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# A Preliminary Quranic Review of Consciousness

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## ABSTRACT

Consciousness is a classical discourse among scientists, philosophers, and theologians across time and space. It has become a *hard problem* from many angles: What it is? How do we approach it? How it is being discussed? What is the objective? Etc. The vast scope of the topic causes consciousness to become an intriguing topic to many disciplines. This paper offers multidisciplinary research to consciousness. This approach enables us to spot the problem, intersection, and division across disciplines. We found that there are convergences and divergences to consciousness as multidisciplinary object of study. First, consciousness is related to the mind, but the location is unclear because of the lack of understanding of human structure. Second, spirituality is closely associated with the study of consciousness but remains secondary in Western hegemonic knowledge production, but it is highly encouraged for mental health practices in Western society. Third, some disagreement in investigating consciousness is on the acknowledgment of soul and the sentiment about religion. The dispute implies to various type of consciousness: consciousness as consciousness, self-consciousness, and God-consciousness. This typology correlates to what extent one's beliefs. We argue that Islam has the most comprehensive explanation to study consciousness and its cognates.

**Keywords:** Consciousness, *hard problem*, Islamic studies

## 1. Introduction

Consciousness triggers heated debate among academia. How it is delivered varies across expertise, culture, and belief. In Western intellectual tradition during 20<sup>th</sup> century, it is more often treated as common sense, a taboo, rather than an object of study. Entering 21<sup>st</sup> century until today, when people start questioning their existence and resurgence the importance of spirituality, scholars, scientists, and New Age people are enthusiastically discussing consciousness in both academic and popular discussion. Many non-Western knowledge tradition (some identified it as philosophy or the esoteric aspect of religion) such as Hindu, Buddhism, and Sufism are explored to add value into the value-free Western academic standard.

In the contemporary era, there are some developments in studying consciousness by the establishment of consciousness studies, its journal article, and particular theories. However,

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the development brings more confusion than clarity. Blurry goals and boundaries across disciplines, and disagreement towards the existence of consciousness itself remain problematic. Scholars seem unable to differentiate consciousness with its related terms such as mind, soul, self, etc. (Tanuwijaya & Hermawan, 2019). But there is a common understanding that the quest on consciousness is important to build holistic understanding of human nature, heal psychopathologies, self-transcendence, and to attain gnostic knowledge.

This paper has two main goals. Firstly, we provide multidisciplinary literature review to map the topic of consciousness in the West and how Western academia enforce integration with Eastern tradition. We refer the East to Indian philosophy, Chinese philosophy, and Islam. The mapping consists of how each tradition delivers consciousness, how consciousness is being associated with, and the objective of studying consciousness.

Secondly, we organize the convergent and divergent to see how Western and Eastern traditions interact as the result of our literature review. It encourages us to raise second question: *even if the West meets East seem promising in academic discourse, why does the quest for consciousness not necessarily lead someone to God?* In the fifth section, we manage to answer the question with Quran An-Nur [24]: 35-40, and Al-Baqarah [2]: 282 as our framework of thinking. The Surah offers comprehensive explanation on consciousness related issues from Quranic perspective primarily on the nature of human existence and the so-called higher consciousness.

Since consciousness is complex in nature, we conduct multidisciplinary approach. We selectively pick some disciplines to highlight approaches in studying consciousness such as psychology, cognitive theory, philosophy, and Islamic theology/philosophy/studies (we intentionally integrate the three). This article offers Islamic perspective based on Quran as the novelty to study consciousness. We found that Islamic tradition provides most integrated framework of thinking to build our argument. It also makes consciousness become easy problem rather than hard one but remain not dogmatic.

## **2. Literature Review**

### *2.1 From Ancient Greek to Contemporary Consciousness Studies*

During the ancient Greek, consciousness was not the primary focus. Although the discussion on soul outweighs consciousness, great philosophers of that time provided little foundation to the modern-day theory of consciousness. Plato talked about human intellectual awareness and

theory of recollection that might provide understanding on consciousness. Consciousness as awareness that we experience when you “*realize that you are enjoying yourself even while you do*”. It is the intellectual form of the other three components of the soul: appetitive (desire), spirited (passion or spirituality), and rational (intellectuality) (Qazi, et al, 2018; Jorgensen, 2018). While it requires more understanding of the soul to comprehend consciousness in Platonic tradition, Aristoteles constructed the theory of consciousness by relating it to perception. Consciousness relates to a psychological activity that goes beyond original perception (Caston, 2002).

It is Cartesian dualism with its counterpart (the monism) that most consciousness theorists put their historical background on and later generate philosophy of mind, a study that investigates the nature of mental state. Comprehension on consciousness is widely referring to Rene Descartes' Cartesian Dualism which consists of *res extensa* the material aspect of consciousness in the brain and *res cogitans* the immaterial aspect of consciousness in the form of mind or soul. According to Descartes, human existence comes from *res cogitans* therefore born the adage *I think therefore I am*. Consciousness is in the mind or soul not in the body. However, there is no clear difference between the mind as thoughts and as soul (Qazi, et al, 2018; Jorgensen, 2018). This dualism enforces the grand debate of the mind-body problem. Unfortunately, the debate between the monists and dualists redeems the soul as the essence of human and emphasizes more on the mind as a psychological concept that interacts with the body. The mind consists of intention (beliefs and desires) and consciousness (perceptual experience and emotional experience) that belong to the self. Meanwhile, the body manifests in attributes such as size, weight, shape, color, and motion (Robinson, 2003).

