'an, the word *al-hawa* was mentioned in 29 different chapters. However, in the Qur'an (28:50), it was mentioned twice, making it 30 in total of the times mentioned. It is mentioned as a singular form (*mufrad*) for example *al-hawa*, *hawa*, and *tahwa* or in plural form (*jama'*) like *ahwa'*, *ahwa'akum*,

and *ahwa'uhum* (al-Baqiy, 1364 A.H.). Generally, the Qur'an mentioned *al-hawa* as a negative instinct within mankind. A literal translation to English would be "lust" or "desire" ('Ali, 2001).

### **6.1. Philosophical Conceptualisation of *Al-Hawa***

The gist of the verses revolving around *al-hawa* can be philosophically conceptualised, which according to Basri (2012) are four aspects: ontological aspect, epistemological aspect, axiological aspect and teleological aspect.

#### **(a) Ontological Aspect**

Ontology can be literally defined as a theory of being. It revolves around the issue of beings, and the reality of existence, which includes the physical realm (*'alam al-shahadah*) and the spiritual realm (*'alam al-ghayb*) (Abdullah, 2005). Ontologically, from the context of *al-hawa*, this matter also implies that mankind who are unwilling to worship Allah or associates Him with other "gods" are the people of *al-hawa*. Specifically, *al-hawa* also plays a role in misleading groups of people who had acquired revelation, such as Christians who embraced Jesus as god other than Allah (Ibn Kathir, 2000).

This was stressed in the Qur'an (5:77) that the People of the Book (Jews and Christians) should not transgress in the matters of beliefs. Even so, *al-hawa* drives people to disobey the Qur'an and the coming Day of Judgment (Qur'an 6:150). All these deviations are also influenced by the allurements of the devil (Satan) who whispers through *al-hawa* (Ibn Kathir, 2000). It is explained by the Qur'an: "*Relate to them the story of the man to whom We sent Our signs, but he passed them by: so Satan followed him up, and he went astray. If it had been Our will, We should have elevated him with Our signs; but he inclined to the earth, and followed his own vain desires...*" (Qur'an 7:175-176).

According to Ibn Kathir (2000), this verse clearly explains about *al-hawa* of a man among the Children of Israel who was given knowledge by Allah, named Bal'am bin Abar. He was influenced by devils for having inclinations towards his own *al-hawa*. *Al-hawa*, therefore, ontologically speaking, is a "god" worshipped by those who opposed the Qur'an and the Day of Judgment. *Al-hawa* also have been manipulated by the devils as their tool to mislead mankind (Qur'an 15:39).

#### **(b) Epistemological Aspect**

Epistemology literally means a theory of knowledge that is a branch in philosophy that discusses the nature of knowledge, justifications and limitations of knowledge attained, the interpretations of the forms of knowledge, methods and limitations of attaining knowledge (Long, 2008). According to Ridwan and Safrudin (2011), epistemology also answers issues like source of knowledge, method of knowing, and truth of knowledge. Generally, true knowledge or *al-'ilm* does not come from *al-hawa*. The term *al-'ilm* as found in verses of the Qur'an (2:120; 2:145; 6:119; 13:37; 30:29 and 47:16) interpreted by Ibn Kathir (2000) as the knowledge of revelation (Qur'an and Hadith).

If one followed *al-hawa* compared to the teachings of Islam, thus one can be led astray and do not receive guidance from Allah. This is stated in verses of the Qur'an (5:49; 6:56; 28:50). Even in the Qur'an (45:23) clearly stated that the faculties of hearing, sight, and heart of one can be hindered by one's self act

of “worshipping *al-hawa*”. Meanwhile, these faculties are the crucial faculties to attain knowledge and will be accountable for on the Day of Judgment (Qur’an 17:36).

With the blockade of these knowledge faculties, the activity of searching for the signs of truth in the revelation will be restrained. This situation was illustrated by the hypocrites (*munafiq*) where their hearts were sealed from receiving knowledge from the Qur’an (Qur’an 47:16). Likewise, the infidels (*kafir*) cannot provide any proof that the idols they worshipped was from Allah due to their assumptions and following *al-hawa* (Qur’an 53:23). Because of that, the Qur’an (47:14-15) stated the differences between the followers of *al-hawa* and the believers who seek for the signs of the truth are like the differences between the recipients of torments of hellfire and the residents of paradise.

