

ISLAMIC EPISTEMOLOGICAL PARADIGM: AN ANALYTICAL- CONCEPTUAL STUDY OF *BAYANI, BURHANI, AND IRFANI* AND THEIR RELEVANCE IN MODERN CIVILIZATION

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ABSTRACT

Epistemology is a branch of philosophy that specifically discusses the theory of knowledge. Philosophy is called the mother of science because it explores the nature, origins, and ethical or aesthetic values that form the basis of various scientific disciplines. Western epistemology generally discusses rationalism and empiricism, but has not yet met the needs of Muslims to form a scientific framework for Islamic education in integrating revelation, reason, and spiritual experience as a whole. Therefore, a conceptual study of Islamic epistemology Bayani, Burhani, and Irfani and its relevance to the challenges of modern civilization is very necessary by conducting analytical and conceptual studies. The purpose of this research is to conceptually analyze the paradigm of Islamic epistemology through the Bayani, Burhani, and Irfani approaches and examine its relevance in the development of modern civilization. The method used in this research is a qualitative approach with a library research type that collects and analyzes various literature sources as the main data. The results of the study show that the three epistemologies support each other in a specific role pattern: bayani plays a role in maintaining textual legitimacy, burhani strengthens critical reasoning and scientific rationality, while irfani instills a moral-spiritual dimension, so that the integration of the three becomes a concrete answer to the moral crisis due to technological acceleration and disorientation of generation Z education. In the field of Islamic education, the bayani approach can be used in strengthening the understanding of nash and turats books, burhani is used to encourage critical thinking and scientific reasoning, while irfani can strengthen the moral and spiritual aspects of students. All three, if integrated in the educational curriculum, will produce students who are balanced textually, rationally, and spiritually.

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INTRODUCTION

Knowledge and science play a paramount role in shaping and driving the advancement of human civilization. From an Islamic perspective, the pursuit and development of knowledge constitute an integral component of religious teachings. The Qur'an and Hadith place significant emphasis on the importance of knowledge, encouraging Muslims to continuously reflect upon, investigate, and comprehend various phenomena of life as a manifestation of devotion to Allah (SWT). Consequently, the development of Islamic civilization is inextricably linked to a robust and sustainable intellectual tradition.

In the systematic study of knowledge, the discourse on epistemology holds crucial significance. As a branch of philosophy, epistemology investigates the nature, sources, and methods of acquiring knowledge, alongside the validity and criteria of its truth. Functioning as the mother of all sciences, philosophy endeavors to profoundly examine the origins, structures, and foundational thoughts that underpin various academic disciplines. Thus, epistemology serves as the fundamental basis determining how knowledge is constructed, developed, and scientifically justified.

In the pursuit of truth, philosophy, science, and religion employ distinct methodological characteristics. Philosophy emphasizes the application of reason and critical reflection; science relies on empirical methods and systematic experimentation; whereas religion is rooted in divine revelation as the ultimate foundation of truth. These three domains contribute significantly to the development of human civilization and frequently complement one another in addressing multifaceted life complexities. Science itself is the product of an epistemological process involving continuous observation, reasoning, and verification to generate justifiable knowledge. In tandem with the changing times, humanity continuously strives to advance scientific knowledge to fulfill existential needs and to comprehend the laws governing both the universe and human social dynamics (Syafiqoh et al., 2025).

Within the Islamic philosophical tradition, epistemology exhibits characteristics that are distinctly different from its Western counterpart. While Western epistemology predominantly relies on rationalism and empiricism as the primary sources of knowledge, Islamic epistemology offers a more comprehensive framework through three principal approaches: *bayani*, *burhani*, and *irfani*. *Bayani* posits the revealed text as the primary source of knowledge; *burhani* emphasizes the utilization of reason and logical argumentation; whereas *irfani* is anchored in intuition and spiritual experience (Abdul Aziz, 2025). These three approaches construct a distinctive epistemological edifice in Islam, complementing one another in elucidating the processes of acquiring, developing, and applying knowledge within the lives of Muslims.

The study of *bayani*, *burhani*, and *irfani* epistemologies is crucial because they not only represent the classical Islamic intellectual tradition but also hold relevance in addressing various challenges of modern civilization. This urgency is evident in a number of concrete issues currently confronting the Muslim community: the acceleration of digital technology and artificial intelligence often proceeds without an adequate ethical compass, thereby triggering moral crises in the form of widespread disinformation, social media addiction, and personal data misuse. On the other hand, the realm of Islamic education experiences a directional disorientation when the learning process exclusively emphasizes textual or rational aspects, consequently producing learners who excel cognitively but remain spiritually and morally fragile.

These phenomena underscore that revisiting *bayani*, *burhani*, and *irfani* is not merely a philosophical nostalgia for the classical Islamic intellectual heritage, but rather an urgent necessity to formulate an epistemological framework capable of reconnecting revelation, intellect, and spirituality in navigating the complexities of the contemporary era. Amidst the rapid advancement of science and technology, an understanding of these three epistemological paradigms can serve as a foundation for establishing the integration of science, religion, and humanitarian values. Therefore, this article aims to conceptually analyze the Islamic epistemological paradigm through the *bayani*, *burhani*, and *irfani* approaches and to examine their relevance in the development of modern civilization.