Gottfried Leibniz and Immanuel Kant have also influenced the construction of philosophy of mind (Jorgensen, 2018). Leibniz perceived consciousness as perception in terms of substance of the external things rather than awareness and experience. While Kant built his theory of mind by stating that our minds shape our experience and external things. Kant's prominent contribution is on noumena (things as they are) and the phenomena (object of our experience). These points of view form another primary discussion in studying consciousness that is *third person* or the objective and *first-person* point of view or the subjective or the self.

In contemporary philosophy, the mind-body problem generates the emergence of several schools of thought. They are materialists who think that the mind as mental states are just

physical states. The idealist who perceives physical states are mental states. Lastly, the dualist who sees mind and body are real and can be assimilated to the other. There is a dead end to the discussion on mind-body problem among the philosopher of mind due to the unclear explanation of consciousness, thought, and soul.

Psychology is one of those disciplines that has a close relation with mind-body problems. The behaviorist like J.B. Watson stated there is no existence of consciousness. Another behaviorist like B. F. Skinner believes that consciousness is just an epiphenomenon of matter (Rao, 2005). Unlike the behaviorist who tends to be materialist, James, a prominent psychologist, and philosopher stated that the relation between consciousness and the brain remains a mystery. He was a non-physical monism scholar emphasizing mentality. Mentality produces physical symptoms. Therefore, James (1890) defined *consciousness as a continuous flow of changing sensations, images, thoughts, and feelings*. His definition became known as *the stream of consciousness theory* that gave birth to psychology as mental processes studies (Qazi, et al, 2018). As a study on mental process, understanding consciousness is part of the attempt to describe, control, and change mental process.

Another prominent psychologist was Sigmund Freud with his psychoanalyst which consciousness and unconsciousness become crucial domain. Freud's id as the core draws attention to neuroscientists and other biological based scientists. Mark Solms is one of those who integrate neuroscience and psychoanalysis into neuro-psychoanalysis –a study that investigates the brain using Freudian psychoanalysis as theoretical foundation. Neuro-psychoanalysis assumes that the mind originates from consciousness and is located on the brain stem of every vertebrate. Consciousness contains emotion that functions to provide information to the body and encourage actions to keep it in a homeostatic state. While the unconsciousness contains experiences placed in the memory. Solms' contribution validates Freud's id that has long been underestimated as unscientific (Roesler, 2019). Consciousness among psychoanalysts and neuro-psychoanalysts is associated with dysfunctionality. The goal of investigating consciousness is to heal pathological patients.

The spiritual turn in understanding consciousness re-emerged with Carl Jung's analytical psychology and Maslow and partners' transpersonal psychology. Along with that, the New Age movement enforced by *Theosophy Society's* doctrine amplified the discourse on consciousness as more than mind and body but also soul (will be elaborated in the next subsection). Discourse on healing and self-realization becomes the main object to this approach.

In the meantime, the discussion on the mind-body problem among materialists, idealists, and dualists also remained. Thomas Nagel's *What Is It Like to Be a Bat?* published in 1974, came up with an idea on subjective experience. In the previous decades, scholars on theory of thinking dominantly used third person perspective to ensure objectivity. Nagel offered first person paradigm emphasizing experience and self-reflection towards consciousness. In another word, there is an effort to put meaning to the consciousness of oneself.

Entering the 90s, in 1994, *Journal of Consciousness Studies* was published. It was an interdisciplinary study of psychology, philosophy, neurophysiology, physics, cognitive scientist, and information technology experts, and New Age adherents. There are many common ground and pitfalls across disciplines and cultures. A year later, contemporary philosopher on consciousness David Chalmers (1995) considered it a *hard problem*. According to him, monist scholars reluctantly reduce consciousness into the nervous system due to the scientific method rules (functionality, dynamics, and structure). Meanwhile, dualists are unable to explain how the mind/soul interacts with the system. Chalmers complemented *hard problems* with *easy problems* by making peace with the fact that consciousness can only be explained by the scientific method. He objected to esotericism in consciousness due to its hidden meanings and symbolism that can only make another paradox (Castro, 2021). He gave simple examples such as how sleeping is different from being awake, and on the perception of things, learning, awareness, and memory to demonstrate that consciousness is less problematic. However, Chalmers' simplification was criticized by Patricia Churchland (1996) with her *hornswoggle problem* concept that assumes humans are unable to identify which problem is easy and hard.

