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## AL-GHAZĀLĪ'S THEORY OF *LUBĀB AL-QUR'ĀN* AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CLASSIFICATION OF ISLAMIC SCIENCES: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

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### Abstract

In critically analysing Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī's theory of "Essences of the Qur'ān" (*Lubāb al-Qur'ān*), this article explores, at the outset, a definition of *Lubāb al-Qur'ān*. Secondly, it introduces a brief exposition of the historical background of this theory. Thirdly, we analyse the theoretical structure of this theory, and how its implications illustrate al-Ghazālī's understanding of the Islamic sciences and discourse. This library-based qualitative research aims to analyse al-Ghazālī's theory of *Lubāb al-Qur'ān*. This article also compares al-Ghazālī's views with those of other scholars. Finally, it explores the influence of al-Ghazālī's intellectual makeup on this very theory.

### Introduction

Al-Ghazālī's theory of *Lubāb al-Qur'ān* promotes a particular kind of understanding of the Qur'ānic discourse. As mentioned in the introduction to his treatise, *Jawāhir al-Qur'ān*, this theory constituted an intellectual contribution made when its author was at an advanced age, when he had already composed numerous, well-known works on many of the Islamic intellectual disciplines, such as his *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*. The theory of *Lubāb al-Qur'ān* represents a particular portion of his broader understanding of the Qur'ān. Throughout this very theory, there is a strong emphasis upon a particular method of approaching the Qur'ān. A very clear-cut and complete yet brief theory concerning the aims (*maqāṣid*) of the Qur'ān is given in this book – a theory that is recognized as important and is often quoted by al-Suyūṭī (d. 911 AH/1505 CE), Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728 AH/1328 CE) and some later scholars of the Qur'ān. Based on this theory, al-Ghazālī identifies the major themes of the Qur'ān as well as its higher objectives. He demonstrates how theory of knowledge in Islam is related to this theory. More precisely, he uses his theory as a tool in separating the Islamic sciences into two; namely the sciences of *lubāb* (essences) and the sciences of *ṣadaf* (shell). This theory is used in