METHOD

This research employs a qualitative methodology, specifically utilizing a library research design to conduct an analytical and conceptual study. Library research involves the systematic gathering, evaluation, and synthesis of data derived from various literary materials, rather than relying on empirical field observations. This approach is highly appropriate for philosophical and epistemological inquiries that require deep textual and conceptual analysis.

The data sources in this study are divided into primary and secondary literature. Primary sources consist of authoritative classical and contemporary texts on Islamic philosophy and epistemology, particularly scholarly works detailing the theoretical foundations of the *bayani*, *burhani*, and *irfani* paradigms (such as the philosophical frameworks proposed by Abed Al-Jabiri, Imam Al-Shafi'i, Al-Kindi, and Al-Ghazali). Secondary sources encompass recent academic journals, books, and scholarly articles that discuss the challenges of modern civilization, Islamic education, and contemporary socio-religious dynamics.

Data collection was conducted through the documentation method, which entails identifying, classifying, and systematically organizing relevant textual information and academic discourses.

Following the data collection phase, the information was analyzed using a descriptive-analytical method combined with content analysis. This analytical process involves three main steps: first, structurally defining and dissecting the characteristics, origins, and methodologies of the *bayani*, *burhani*, and *irfani* paradigms; second, comparing their respective strengths, limitations, and interrelations; and third, synthesizing these paradigms to formulate a holistic epistemological framework. Finally, the study contextualizes this integrated framework to examine its practical relevance and applicative solutions in addressing contemporary modern issues, such as technological acceleration, digital literacy ethics, and the orientation of Generation Z education.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. The *Bayani* Approach within the Islamic Epistemological Paradigm

1. The Concept of *Bayani* Epistemology

Etymologically, the term *bayani* is derived from the Arabic word *bayan*, meaning explanation or elucidation. According to Ibn Manzur, *bayan* signifies *al-fashl wa infishal* (to separate and be separated) and *al-idhhar wa al-dhuhur* (to make clear and become apparent). In this context, *al-fashl* and *al-idhhar* relate to the methodology, whereas *infishal* and *dhuhur* pertain to the vision and method of *Bayani*. Terminologically, *bayan* encompasses two meanings: first, as the principles of discourse interpretation (*qawanin tafsir al-khitabi*), and second, as the prerequisites for producing discourse (*syurut intaj al-khitabi*).

Bayani epistemology is a text-based methodological model of thinking that employs reasoning skills to comprehend the primary reference (*Nass*) and to extract truth from it. These analytical efforts are actualized through *qiyas* (analogical deduction) and *istinbath* (legal extraction or decision-making). As a mode of thought rooted in the *Nass* of the Qur'an, *Bayani* epistemology grants the Qur'anic text absolute authority in determining the direction of truth. The function of the intellect (*'aql*) is restricted to safeguarding the embedded meanings, which are discernible through a careful examination of the relationship between meaning (*makna*) and articulation (*lafaz*). Within *Bayani* epistemology, the intellect serves to restrain or regulate human desires, act as a justificatory instrument, and reinforce the truth derived from textual authority (Ulliyah et al., 2024).

Exegetes (*mufasssirun*) utilize the *Bayani* method (methods of *tafsir* or *ta'wil*) to explore information regarding the Qur'an and Hadith. Fundamentally, *Bayani* epistemology has been systematically applied by: 1) *fuqaha* (jurists); 2) *mutakallimun* (theologians); and 3) *ushuliyyun* (experts in Islamic jurisprudence). Its applications include: a. Comprehending or analyzing texts to seek or acquire the implicit or intended meaning of a statement. It can be posited that this approach is utilized to extract the apparent (*zahir*) meaning from explicit (*zahir*) statements. b. *Istinbath* (the extraction and study) of laws from religious texts (*al-nushush al-diniyyah*, i.e., the Qur'an and Hadith).

Bayani epistemology encompasses disciplines rooted in the Arabic language (namely, *Nahwu* [grammar], *Fiqh* [jurisprudence], *Ushul Fiqh* [principles of jurisprudence], *Kalam* [theology], and *Balaghah* [rhetoric]). Within Islamic epistemology, *Bayani* represents a distinctively Arab mode of thinking that, directly or indirectly, emphasizes textual authority and is justified by linguistic reason explored through deductive reasoning (*istidlal*), utilizing a linguistic (*lughawiyyah*) approach. Through the integration of these disciplines, the knowledge acquired via the *bayani* method becomes highly comprehensive. Al-Jabiri argues that, historically, the *bayani* epistemological pattern was the inaugural epistemological system to emerge in Arab thought.

Historically, the origins of *Bayani* epistemology trace back to the era of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), particularly when he elucidated verses that were difficult for his companions to comprehend. The companions subsequently interpreted the Qur'an based on the Prophet's guidance regarding those texts. Furthermore, the *Tabi'in* (the generation succeeding the companions) compiled the texts of the Prophet and the companions, enriching the interpretations through their intellectual reasoning and *ijtihad* (independent legal reasoning), while strictly maintaining the text as the primary guideline. Following the *Tabi'in*, subsequent generations continued this tradition of interpretation, passing it down through the ages. Therefore, *bayani* epistemology is a branch of knowledge positing that the source of knowledge is revelation (the text) or reasoning directly derived from the text (Hendrizal et al., 2024). *Bayani* epistemology rests on knowledge acquired through the texts and revelations found in the Qur'an and Hadith. Consequently, the *Bayani* approach is inherently tied to textual authority, viewing it as an absolute, immutable truth. This approach is primarily employed in the fields of *Tafsir*, *Fiqh*, and *Ushul Fiqh*, which emphasize authentic interpretation and ultimate truth (Lailatul Zuhriyah & Angellita Salsabila Prasadha, 2025).