Amidst this paradox, Niikawa (2020) offers systematic mapping to understand consciousness as a field of study based on questions and approaches. Questions on consciousness can be categorized into definitional, phenomenological, epistemological, ontological, and axiological. The first category talks about how consciousness should be defined. Questions on consciousness definition can be approached with example-based and essence-bases approach. Phenomenological questions consist of content, dimension, and structure are answered by introspection and reasoning approach. Epistemological questions include one's consciousness and other's consciousness are related to first-person and third-person approach. Ontological questions, as depicted in previous paragraphs, discuss mind-body problems and distribution questions such as who has consciousness. The fourth category of

questions requires a correlation and reasoning approach for the mind-body problem, and intuition and reasoning approach to the distribution question. Lastly, axiological questions that relate to values such as cognitive, epistemic, moral, and aesthetic. It consists of first-person contrast, third person, and reasoning approach. From here we know that the complexity of consciousness is not merely lies on what consciousness is about. However, various theories and models can still be offered amidst this difficulty (see table 1).

**Table 1. Theories of Consciousness**

<b>Dualists' Theory</b>	<b>Physics' Theory</b>
Substance dualism	Eliminativism
Property dualism	Identity theory
Fundamental property dualism	Type two identity theory
Emergent property dualism	Functionalism
Neutral monist property dualism	Nonreductive physicalism
Panpsychism	

Source: Robinson (2003)

### *2.2 Theology, Eastern Religious/Spiritual Teachings, and the New Age Movement*

Maslow's humanistic psychology enabled spirituality to be acknowledged by scientists at his time. He built his own *weltanschauung* and developed the theory that people gradually accept until today. Although spirituality has been mentioned by James and massively introduced by Jung in his analytical psychology, the epistemic community in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century had not been able to comprehend spirituality due to strict scientific rules of knowledge production. Maslow constructed the next phase of *self-actualization* theory and *peak experience* concept that opened further exploration of spirituality in psychology. Existentialist in nature, Maslow's theoretical foundation was inspired by Taoist teachings of consciousness to treat clients more humane rather than perceive them as lab-rat or broken objects (Maslow, 1994).

In collaboration with his fellow scientists and therapist, Maslow founded transpersonal psychology aimed to reawaken the soul that has been killed by modernity. The school of thought was officially confirmed by the establishment of *Institute for Transpersonal Psychology* (ITP). Consciousness with its spiritual spectrum has become one of crucial topics in psychology ever since. The group integrated psychology, neuroscience, religion, and philosophy to create more value-friendly, essential, and sustainable therapy for patients inside and outside the therapy room. Due to its inclusivity of any religious tradition, transpersonal psychology gives value-added to value free science based on clients' need such as yoga and

Vedanta for the Hindus, Zen for those interested in Buddha, Sufism for Muslims, etc. the teachings enable individuals to experience higher level of consciousness or cosmic consciousness (see picture 2). Since then, transpersonal psychology has blurred the boundary between psychology and religious studies (May in Shapiro, 1994).

The development of humanistic and transpersonal psychology was inseparable (although might not be direct) with the New Age Movement as social-cultural background at that time. Started by Helena Petrovna Blavasky's *Theosophy Society* in the 19th century, the movement spread across Western societies who long for spirituality. Since the 1970's the U.S. was one of those countries that 'imported' the occult and spiritual teachings for self-transformation and healing. Discourse on light and love became infamous among modern exoteric followers who strive for higher state of consciousness. Psychology, psychiatry, neuroscience, and related discipline became the bridge between science and spirituality in Western modern society.

Intense light	Ecstasy	Strengthen intuition
Transcendental and warm-hearted love	Redeemed physical and mental suffering	More attune to the spiritual than the material
Improved physical and mental vitality	Revelation	Transfiguration with Divine energy

**Figure 1. Adaptation of Eastern Teachings for Altering the State of Consciousness in Western Psychotherapy**

Source: Wilcox (2018)

There are several religious teachings included in transpersonal psychology development mostly for therapy purposes: Zen philosophy taught by D. T. Suzuki, Taoist, Buddhist, Hindu teachings brought by Allan Watts, Hindu Sri-Aurobindo introduced by Haridas Chaudhuri, Tibetan Buddhism imported by Chogyam Trungpa, Theravada vipassana movement by Jack Kornfield and Joseph Goldstein, and Sufism famously integrated to psychology by James Fadiman, Robert Frager and Idris Shah (Ferrer, 2002; Lorimer, 2017). The effort to develop



interdisciplinary study between science, consciousness, theology, spirituality, and esotericism of science including transpersonal psychology has been enforced since the 1980s to accommodate humans' transcendental needs beyond the cognitive, emotive, and behavioral domain of their mental process. Most criticisms focus on ontological problems and paradigmatic foundations of the study (Walach, 2013; Lominer, 2017).