Consequently, the verse explains that people who obey the will of *al-hawa* solely resulting the truth that presented upon them to be interpreted according to their relish and it seals their heart to accept the truth of God’s law. Besides limiting the interpretation, *al-hawa* extremely interprets information beyond one’s self<sup>2</sup> which will lead into false knowledge (al-Attas, 2015). This has been informed in the Qur’an (6:119): “*Why should ye not eat of (meats) on which Allah’s name hath been pronounced, when He hath explained to you in detail what is forbidden to you - except under compulsion of necessity? But many do mislead (men) by their appetites unchecked by knowledge. Thy Lord knoweth best those who transgress*”.

Hamka (1983) in his exegesis mentioned about the effect of extremely following *al-hawa*, which is fanaticism. For instance, this also happened among the people who received Scriptures before the Qur’an (People of the Book). Receivers of the Torah were fanatic in believing that only the Jews were the honourable race compared to other races. The people who received the Gospel exalting Jesus and their fanaticism got to the point where they believed that he was to be the son of God. Allah, therefore, ordered Prophet Muhammad to not follow *al-hawa* of the People of the Book and hold firmly to the Qur’an (42:15). The prohibition from following *al-hawa* of these people are so because they will drive the believers astray from implementing Allah’s laws (Qur’an 5:49; Qur’an 45:18). The effects of these prohibitions proved that the Qur’an is the authoritative source of knowledge in Islam and anything delivered by Prophet Muhammad is not based on his *al-hawa* (Qur’an 53:3).

### (c) Axiological Aspect

Axiology literally means theory of values (Lacey, 1996; Abdullah, 2010). Generally, axiology is a branch of philosophy that studies ethics and values which covers a few important criteria like values that are good, bad, right, wrong, means and ends, and what ought to be done (Fautanu, 2012). In the context of *al-hawa*, a few verses have mentioned the values obtained by complying *al-hawa*, which are verses from Qur’an (2:87), Qur’an (4:135), Qur’an (5:70), Qur’an (18:28), Qur’an (20:16), Qur’an (28:50), and Qur’an (54:3).

In the Qur’an (2:87), it is explained that *al-hawa* have become the root that drove the Children of Israel to defy the truth delivered by Prophet Muhammad. According to Ibn Kathir (2000), their attitude shows their arrogance which was a result of following to *al-hawa*. In other verses, *al-hawa* lead to the nature of liking to defy the truth. Allah said: “*We took the covenant of the Children of Israel and sent them messengers, every time, there came to them a messenger with what they themselves desired not - some (of these) they called impostors, and some they (go so far as to) slay.*” (Qur’an 5:70).

Even in the Qur'an (5:70), *al-hawa* which execrates the truth also leads mankind to killing. Hatred and *al-hawa* bring about injustice in passing judgment onto something (Qur'an 4:135). Besides, *al-hawa* also causes people to be negligent in their remembrance of Allah, and far from the belief of the Day of Judgment. Therefore, in a Hadith, Prophet Muhammad has addressed the following: “*And do not mix with those who follow al-hawa and do not have debates with them because I am afraid it will lead you astray and mixing with the matters you know.*” (Narrated by al-Darimi, Hadith no. 393).

This Hadith also addressed another issue studied in the field of axiology on the matters of ought and ought not be done. In verses from the Qur'an (18:28; 20:16), Ibn Kathir (2000) interprets that the path of the negligent should be avoided because it can lead to fatal error, major disappointments, and void in the Day of Judgment. With that, overall, *al-hawa* instils many negative values in men such as arrogance, injustice, disappointments and emptiness.

#### **(d) Teleological Aspect**

Teleology is derived from two Greek words that is “*telos*” which means the end; and “*logos*” which means study or theory (Basri, 2012). Terminologically, teleology refers to research on the final aim or the ending theory of respective phenomena that had happened (al-Faruqi, 1992). Among the Qur'anic verses that relates *al-hawa* to teleology are from Qur'an (23:71; 38:26; 79:40).