2. The Structure of Bayani Epistemology

This epistemology is rooted in the sacred texts of Islam, namely the Qur'an and Hadith, and emphasizes the paramount importance of the Arabic language in comprehending both. Linguistic proficiency serves as the primary prerequisite to ensure that the meanings of the texts can be accurately extracted. Imam Ash-Shafi'i stands as the principal figure who formulated the foundations of *Bayani* epistemology in his seminal work, *Al-Risalah*, which introduced the logic of *qiyas* (analogical deduction) as the primary method for deriving legal rulings from texts. The logic of *qiyas* within *Bayani* employs two approaches: a. When a text establishes a ruling of *halal* (permissible) or *haram* (prohibited), yet a similar, explicitly unmentioned case arises, the ruling is determined through analogy based on the legal similarities found within the text. b. If a case exhibits superficial similarities, the approach is conducted through analogy based on external or apparent characteristics.

In practice, *Bayani* epistemology emphasizes two main steps in acquiring knowledge: a. The structural analysis of the language within the text. b. The examination of the text's semantic content through logic and rational reasoning. This involves the application of the analogical method or *qiyas*, which considers the relationship between the *ashl* (primary source/original case) and the *far'* (secondary/new case), the presence of the *'illat* (effective cause or underlying rationale), and the congruence between the two. This approach is highly significant in the development of *tafsir* (exegesis), *fiqh* (jurisprudence), and *ushul fiqh* (principles of jurisprudence), particularly as a method of *istinbath* (legal extraction) to address contemporary issues.

Furthermore, according to Al-Jahiz, *bayan* refers to the prerequisites for producing discourse rather than merely the rules for interpreting it. Al-Jahiz establishes five prerequisites for *Bayani*, namely: (1) eloquence of speech; (2) the careful selection of letters and articulation (vocabulary); (3) semantic openness, meaning that the intended meaning must be expressible through one of five explanatory forms: articulation, gesture, writing, conviction, and relation (*nisbah*); (4) congruence between meaning and word; and (5) the sentence's structural strength to acknowledge truth, as well as the weaknesses and conceptual errors (Anggun Khafidhotul Ulliyah, 2024).

Philosophically, *Bayani* is a methodological framework of thought grounded in textual authority. Sacred texts are perceived as possessing absolute truth, while the function of the intellect (*'aql*) is merely auxiliary, utilized to comprehend meaning through the relationship between articulation and semantics. *Bayani* reasoning tends to be apologetic and defensively upholds the literal position of the text, rendering it less adept at accommodating the diversity of interpretations within a pluralistic society. Directly, *Bayani* is an endeavor to understand texts literally for immediate application; indirectly, however, texts are viewed as raw knowledge requiring interpretation, while consistently maintaining the text as the primary reference and the intellect as a supportive tool.

Consequently, from a religious perspective, the *Bayani* method places greater emphasis on the exoteric aspect (*Sharia*). Thus, as a conceptual framework within the Islamic intellectual tradition, *Bayani* epistemology serves as a scholarly method for extracting meanings and legal rulings from texts. It is predicated on the Qur'an, Hadith, *ijma'* (scholarly consensus), and *qiyas*, with classical Arabic acting as the primary medium for comprehending these sources. Therefore, this epistemology

is also closely intertwined with human consciousness of reality. Consciousness, in this context, is defined as an intellectual construct that continuously evolves throughout human life, and within Muslim societies, it plays a pivotal role in determining the trajectory of educational and religious thought (Mujlisal, 2025).

3. An Example of the Bayani Approach

An illustrative example of this approach is the establishment of the *'iddah* (waiting period) obligation, specifically three periods of purity (*quru'*), for a divorced woman who is not pregnant. This legal ruling is directly predicated on the divine decree of Allah (SWT) as articulated in the Qur'an, Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 228.

وَالْمُطَلَّقَاتُ يَتَرَبَّصْنَ بِأَنفُسِهِنَّ ثَلَاثَةَ قُرُوءٍ وَلَا يَحِلُّ لَهُنَّ أَنْ يَكْتُمْنَ مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ فِي أَرْحَامِهِنَّ إِنْ كُنَّ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَبُعُولَتُهُنَّ أَحَقُّ بِرَدِّهِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ إِنْ أَرَادُوا إِصْلَاحًا وَلَهُنَّ مِثْلُ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَلِلرِّجَالِ عَلَيْهِنَّ دَرَجَةٌ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ٢٢٨

"Divorced women shall remain in waiting concerning themselves for three *qurū'* (periods of purity or menstruation). It is not lawful for them to conceal what Allah has created in their wombs, if they truly believe in Allah and the Last Day. Their husbands possess a greater right to take them back during this period, provided they desire reconciliation. And women have rights equivalent to their obligations in a just and equitable manner; however, men have a degree [of responsibility] over them. And Allah is Exalted in Might, All-Wise."

The verse explicitly states that the *'iddah* (waiting period) lasts for three *quru'*; however, the term *quru'* itself can be interpreted either as periods of purity or periods of menstruation. Consequently, through the process of *ijtihad* (independent reasoning), the exact meaning of three *quru'* can be determined by examining the accompanying contextual indicators or *qarinah*, a process known as *ijtihad bayani* (explanatory reasoning).