**Table 2. Religious Rituals for Transpersonal Psychotherapy**

	<b>Adopted Teachings/Rituals</b>	<b>Objective</b>
<b>Zen</b>	Three universal truths, four noble truths, and noble eightfold path	Handling psychological illusions of suffering and attachment
<b>Taoist</b>	Harmony between man and universe	Harmonious living
<b>Buddhist</b>	Mindful yoga	Harmonious living
<b>Hindu</b>	Ayurveda and yoga	Address mental imbalance
<b>Sri-Aurobindo</b>	Cosmology of consciousness and integral yoga psychology	Spiritual liberation and transformation
<b>Tibetan Buddhism</b>	Individual responsibility, ethics, discipline, meditation, and love teachings	Ideal states of being – acknowledging pain
<b>Theravada vipassana</b>	Mindfulness practice ( <i>sati</i> ), loving-kindness ( <i>metta</i> ), ethics ( <i>sila</i> ) and generosity ( <i>dana</i> )	Pain and stress relief
<b>Sufism</b>	Al Ghazali's human structure, Al-Tirmidzi's station of heart, sharia (Islamic rituals)	Close to God by annihilating ( <i>fana</i> ) the self

Another historical development of discourse on consciousness can be found in spiritual intelligence and positive psychology. The term *Spiritual Intelligence* (SQ) was made famous in 1994 by Danah Zohar, a physicist, and Ian Marshall, a psychiatrist and psychotherapist. They attempt to convince that spirituality, just like Daniel Goleman's *Emotional Intelligence* (EQ), is part of intelligence which has been unknowledge by the Newtonian society. In fact, it is the ultimate intelligence (Zohar & Marshall, 2000). Howard Garder's multiple intelligence also added the spiritual aspect of intelligence in his theory (Gardner, 2000). Spirituality means *domain of ultimate concern* which can be identified as a spectrum rather than hierarchy, the highest phase of human development but different and transcend common domain of development (cognitive, moral, emotional, etc.), manifest as an attitude of the wayfarer, involving *peak experience*, felt by presence, transcendental, and require commitment to particular faith and /or spiritual path. The objective of commitment toward a certain spiritual path is for spiritual awakening, peaceful feeling, and self-realization. People

with spiritual intelligence are those who have been committed to the paths (Vaughan, 2000). Meanwhile, in public discourse, positive psychology manages to make ‘informal therapy and spiritual path’ more accessible. Positive psychology is *the scientific study of what goes right in life* (Peterson in Waters et al, 2021). It helps people alter their negative thoughts and emotions into positive ones through wisdom, compassion, and other related teachings.

### 2.3 Muslim Society in Western Intellectual Discourse

Among Muslim society in the West, there is also an attempt to integrate science, philosophy, and spirituality with Islamic tradition coined by Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas and Malik Badri in the late 1970s. they are inspired by the development of scientific discoveries of Islamic Golden Age era. Some Islamic Golden Ages’ prominent Muslim scholars like Al-Kindi, Al-Bakhi, Al-Razi, Ibn Sina (Avicenna), Al-Farabi, and Al-Ghazali inspire contemporary Muslim psychologists to resurrect Islamic tradition of studying the soul, *ilm al nafs* (called as Islamic psychology today). This discipline intends to heal the spiritual component of a person, the heart, from bad virtues through *tazkiya al-nafs*. Islamic psychology brings back moral sensibility to Muslim society who at need mental health treatment in today’s contemporary Freudian psychoanalysis domination which they perceive as incompatible (Rassool, 2021). Academically Islamic psychology triggers criticism among the psychologists, including the Muslim ones, but in practice it receives appreciation from Muslim society particularly those who domiciles in the West (Rassool, 2021; Keshavarzi et al, 2021).

**Table 3. Islamic Scholars Psychotherapies for Higher State of Consciousness on the Psychic Level**

Scholars	Period	Techniques for Altered State of Consciousness
Al-Kindi	801 – 873 C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversion technique, letting go technique, and music technique</li> </ul>
Al-Bakhi	850 – 934 C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cognitive behavior therapy</li> </ul>
Al-Razi	1150 – 1210 C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preventive measures</li> <li>• Curative measures (psychotherapy): mind control and lust repression</li> </ul>
Avicenna	980 – 1057 C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aromatherapy technique, body monitoring technique, and music therapy</li> </ul>
Al-Farabi	870 – 950 C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Music therapy</li> </ul>
Badri	2014 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cognitive systematic desensitization</li> <li>• Islamically modeled therapy</li> </ul>
Al-Karam	2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Islamically Integrated Psychotherapy</li> </ul>
Ghozali	2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ILHAM psychotherapy: counteraction through <i>ilm</i> (cognitive), <i>hal</i> (affective), and <i>amal</i></li> </ul>

		(behavior) domain
Keshavarzi et al	2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Traditional Islamically Integrated Psychotherapy (ITTP): the <i>inkishaf</i> (revelation), the <i>mujahadah</i> (spiritual discipline), the <i>i'tidal</i> (moderation) and <i>ittihad</i> (unity)</li> </ul>

Just like Platonic approach to consciousness, the contemporary Muslim scholars mostly focus on the soul rather than consciousness. Consciousness as *qualia* was not the focus of its ontological debate. Muslim scholars in the Islamic Golden Age and today's Islamic psychologists tend to put their energy into the epistemological development for holistic psychotherapy (Ghozali, 2019; Ghozali & Hawadi, 2022). Thus, the effort shows that the main objective of Islamic Psychology is to accommodate the needs of the already settled definition of consciousness (*taqwa*) that goes along with Islamic belief (*iman*) and Islamic way (*sharia*).

In Islamic terminology, consciousness is specifically referred to God-consciousness. God-consciousness means *taqwa*, a piety, fear of God. The word occurs 258 times in 237 different verses of the Quran. It is one of the most prominent concepts in Islam (Mawdudi, 1979). As it is stated in the Qur'an Al-Hujuraat [49]: 13,

...يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۗ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَىٰكُمْ

إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

“...Surely the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous among you. Allah is truly All-Knowing, All-Aware.”