Referring to the Qur'an (23:17), Qutb (2000) translated that Allah had arranged the universe orderly according to a single truth derived from Him. By referring to this, Allah give humanity Islamic rules (sharia) as part of the world orders. With respect to that, human being should not have bowed down to the urge of desire as it may induce to world havoc and destruction. A Hadith by Prophet Muhammad: “*Indeed, they are mentioned as *ashab al-ahwa'* because they will fall into the pits of hellfire.*” (Narrated by ad-Darimi, Hadith no. 404)

The above Hadith opens a room for discussing eschatology as one of the subtopics under teleology. Eschatology discusses knowledge at the end of time<sup>3</sup> and the Hereafter (Bakhtiar, 2001). The information about the Hereafter is sourced from the Qur'an and Hadith, and is also known as *al-sam'iyat* (Basri, 2012). Therefore, human which are influenced by *al-hawa* as explained in the Qur'an (38:26) will receive heavy punishment in the Hereafter. On the contrary, people who are afraid of the Day of Judgment or the Hereafter and Allah's punishment are free from the shackles of *al-hawa* and will be rewarded with paradise (Qur'an 79:40-41).

## **6.2. Analysis of Philosophical Concept of *Al-Hawa* from the Perspective of Islamic Research**

From the concept of *al-hawa* which was identified, this section focuses on discussions that view the concept of *al-hawa* from the perspective of Islamic research philosophy. Before progressing with the discussion, the philosophy of Islamic research is a research philosophy used to implement research based on four criteria. Firstly, to establish it within Islamic worldview; secondly, to base it on Islamic epistemology which is integration of self-evident knowledge (*daruri*) and reasoning (*'aqli*) with research-based knowledge (*nazari*) and revelation (*naqli*); thirdly, guided by understanding of Islamic axiology and its practice; and fourthly, based on the tradition of observing Islam in the past and the relevant current times (Alias, 2016).

There are a few verses in the Qur'an that encourages mankind to do research, for example: "Say: *Roam the earth and see how Allah initiated the creation. So, will Allah produce a later creation (in the Hereafter)? Truly, Allah has power over all things.*" (Qur'an 29:20). Based on this definition and the Qur'anic verse above, the aspect which is accurate to be analysed more specifically is the epistemological and axiological aspects of *al-hawa*. Epistemologically, Islamic research were conducted in accordance to Allah's urge to travel and observe the nature (natural sciences), and humankind and society (social sciences) based on the verses of the Qur'an given above.

However, research conducted based on *al-hawa* will not reach the objective of observing Allah's greatness in the universe and the man himself. This is established on Allah's words: "We will show them *Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth. But is it not enough concerning your Lord that He is, over all things, a Witness?*" (Qur'an 41:53). This is because *al-hawa* commanded researchers to hide the truth they know. For example, a view for putting God as a Being which cannot exist outside space and time would not be accepted in a scientific research guided by Islamic worldview, which affirms self-evident proof of the existence of God (Abdullah, 2016).

In the field of natural sciences, the concept of justice (*al- 'adl*) is emphasised in observing objects of nature (Ishaq & Daud, 2017). This can be seen through the statement of Ibn al-Haytham (1989) in the introduction of his masterpiece *Kitab al-Manazir* (Book of Optic). He stated that:

After which we should ascend in our inquiry and reasoning, gradually and orderly, criticizing premises and exercising caution in regard to conclusions – our aim in all that we make subject to inspection and review being to employ justice, not to follow prejudice and to take care in all that we judge and criticize that we seek truth and not to be swayed by opinion (p.5-6).

Based on the quote, justice is an important value to ensure any facts observed with caution, and not influenced by *al-hawa* and the opinion of others. This is in line with the view of al-Qardawiy (2011) that facts are known without influence of *al-hawa*. If *al-hawa* has affected the seeking of facts, it is caused by the hindering of someone faculties of hearing, sight and heart (Qur'an 45:23). In research context, "someone" is referred to the researcher himself. No matter how hard a researcher optimizes his faculty of sight in conducting a research by observation tools, it will not affect his heart. It all comes back to the explanation at the end of the Qur'an (22:46), that for a man to see the truth is not through the physical eyes (*al-absar*, singular: *al-basar*), but the spiritual eyes (*al-qulub*, singular: *al-qalb*). This is because mankind cannot take lessons from any phenomenon or events without the consciousness of their heart and soul (Ibn Kathir, 2000).

In the context of Islamic research axiology, following *al-hawa* affects the explanation of facts to be unjust. Moreover, it can lead to transgression like defying the nature of divine power, unseen existents and authority of the Messengers (Daud, 1991). Allah has ordered mankind to not follow *al-hawa* to achieve justice in the following verse: "O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm in justice, witnesses for Allah, even if it be against yourselves or parents and relatives. Whether one is rich or poor, Allah is worthier of both. So, follow not [personal] inclination, lest you not be just. And if you distort [your testimony] or refuse [to give it], then indeed Allah is ever, with what you do, Acquainted." (Qur'an 4:135).