B. The *Burhani* Approach within the Islamic Epistemological Paradigm

1. The Concept of *Burhani* Epistemology

The term *burhani* is derived from the Arabic language, conveying the meaning of purifying or clarifying. According to scholars of Islamic jurisprudence principles (*ulama ushul*), *al-burhan* refers to a decisive proof that separates truth from falsehood and distinguishes right from wrong through clear explanation. Thus, *burhani* epistemology is an epistemological framework which posits that the intellect (*'aql*) is the primary source of knowledge. According to this epistemology, the intellect possesses the inherent capacity to discover knowledge; even in the realm of religion, the intellect is capable of discerning truths, such as distinguishing between good and evil (*tahsin* and *taqbih*).

In the field of philosophy, the equivalent concept is rationalism, wherein the intellect serves as the fundamental basis for the certainty and truth of knowledge, even prior to being supported by empirical facts. A prominent figure in this tradition is René Descartes. Meanwhile, in the science of Qur'anic exegesis (*tafsir*), the term frequently associated with the *burhani* meaning is *tafsir bi al-ra'yi* (reason-based exegesis). Upon examining Qur'anic statements, one encounters numerous verses that command humanity to employ reasoning in contemplating ideas, utilizing terms such as *ta'qilun* (you reason), *tatafakkarun* (you reflect), and *tadabbarun* (you ponder). Hence, the intellect is capable of attaining knowledge and truth as long as it operates within its proper domain.

The *burhani* method is also a rational-argumentative approach grounded in the power of reason, operationalized through logical arguments. This approach designates both textual reality and context as sources of inquiry. The *burhani* approach encompasses the *ta'lili* method, which involves understanding the reality of the text based on rationality, and the *istiishlahi* method, which seeks to approach and comprehend objective reality or context based on the underlying philosophy of the text.

Consequently, the comprehension of socio-religious and socio-Islamic realities becomes significantly more adequate when utilizing sociological (*ijtima'iyyah*), anthropological and cultural (*tsaqafiyyah*), and historical (*tarikhiyyah*) approaches, alongside considerations of the development of science and technology. The sociological approach is utilized in Islamic thought to understand socio-religious realities from the perspective of interactions among community members. Through this method, the social context of religious behavior can be approached more precisely, potentially facilitating the reconstruction of an ideal or excellent society.

According to Al-Jabiri, *burhani* represents the mode of thinking employed by Arab society to acquire knowledge, emerging naturally from human faculties, namely empirical experience and logic. This mode of thought cannot be divorced from the influence of Aristotelian philosophy, which is predicated on the law of cause and effect. The knowledge acquired by Arab society is profoundly influenced by the intellect and daily empirical experiences (Aswandi, Amril M., & Eva Dewi, 2025).

Therefore, *burhani* epistemology is a philosophical branch that studies the nature of knowledge and its acquisition through empirical evidence or experiential proof, serving as a robust foundation for constructing legitimate and valid knowledge. The construction of this knowledge relies heavily on empirical evidence, observation, measurement, and the scientific method. This epistemological framework makes it possible to understand and explain the existing world in an objective and reliable manner.

2. The Origins of the *Burhani* Approach

In the development of Islamic sciences, *burhani* reasoning was first introduced by Al-Kindi in his treatise, *Al-Falsafah al-Ula* (First Philosophy). This work was dedicated to the Caliph Al-Ma'mun (218–227 AH). The philosophical ideas within this treatise were adopted from the thought of the Greek philosopher, Aristotle. According to Al-Kindi, philosophy represents the highest form of human knowledge. He also categorically refuted Muslim thinkers who opposed and vehemently rejected philosophy as a valid path to attaining the truth.

Although Al-Kindi's *Al-Falsafah al-Ula* possessed the characteristic of "rational reasoning" akin to Aristotelian thought, it was unable to significantly shape the dominant intellectual discourse of Islamic thought at that time. According to Al-Jabiri, Al-Kindi's efforts were not primarily aimed at introducing Aristotelian philosophy, but rather at counterattacking the jurists (*fuqaha*) who staunchly disagreed with and vehemently rejected philosophy. In fact, Al-Kindi's endeavor was largely a pragmatic one. Nevertheless, Al-Kindi merits substantial credit for introducing Aristotelian thought to the Muslim community.

3. Characteristics of *Burhani* Epistemology

The characteristics of *Burhani* epistemology are as follows:

- a. It prioritizes the intellect (*'aql*) and rationality in the acquisition of knowledge.
- b. It employs Aristotelian logical methods and philosophical approaches.
- c. Knowledge is acquired through observation, experimentation, and logical demonstration.
- d. It posits that religion and science can coexist harmoniously through rationalization.
- e. It plays a significant role in the development of Islamic science and philosophy (Aswandi, Amril M., & Eva Dewi, 2025).

C. The *Irfani* Approach within the Islamic Epistemological Paradigm

1. The Concept of *Irfani* Epistemology

Etymologically, the term *irfani* derives from the root word *'arafa*, which shares a similar meaning with knowledge (*ma'rifah*). In the Arabic language, the term *al-irfan* is distinct from *al-'ilm*. *Al-'ilm* refers to the acquisition of a knowledge object through transmission (*naql*) or rationality (*'aql*). In contrast, the term *irfan* or *ma'rifah* denotes a direct relationship between experience or knowledge and the object of knowledge (Wira Hadi Kusuma, 2018). The *irfani* method is a paradigm of acquiring knowledge through direct spiritual experience. This method utilizes direct experience and witnessing to unveil to humanity the knowledge attained by elucidating the Divine reality. Philosophically, the *irfani* approach is more commonly associated with intuition.