There is only one conception on consciousness in Islam, that is God-consciousness. God-consciousness is different from mind-consciousness. However, mind-consciousness may lead to God-consciousness usually through sharp intuition (Bakhtiar, 2019). Fazlur Rahman (1988) utters that *taqwa* is the inner-most virtue of the Quran that helps humans have an empowered life (Oxford, 2022). In everyday life, *taqwa* can be interpreted as obedience or trusting God. To be a *muttaqin*, one who have *taqwa*, he/she must believe (*imaan*) and conduct specific devotion or righteousness (*al-birr*) as stated in Quran Surah Al-Baqarah [2]: 177,

لَيْسَ الْبِرَّ أَنْ تُولُوا وَجُوهَكُمْ قِبَلَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ ءَامَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالْكِتَابِ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ وَءَاتَى الْمَالَ عَلَىٰ حُبِّهِ ذَوَى الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَأَبْنَ السَّبِيلِ وَالسَّائِلِينَ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ وَأَقَامَ

الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَى الزَّكَاةَ وَالْمُوفُونَ بِعَهْدِهِمْ إِذَا عَاهَدُوا وَالصَّالِحِينَ فِي الْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَحِينَ الْبَأْسِ أُولَئِكَ  
الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ

*“Righteousness is not in turning your faces towards the east or the west. Rather, the righteous are those who believe in Allah, the Last Day, the angels, the Books, and the prophets; who give charity out of their cherished wealth to relatives, orphans, the poor, needy travelers, beggars, and for freeing captives; who establish prayer, pay alms-tax, and keep the pledges they make; and who are patient in times of suffering, adversity, and in the heat of battle. It is they who are true in faith, and it is they who are mindful of Allah.”*

Above is one of many verses that illustrates how Islam defines consciousness. God-consciousness located in the heart. The heart is also another crucial component for human beings to know themselves, to seek moral balance, to know their God (Bakhtiar, 2019). Al-Ghazali (in Nasution, 2014) defined the heart as the place for belief (*imaan*), *“Light is the key to most knowledge, those who would have thought that khasyf (uncovering) depended on arguments, has narrowed the breadth of God’s grace. It is the light that God shines into one’s heart.”* The belief (*imaan*) is in the form of light, the heart is the place where the light of God enters as it is stated in Quran Surah An-Nur[24]: 35,

اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ مِثْلُ نُورِ نُورَةٍ كَمْشَكَوَةٌ فِيهَا مِصْبَاحٌ ۚ الْمِصْبَاحُ فِي زُجَاجَةٍ ۚ الزُّجَاجَةُ كَأَنَّهَا كَوْكَبٌ  
دُرِّيٌّ يُوقَدُ مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ مُبَارَكَةٍ زَيْتُونَةٍ لَا شَرْقِيَّةٍ وَلَا غَرْبِيَّةٍ يَكَادُ زَيْتُهَا يُضِيءُ وَلَوْ لَمْ تَمْسَسْهُ نَارٌ ۚ نُورٌ عَلَى  
نُورٍ ۚ يَهْدِي اللَّهُ لِنُورِهِ مَن يَشَاءُ ۚ وَيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ ۚ وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

*“Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. His light<sup>1</sup> is like a niche in which there is a lamp, the lamp is in a crystal, the crystal is like a shining star, lit from ‘the oil of’ a blessed olive tree, ‘located’ neither to the east nor the west,<sup>2</sup> whose oil would almost glow, even without being touched by fire. Light upon light! Allah guides whoever He wills to His light. And Allah sets forth parables for humanity. For Allah has ‘perfect’ knowledge of all things.”*

Although Al-Ghazali acknowledge the existence of the metaphysics version of the heart besides the physiological one that pumps humans’ blood, he stated that only God has the access to the metaphysics one, human can only access the psychic phenomenon of the conscious mind while God-consciousness is given in nature (Nasution, 2014).

*Taqwa* is not limited to rituals such as prayer (*salah*) and fasting (*shaum*), it is primarily about virtue, morality, and manners (*akhlaq*) and etiquette (*adab*) based on oneness of God

(*Tawheed*) (Ahmad in Rassool, 2021). The end point of *taqwa* is obedience to God. Hence in Islamic term, higher consciousness aims to enhancing the state of *taqwa* (Ghozali, 2019).

In a more unveiling finding, At-Tirmizi (in Frager, 2009) identified four level of higher consciousness in Islam which categorized by the place, intensity of the light, kind of knowledge, persons (identity), and the soul (*nafs*). The intensity of consciousness is in line with the condition of the heart. The purer the heart means the higher the God-consciousness (*taqwa*).