Besides prohibiting mankind from following *al-hawa* and to be more just, this verse also elaborates the requirement of justice for a witness. According to al-Qardawiy (2011), *al-hawa* can dominate one's

mind with or without his consciousness in searching of truth. This is agreed by Alatas (2015) who stated that it is an element that influences the sophists who upheld relative truth while rejecting the absolute truth. Whereas absolute truth only comes from Allah: “*And say, ‘The truth is from your Lord, so whoever wills – let him believe; and whoever wills – let him disbelieve.’ Indeed, We have prepared for the wrongdoers a fire whose walls will surround them. And if they call for relief, they will be relieved with water like murky oil, which scalds [their] faces. Wretched is the drink, and evil is the resting place.*” (Qur’an 18:29).

In this context, truth in Islam stands alone and is always related to guidance from Allah based on tawhid or unity of God (al-Faruqi, 1992). Tawhid is important in the search for the truth because it is related to honesty, whereas the opposite value of it is untruthfulness. Lying about the truth is as a matter of fact based solely on *al-hawa* (Qur’an 54:3). Therefore, to relate the value of honesty to tawhid, al-Kharraz (1937) stated there must be three criteria. Firstly, to do something always in the fear of Allah; secondly, to always guard the heart and the other faculties; and thirdly, to always focus on the aim or purpose. Regarding the third criteria mentioned by al-Kharraz (1937), the purpose of al-Biruni (1910) in conducting research on sociology of religion is clearly stated in his book:

This book is not a polemical one. I shall not produce the arguments of our antagonists in order to refute such of them as I believe to be in the wrong. My book is nothing but a simple historic record of facts. I shall place before the reader the theories of the Hindus exactly as they are, and I shall mention in connection with them similar theories of the Greeks in order to show the relationship existing between them (p.7).

An important matter explained by al-Biruni (1910) from the excerpt is that fact is something that is related to its reporting “as it is” and is not affected by opinions of earlier authors which have factual misunderstandings due to their hatred towards Hinduism. According to el-Kastawy (2006), reporting of facts transparently and objectively in relation to history and religion of societies that differ from one’s own beliefs, according to al-Biruni (1910) is an act of justice. This is explained by himself as follows:

Now as justice (i.e. being just) is a quality liked and coveted for its own self, for its intrinsic beauty, the same applies to truthfulness, except perhaps in the case of such people as never tasted how sweet it is, or know the truth, but deliberately shun it... (p.5).

Therefore, if a researcher is honest with himself and just to his objects of research, or in other words, does not entertain his *al-hawa*, ethical issues that arise in researches such as that of Laud Humphreys and Stanley Milgram will not occur. Besides that, an honest researcher will not burden himself by following *al-hawa* which disrupts *al-qalb* (the heart) in achieving the truth. In other words, if a researcher has faith in Allah, and believe that the truth he seeks through his research comes from Allah, he will always be committed in conducting the research.

## 7. Conclusion

To conclude, this article has argued that the concept of *al-hawa* can be conceptualised into four philosophical aspects which are ontology, epistemology, axiology, and teleology. *Al-hawa* from the aspect of the theory of being is a “god” obeyed by human and easily influenced by the devils. From the perspective of theory of knowledge, *al-hawa* drives human being into arrogance and seals their hearts from receiving guidance from Allah and using their sight, hearing and hearts to observe the signs of truth from Allah.



Meanwhile, from the aspect of the theory of values, *al-hawa* causes human to be arrogant, resulting in many negative attitudes and attributes. Finally, from the theory of the end, *al-hawa* manipulates human towards the direction of Allah's punishment on the Day of Judgment because they reject God's laws and subsequently brought destruction to the heaven and the earth. This concept has implications on the philosophy of Islamic research from the two aspects which are epistemology and axiology. From the aspect of Islamic research epistemology, it closes a space to seek the truth implied in every research through the heart and soul of the researcher. From the aspect of Islamic research axiology, *al-hawa* results in injustice to the objects of research and dishonesty on the part of the researcher. Therefore, the facts discovered and the interpretations from the study will not guide one to the truth which comes from Allah.

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