According to several philosophers, intuition can be categorized into three types. The first is sensory-based, such as perceiving the color or scent of an object. The second is grounded in reason and axioms, exemplified by logical laws asserting that A equals A, A does not equal B, or that the number 10 is greater than 9. The third involves innovative ideas that emerge spontaneously and unexpectedly. *Irfani* knowledge is not text-based like *bayani*, but is founded on *kasyf*—the unveiling of the secrets of reality by God. Therefore, *irfani* knowledge is acquired not through textual analysis, but through spiritual endeavor. Through purity of heart, it is hoped that God will bestow knowledge directly upon the seeker, which then enters the mind, is conceptualized, and is subsequently articulated to others in a logical manner.



Consequently, in the *irfani* approach, the acquisition of knowledge is achieved through three progressive stages: preparation, reception, and expression (either orally or in writing) (Aswandi, Amril M., & Eva Dewi, 2025).

- a. The Preparation Stage. To be receptive to the outpouring of divine knowledge (*kasyf*), an individual must traverse the progressive stages of spiritual life. There are at least seven stages (*maqamat*) that must be ascended, from the foundational level to the peak: (1) *Taubah* (repentance); (2) *Wara'* (abstinence), distancing oneself from doubtful matters (*syubhat*); (3) *Zuhud* (asceticism), refraining from greed and not prioritizing worldly life; (4) *Faqir* (spiritual poverty), emptying the mind of all worldly thoughts and future expectations, desiring nothing but Allah (SWT); (5) *Sabar* (patience), gracefully and willingly accepting all afflictions; (6) *Tawakkal* (reliance), trusting entirely in His divine decrees; and (7) *Ridha* (contentment), the elimination of all displeasure from the heart, leaving only joy and spiritual delight.
- b. The Reception Stage. Upon reaching a certain level in Sufism, a seeker will receive a direct, illuminative outpouring of knowledge from God. At this stage, the individual attains a state of absolute self-awareness reality (*kasyf*), enabling them through that consciousness to perceive their own reality (*musyahadah*) as the known object. However, the reality of the consciousness and the object of consciousness are not distinct entities but share the exact same existence. Thus, the known object is none other than the knowing consciousness itself, and vice versa (*ittihad*). In the studies of Mehdi Yazdi, this phenomenon is referred to as '*ilm huduri* (knowledge by presence) or self-object knowledge.
- c. The Expression Stage. In this stage, the mystical experience is interpreted and articulated to others through spoken or written words. However, because *irfani* knowledge does not belong to the standard realm of conception and representation, but is instead intrinsically related to the unity of the self in God, which defies ordinary communication, not all of these experiences can be expressed. It can be argued that although *irfani* knowledge is subjective in nature, anyone can experience its truth. This implies that every individual can undertake this path according to their own level and capacity; therefore, the validity of its truth is intersubjective, and the role of the intellect is participative.

In philosophical studies, *irfani* is commonly understood as intuition. Through intuition, human beings spontaneously acquire knowledge without undergoing a rational reasoning process. This intuition possesses distinctive characteristics, including: *dhawqi* (taste/feeling), which refers to direct experiential realization; '*ilm huduri* (knowledge by presence), wherein the object is intimately present within the knowing subject; and existential knowing, which entails intimate comprehension without categorical conceptualization. According to Henri Bergson, intuition represents a highly personal evolution of an individual's thought. Furthermore, Allah elucidates in Surah Al-'Alaq, verses 1–5, the first revelation bestowed upon the Prophet Muhammad, that there are two modes of acquiring knowledge. The first is through the "pen," denoting written texts that humans can read. The second is through direct divine instruction without any intermediary medium. This second mode is termed '*ilm ladunni* (divinely inspired knowledge), as experienced by the Prophet Khidr (AS). The Qur'an states: "*And they found a servant from among Our servants to whom We had given mercy from Us and had taught him from Us a [certain] knowledge*" (QS. Al-Kahfi: 65) (Aswandi, Amril M., & Eva Dewi, 2025).

2. Characteristics of *Irfani* Epistemology

Intuitive knowledge can be predicated on sensory experiences, such as perceiving the color or scent of an object. It can also be acquired through reason and possess an axiomatic nature, such as the logical premise that "A equals A." Furthermore, it can emerge spontaneously without prior cognitive categorization, as exemplified by Newton's discovery of the law of gravity upon observing an apple fall near its source. Additionally, it can manifest through dreams, as experienced by the Prophets Ibrahim (AS) and Yusuf (AS). The core concepts of *Irfani* epistemology include:

- a. Intuition and Inner Unveiling (*Kasyf*): Knowledge is acquired through profound spiritual experience, rather than mere logical analysis or textual study.
- b. Purification of the Soul (*Tazkiyat al-Nafs*): A seeker of knowledge must undergo a process of spiritual purification to be receptive to ultimate truth.
- c. Direct Communion with God: This concept emphasizes personal spiritual illumination attained through contemplation and the remembrance of God (*dhikr*).

Furthermore, the defining characteristics of *Irfani* epistemology are as follows:

- a. It is fundamentally grounded in spiritual experience and intuition.