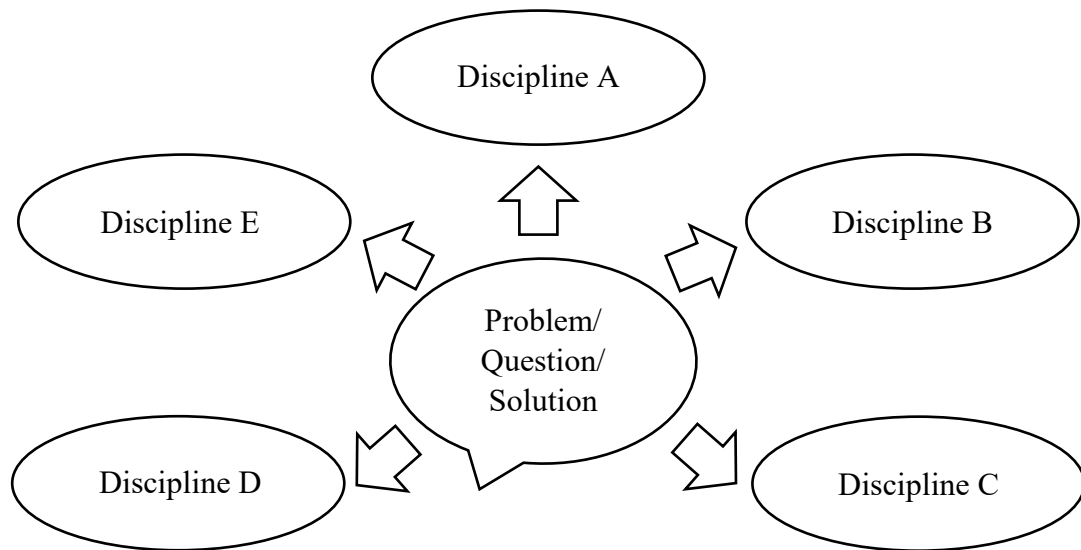
**Table 3. Station of the Heart (Islamic Level of Consciousness)**

<b>Station</b>	<b>Shadr</b>	<b>Qalb</b>	<b>Fuad</b>	<b>Lubb</b>
<b>Intensity</b>	<i>Nur Islam</i>	<i>Nur Imaan</i>	<i>Nur Ma'rifah</i>	<i>Nur Tawheed</i>
<b>Knowledge</b>	Jurisprudence	Spiritual	Spiritual	Divine attitude
<b>Identity</b>	<i>Muslim</i>	<i>Mukmin</i>	<i>Muhsin</i>	<i>Muwahhid</i>
<b>Soul</b>	<i>Nafs ammarah</i>	<i>Nafs mulhamah</i>	<i>Nafs lawwamah</i>	<i>Nafs muthmainnah</i>

Source: Frager (2019)

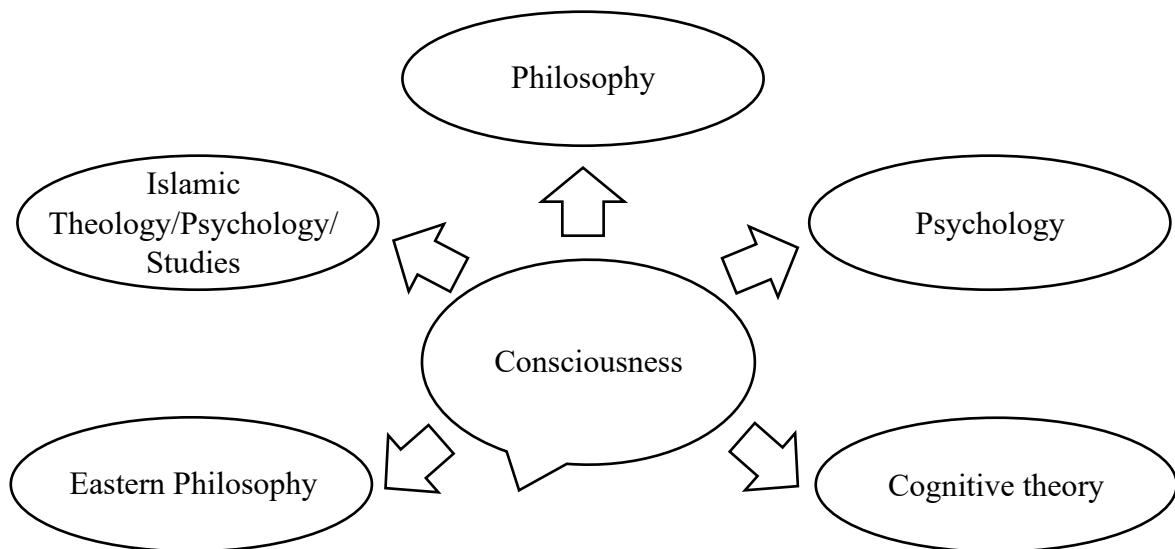
### **3. Research Methodology**

Multidisciplinary research is a methodological perspective that collaborates various disciplines and aims to identify the root causes and solve problems of similar research interests (Fiore & Salas, 2007). It promises the possibility of greater theoretical insights and generates unanticipated outcomes (Cuevas et al, 2012). Unlike unitary discipline research that has a lawful theoretical framework, multidisciplinary approach embraces experts' domain of knowledge, experience, and understanding of complex issues (Janaki, 2021). Multidisciplinary research is also able to critically locate, solve problems, and offer possibilities with its encouragement to integrate faculty of mind and faculty of heart. The mind enables us to differentiate plurality of human experience while the heart spots the singularity across the plurality of human experience (Shahi, 2020). The goal of this multidisciplinary approach is to identify the underlying problems, similarities, and pitfalls of consciousness as the result of our literature review.



**Figure 2. Multidisciplinary Research**

Source: Schmalz et al (2019)



**Figure 3. Multidisciplinary Review of Consciousness**

From the literature review above, we conclude that the Islamic approach able to snatch the underlying problem being asked in our research question that is the matter of being a believer or unbeliever. Islamic knowledge tradition also offers explanation and solution to the *hard problem* of consciousness by integrating the faculty of mind and heart. With this consideration, we use Quranic verses An-Nur [24]: 35-37 and 39-40, Al-Baqarah [2]: 282, to answer our research question on, “*why consciousness is not necessarily lead to God-consciousness?*”.

#### **4. Results**

The previous section presents a brief overview of consciousness from related disciplines ranging from science, philosophy to religion/spiritual teaching. It can be concluded that consciousness is related to the mind but there is no clear statement on where it is. Another convergency across disciplines is the acknowledgement of how spirituality, if not religion, has promising alternative grand theory to science. Spirituality remains complementary due to scientific rules and tends to be instrumentalized for therapeutic purposes rather than seeking spiritual path as it is.

Some important divergences we found are regarding the acknowledgment of soul as an entity and the role of religion. First, in ancient Greek period, consciousness is part of the soul. The difference between Platonic and Aristotelian is situated in the orientation of the conscious soul, either inner-looking (awareness) and outward-looking (perception). In the Renaissance, soul as an important entity slowly fade, the mind and objectivity from outward-looking activity became dominant until theosophical thinking revived the soul through the importance of spirituality.

Second, the acceptance of spiritual teachings as an esoteric aspect of religion does not go hand in with the exoteric one. Natural religion's spiritual teachings from India and China are preferable to complement science for healing. It is Islamic knowledge tradition that able to integrate its exoteric and esoteric aspects at once. Not only it does not navigate the soul from mind and body discussion, *sharia* or Islamic law as the exoteric aspect become the epistemology to attain higher consciousness. Islam also has rich elaboration regarding the heart as vital device for consciousness. The objective of investigating and altering consciousness is comprehensive from self-consciousness to God-consciousness. Islamic psychology is one embodiment of this integrality of science, spiritual, philosophy and religion. Unfortunately, the hegemony of Western scientific standard haunts Muslim psychologists although an independent methodology has already formulated.

Next section further elaborates how soul, self-consciousness, God-consciousness, knowledge, spirituality, and religion in Islam is intertwined and established comprehensive explanation regarding consciousness.

## 5. Discussion

Talking about consciousness is talking about belief (*iman*). Belief in a form of light is not merely a blind faith that has long been underestimated by scientific culture. It is the essence of human beings that requires in-depth comprehension of the soul. It goes beyond sensory perception or mental process, neither in the body nor the mind limited to parallel universe that mostly scientists and philosopher grasp. “*Light upon light! Allah guides whoever He wills to His light,*” (Q.S. [24];35). Scientific findings might help the advancement of medical treatment and self-consciousness, but it can only reach the body. The psyche investigated by most psychologists, psychiatrists, and cognitive scientists is mostly still part of the body.

Relation between God-consciousness, light, and heart in spiritual discourse is related to the structure of human being. Hence it is important for knowing oneself before knowing God. Tanuwijaya’s (2018) interpretation on An-Nur [24]: 35 offers the explanation. Human beings (*insan Ilahi*) who have been guided by Allah in His light, “*Allah guides whoever He wills to His light,*” has divine role, structure, and purpose. This further explains analytical and transpersonal psychology’s aspiration regarding self-realization. Humans are not merely animalistic being or limited to the body (*jasad*). Human beings consist of the material and the immaterial, the body (*jasad*) and the soul (*nafs*), tied by the spirit (*ruh*). The verse illustrates the human bodily self (including the brain and the psyche) as dark niche (*misykat*) made from natural aspect (*al-ardh*) while the soul (*nafs*) is from heavenly aspect (*as-sama’*). The two worlds meet in the *misykat*. Within it there is a heart (*qalb*) symbolized by crystal (*zujajah*) or a house of Allah (*baitullah*). If the crystal has light, he/she has God-consciousness (*taqwa*) given by Allah after one follow *sharia* and the prescribed disciplines.

Upgrading one’s consciousness in Islam does not demand cross-cultural debate due to the universality of Islamic knowledge from ontology, epistemology, and methodology. Someone requires purified heart as the field, strong belief (*iman*), and good deeds (*amal sholih*) to enforce the growth of his/her *taqwa* symbolizes by a tree-branch, “*lit from the oil of a blessed olive tree, located neither to the east nor the west*”. The result of being *muttaqin* is kindness (*al-hasanah*) and the essence of the olive is understanding the meaning of His policy (*haqiqah*) (Tanuwijaya, 2018). This understanding or popularly known as gnostic knowledge or divine wisdom is taught by Allah through our life experience as mentioned in Q.S. Al-Baqarah [2]: 282,

...وَأَنْتُمْ أَلِلَّهُ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ



“...Be mindful of Allah, for Allah is the One Who teaches you. And Allah has  
‘perfect’ knowledge of all things.”