- b. It prioritizes the purification of the heart and employs an esoteric approach in the pursuit of knowledge.
- c. It does not rely solely on textual authority or rationality, but rather emphasizes direct experiential knowledge of the Divine. It is the dominant paradigm within the traditions of Sufism (*tasawuf*) and Islamic theosophy (*'ilm al-hikmah*).
- d. Knowledge is attained through inner witnessing (*kasyf*) and spiritual inspiration (Aswandi, Amril M., & Eva Dewi, 2025).

The implication of *irfani* knowledge within Islamic thought lies in its capacity to approach religions at their substantive level and through their spiritual essence. It cultivates an inclusive paradigm with a profound awareness that while the religious experiences of others may differ in their external expressions and accidental forms (*accidents*), they inherently share a fundamentally similar substance and essence (Mochammad Hasyim, 2018).

3. Examples of Qur'anic Verses concerning Tazkiyah al-Nafs and the Irfani Approach

Within *Irfani* studies, the concept of *tazkiyah al-nafs* (purification of the soul) is fundamentally anchored in two primary Qur'anic passages, namely Surah Ash-Shams (91:7–10) and Surah Al-A'la (87:14–15). These verses substantiate the critical importance of the spiritual purification process and the cultivation of a direct relationship with Allah through *dhikr* (remembrance) and *salah* (ritual prayer) as the essential pathways to achieving ultimate felicity and tranquility of the soul (Irma Syafiqoh et al., 2025):

- a. Surah Ash-Shams (91:7–10):

نَفْسٍ وَمَا سَوَّاهَا ۖ فَأَلْهَمَهَا فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا ۚ قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَن زَكَّاهَا ۙ وَقَدْ خَابَ مَن دَسَّاهَا ۚ ١٠

"And [by] the soul and He who proportioned it, And inspired it [with discernment of] its wickedness and its righteousness, He has succeeded who purifies it, And he has failed who instills it [with corruption]."

- b. Surah Al-A'la (87:14–15):

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَن تَزَكَّىٰ ۙ وَذَكَرَ اسْمَ رَبِّهِ فَصَلَّىٰ ۚ ١٥

"He has certainly succeeded who purifies himself (*tazakka*), And mentions the name of his Lord and prays."

D. Differences Among the Bayani, Burhani, and Irfani Epistemologies

Table 1. Differences Among the *Bayani*, *Burhani*, and *Irfani* Epistemologies

Aspect	Bayani Epistemology	Burhani Epistemology	Irfani Epistemology
Source of Knowledge	Revealed texts (the Qur'an and Hadith)	Intellect (<i>'aql</i>) and rationality	Intuition and spiritual experience
Methodology	Deductive, textual interpretation	Logic, observation, experimentation	Purification of the soul (<i>tazkiyat al-nafs</i>), inner experience
Approach	Scholarly authority (<i>ulama</i>) and classical Islamic tradition	Islamic philosophy and science	Sufism (<i>tasawuf</i>) and spiritual theosophy (<i>hikmah</i>)
Dominant Disciplines	Jurisprudence (<i>fiqh</i>), exegesis (<i>tafsir</i>), and theology (<i>'ilm al-kalam</i>)	Islamic philosophy and science	Sufism, mysticism, and metaphysics
Strengths	Preserves the authenticity of Islamic teachings	Broadens Islamic intellectual horizons	Bridges knowledge with the spiritual dimension
Limitations	Lacks flexibility in accommodating contemporary changes	May conflict with textual approaches	Difficult to verify objectively



Key Figures	<i>Al-Shafi'i, Al-Jahiz, Ibn Wahb al-Katib</i>	<i>Al-Kindi, Al-Farabi, Ibn Bajjah, Al-Ghazali</i>	<i>Al-Ghazali, Ibn 'Arabi, and Sufis such as Ibn 'Ajiba</i>
Examples of Implementation	Principles of jurisprudence (<i>ushul fiqh</i>), theology (<i>'ilm al-kalam</i>), classical exegesis (<i>tafsir</i>)	Islamic philosophy, traditional logic (<i>'ilm al-mantiq</i>)	Esoteric exegesis (<i>tafsir isyari</i>), Sufism (<i>tasawuf</i>)

Source: (Aswandi, Amril M., & Eva Dewi, 2025). See also (Muhammad Adrika Wahyu & Amril M., 2025).

Islamic epistemology is fundamentally constituted by three primary paradigms: *bayani*, *burhani*, and *irfani*. *Bayani* epistemology is oriented toward the authority of revealed texts (the Qur'an and Hadith); *burhani* epistemology emphasizes rationality and logical demonstration; whereas *irfani* epistemology is predicated upon intuition and direct spiritual experience. Each paradigm possesses its distinct characteristics, strengths, and limitations; nevertheless, they are mutually complementary in constructing a comprehensive Islamic intellectual tradition. The integration of these three paradigms facilitates the realization of a harmonious balance among revelation, intellect, and spiritual experience, thereby establishing a robust foundation to navigate the multifaceted challenges of modern civilization (Fatihatus Sya'adah, 2025).

E. The Relevance of the Three Paradigms in the Modern World

The three Islamic epistemological approaches, *bayani*, *burhani*, and *irfani*, possess immense potential for implementation across various sectors of Muslim life. In the field of Islamic education, the *bayani* approach can be utilized to strengthen the comprehension of religious texts (*Nass*) and classical literature (*turath*); the *burhani* approach is employed to foster critical thinking and scientific reasoning; while the *irfani* approach can fortify the moral and spiritual aspects of students. The integration of all three within the educational curriculum will produce learners who are balanced textually, rationally, and spiritually.