Consciousness, especially God-consciousness is only potential and not for every being due to their condition of the heart. It *shines through houses of worship(ers)* those are who remember her/his God, do prayer, pay alms, prepare for the Day of Judgement, put their hope to Allah (*tawakal*), and do kindness (Q.S. 24: 36-38),

فِي بُيُوتٍ أُذِنَ لِلَّهِ أَنْ تُرْفَعَ وَيُذْكَرَ فِيهَا أَسْمُهُ يُسَبِّحُ لَهُ فِيهَا بِالْأَعْدُوِّ وَالْأَصَالِ

“That light shines through houses of worship which Allah has ordered to be raised, and where His Name is mentioned. He is glorified there morning and evening”

رَجَالٍ لَا تُلْهِهِمْ تِجَارَةٌ وَلَا بَيْعٌ عَنِ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَإِقَامِ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءِ الزَّكَاةِ يَخَافُونَ يَوْمًا تَتَقَلَّبُ فِيهِ الْقُلُوبُ  
وَالْأَبْصَارُ

“by men<sup>1</sup> who are not distracted—either by buying or selling—from Allah’s remembrance, or performing prayer, or paying alms-tax. They fear a Day when hearts and eyes will tremble,”

لِيَجْزِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنَ مَا عَمِلُوا وَيَزِيدَهُم مِّن فَضْلِهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَرْزُقُ مَن يَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ

“hoping that Allah may reward them according to the best of their deeds and increase them out of His grace. And Allah provides for whoever He wills without limit.”

Those who does not understand and believe non-existence of consciousness even from the original form barely comprehend self-consciousness, let alone God-consciousness. Their knowledge is like *a mirage in a desert* (Q.S. 24: 39). The discoveries to theories of consciousness lead to more confusion than explanation, a *hard problem* as they said, “Darkness upon darkness! If one stretches out their hand, they can hardly see it. And whoever Allah does not bless with light will have no light!” (Q.S. 24: 40).

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَعْمَالُهُمْ كَسَرَابٍ بِقِيَعَةٍ يُحْسِبُهُ الظَّمْآنُ مَاءً حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَهُ لَمْ يَجِدْهُ شَيْئًا وَوَجَدَ اللَّهَ عِنْدَهُ فَوَفَّاهُ  
حِسَابَهُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ

*“As for the disbelievers, their deeds are like a mirage in a desert, which the thirsty perceive as water, but when they approach it, they find it to be nothing. Instead, they find Allah there ‘in the Hereafter, ready’ to settle their account.*

*And Allah is swift in reckoning.”*

أَوْ كَظُلُمَاتٍ فِي بَحْرٍ لُجِّيٍّ يَغْشَاهُ مَوْجٌ مِّنْ فَوْقِهِ مَوْجٌ مِّنْ فَوْقِهِ سَحَابٌ ظُلُمَاتٌ بَعْضُهَا فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ إِذَا أَخْرَجَ يَدَهُ لَمْ يَكُنْ يَرَاهَا وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَجْعَلِ اللَّهُ لَهُ نُورًا فَمَا لَهُ مِن نُّورٍ

*“Or their deeds are like the darkness in a deep sea, covered by waves upon waves,<sup>1</sup> topped by ‘dark’ clouds. Darkness upon darkness! If one stretches out their hand, they can hardly see it. And whoever Allah does not bless with light will have no light!”*

The objectives of examining consciousness, for therapy self-realization, achieve higher consciousness, to discover deeper human capability, for gnostic knowledge are alluring to be studied and perhaps practice, but without God-consciousness (*taqwa*) this might not lead to the betterment for humanity, since spirituality has its own dark side (Dura-Vila & Dein, 2009). Only those who is guided by God will eventually be enlightened. The nature of investigating consciousness subjectively and objectively is the attempt to seek one’s, whether he/she realizes it or not.

## 6. Conclusion

Analyzing consciousness takes someone to believe in things whether in the form of science, philosophy, spirituality, and/or religion. Some epistemic communities might only believe in science. Others believe that science, philosophy, and spirituality can go hand in hand. Another believes all at once. We argue that consciousness has its own types, the original consciousness that dominantly attached to mind/body, self-consciousness, and God-consciousness. In Western modern and contemporary intellectual discourse, consciousness studies experience stagnancy for its limited realm to mind and body. The absence of acknowledgement to soul as a valid entity becomes the core problem to the discussion. Even though some scholars acknowledge its existence, the mystery of the mind draws more attention and is more feasible to be proven by the value-free scientific rules. Meanwhile the integration between Western science and Eastern wisdom primarily from Hindu and Buddhism tend to lead the investigation of consciousness to the second stage, the self-consciousness. This incorporation provides alternatives for mental health treatment and

meaning for some people. Lastly, God-consciousness which we found related to religion not merely spirituality per se. In this case, we illustrate how God-consciousness in Islam requires not only science, philosophy, and spirituality, but also religion.

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