In the issuance of *fatwa* (legal opinions) and Islamic law, the *bayani* approach serves as the foundation for seeking textual evidence (*dalil*); the *burhani* approach is necessary to align rulings with social realities and the needs of the *ummah* (community); and the *irfani* approach provides a profound sense of justice and wisdom from an inner, spiritual perspective. The synergy of these three approaches renders legal products more responsive, humane, and transformative. Amidst the socio-religious dynamics of Indonesia, the implementation of this integrative method is also capable of preventing sectoral fanaticism. An overly textual *bayani* approach must be balanced by the *burhani* and *irfani* approaches, ensuring that religious interpretation does not become rigid or disregard contextual and spiritual values.

In the realm of *da'wah* (Islamic propagation), these three approaches can engender a presentation of Islam that is amicable, logically argumentative, and capable of touching the hearts of the *ummah*. Thus, the development of Islamic epistemological approaches should not be confined merely to the academic level or the discourse of the philosophy of science; rather, it must descend into the practical spaces of real life to present an Islam that is comprehensive and relevant across all ages (Rahmi Utami, 2025).

The integration of the *bayani*, *burhani*, and *irfani* epistemologies holds strategic implications for the development of contemporary Islamic intellectualism:

1. In the field of Islamic education, this integration promotes a learning model that not only emphasizes rote memorization of texts and formal logic but also prioritizes character building, spiritual awareness, and academic ethics.
2. In the field of Islamic law, epistemological integration facilitates *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) that remains rooted in revelation (*bayani*), is rational and contextual (*burhani*), and is oriented toward substantive justice and the inner well-being (*maslahah*) of the community (*irfani*). This is crucial for responding to modern social problems without forfeiting normative legitimacy.
3. In the field of Qur'anic exegesis (*tafsir*), epistemological integration opens the space for a multidimensional interpretation: the text is comprehended linguistically and normatively, analyzed from a rational-historical perspective, and internalized spiritually. Consequently, the Qur'an is not solely positioned as a legal or theological document, but also as a source of intellectual and moral transformation.

Overall, the integration of the *bayani*, *burhani*, and *irfani* epistemologies is an urgent necessity in constructing an Islamic intellectual framework that is holistic, adaptive, and relevant to the challenges of modernity, without severing its transcendental roots and the foundational values of *Tawhid* (Islamic monotheism) (Sarmin & Eva Dewi, 2026).

Within Islamic philosophical thought, *bayani* epistemology generates manifold impacts. It plays a pivotal role in preserving and developing the rich and continuously evolving tradition of Islamic thought. This is primarily because, regarding theological assertiveness, *bayani* provides a robust foundation for theological reasoning and the interpretation of sacred texts, namely the Qur'an and Hadith. This approach establishes an essential groundwork for the Islamic legal system. Conversely, this method prioritizes literal text interpretation, which can lead to more conservative modes of thought. However, this conservatism serves to preserve the Islamic intellectual tradition that has developed over centuries.

Secondly, *irfani* epistemology encompasses spiritual aspects and creativity. The *irfani* approach integrates the dimension of mysticism into Islamic philosophical thought, placing a strong emphasis on subjective spiritual experiences and the endeavor to achieve an intimate communion with God. This allows for spiritual creativity and exploration, thereby enhancing the comprehension of human existence and its relationship with the universe.

Lastly, *burhani* epistemology is intimately connected to rational approaches and their relationship with Western science. This method affirms the utilization of reason in the pursuit of knowledge, yielding an Islamic philosophical understanding of rationality. It provides the framework for critical reasoning and more profound analysis. Furthermore, *burhani* facilitates a broader intellectual exchange between Islamic theories and Western sciences, particularly regarding rational thought. This significant cross-cultural dialogue enables a mutually enriching exchange of ideas between the Islamic world and Western academia. Therefore, the implications of these epistemologies demonstrate the complexity and richness of Islamic philosophical thought that has evolved throughout history.

Fundamentally, epistemology within Islamic education is grounded in the harmonious integration of revelation, intellect, and human experience. In the contemporary era, the learning processes of Generation Z are profoundly influenced by the velocity of technological advancement, the ceaseless flow of information, and a culture of multitasking. This generation is characterized by its visual orientation, susceptibility to boredom, and critical thinking skills, yet it also suffers from information overload and identity crises. A profound understanding of Islamic epistemology provides the necessary framework to ensure that the pursuit of knowledge consistently aligns with revealed values while remaining highly relevant to the demands of the modern age (Nafila Mubaroka et al., 2025).

The following elucidates the practical relevance of the *bayani*, *burhani*, and *irfani* Islamic epistemologies:

1. Bayani (Tahfiz and Exegesis Learning)

When students memorize the Qur'an and are subsequently guided to comprehend the meaning of the verses through exegetical principles, such as *asbab al-nuzul* (occasions of revelation) and *munasabah* (correlation between verses), they are undergoing a *bayani* process: knowledge is extracted directly from textual authority. The integration of *tahfiz* (memorization) activities with an understanding of *asbab al-nuzul* has proven effective in helping learners reconnect revelation with their surrounding social realities. Consequently, memorization does not stagnate merely at the level of articulation (*lafaz*), but rather evolves into a contextual understanding of the verses' substance (Nur Annisa, Affifah, & Neni, 2025). A concrete example of this pattern can be observed in the discussion of verses concerning the ethics of *mu'amalah* (social transactions), which are taught strictly according to the *Nass* before being further developed through the reasoning of scholars.

2. Burhani (Contextual Fiqh and Social Research)

When teachers prompt students to inquire, "Why is this ruling established in such a way?" and encourage them to investigate the underlying social context, *burhani* reasoning is actively at work. A tangible example of this paradigm is evident in contemporary *ushul fiqh* studies concerning digital transactions, such as cryptocurrency. In this context, legal rulings are determined through the analysis of empirical realities, such as elements of *gharar* (uncertainty/deception), *maysir* (speculation/gambling), and market volatility, rather than merely referencing pre-established orthodox rulings (Rachmaditya, 2023). This process of *istinbath* demonstrates how the *burhani* approach aligns legal products with evolving social realities and the continuous needs of the *ummah*.

3. Irfani (Character Building and Spirituality)

When the instruction of *akhlaq* (morality) does not culminate in mere theory but is operationalized through the habitual practice of *dhikr* (remembrance of God), *muhasabah* (self-reflection), and *tazkiyat al-nafs* (purification of the soul), students directly experience the *irfani* dimension: knowledge permeates into inner consciousness, transcending mere cognitive acquisition. The integration of *tazkiyat al-nafs* into character education demonstrates that the spiritual dimension can be positioned as a structural component of the educational process, rather than acting merely as a supplementary extracurricular activity (Nasution, 2021). Such habitual practices cultivate emotional stability and moral resilience in learners as they navigate the complexities of the modern era.

4. An Example of Triadic Integration

Addressing Hoaxes on Social Media: All three approaches can be seamlessly synthesized within a single learning topic, such as "addressing hoaxes on social media." From the *bayani* dimension, students are encouraged to seek scriptural evidence regarding the commandment of *tabayyun* (verification) prior to disseminating information, as articulated in Surah Al-Hujurat (49:6). From the *burhani* dimension, students are guided to trace facts, verify sources, and understand the mechanisms of hoax proliferation within the digital sphere. From the *irfani* dimension, students engage in reflective moral consciousness, recognizing that spreading hoaxes constitutes a form of *zulm* (injustice/oppression) that deleteriously affects the heart and social relationships. Studies on *tabayyun* as a principle of digital literacy ethics affirm that this value is highly relevant in the digital era to foster a healthier, more critical, and responsible social media environment (Putra & Ayyaisy, 2025). Through this pedagogical model, learners not only acquire cognitive knowledge but also think critically and rationally, while simultaneously experiencing the profound spiritual significance of a singular issue.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the Islamic epistemological paradigms of *bayani*, *burhani*, and *irfani* constitute an interdependent and mutually supporting epistemological unity. *Bayani* preserves the legitimacy and authenticity of teachings through the authority of revealed texts; *burhani* introduces critical reasoning and rational-empirical validity; whereas *irfani* provides profound meaning and moral-spiritual orientation. The absence of any one of these elements yields an imbalanced cognitive framework: textual reliance devoid of critical reasoning risks becoming rigid and anachronistic; rationality unrooted in revelation is susceptible to detachment from its foundational values; while spiritual internalization lacking rational argumentation and textual grounding is difficult to justify intersubjectively. Therefore, the objective of this study, to conceptually analyze the Islamic epistemological paradigms and examine their relevance to modern civilization, has been fulfilled through the finding that the integration of all three, rather than the prominence of any single one, is an absolute prerequisite for constructing a holistic Islamic intellectual framework.

Philosophically, this synthesis asserts that Islamic epistemology offers an alternative to the rationalism-empiricism dichotomy that heavily dominates Western epistemology, by incorporating the dimensions of revelation and spiritual experience as equally positioned sources of knowledge, rather than mere normative supplements. Practically, the integration of *bayani*, *burhani*, and *irfani* yields concrete implications in three primary domains. First, in Islamic education, it serves as a framework to address the disorientation of Generation Z, who excel cognitively yet remain spiritually fragile, through a pedagogical model that unifies textual fortification, critical reasoning, and character building. Second, in Islamic law, it acts as a foundation for contextual *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) that remains rooted in revelation, thereby enabling responses to contemporary issues without forfeiting normative legitimacy, while simultaneously preventing sectoral fanaticism. Third, in Qur'anic exegesis (*tafsir*), it functions as a multidimensional reading model that synthesizes linguistic analysis, rational-historical argumentation, and spiritual internalization of the sacred text.

This study remains conceptual and is based on library research; thus, it has not yet explored how the integration of these three paradigms is implemented and tested in actual practice. Therefore, future research is recommended to: (1) conduct field studies or case studies in Islamic educational institutions, *fatwa* councils, or religious communities that explicitly apply this integrative model, in order to empirically test its effectiveness; (2) develop operational instruments or indicators to

measure the extent to which a product of thought, policy, or curriculum genuinely reflects the *bayani-burhani-irfani* balance, rather than merely stating it rhetorically; and (3) broaden the scope of study to encompass more specific and pressing issues of modern civilization, such as the ethics of artificial intelligence, bioethics, or the environmental crisis, to demonstrate the exploratory capacity of integrative Islamic epistemology in responding to unprecedented challenges unfamiliar to classical generations of scholars (*ulama*).

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