

The Philosophical Approaches of Bayani, Burhani, and Irfani: A Synergistic Framework for Islamic Knowledge Development

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ABSTRACT

The bayani, burhani, and irfani approaches are three main epistemological styles in the Islamic intellectual tradition that shape the way Muslims understand truth and reality. These three approaches developed from different sources, methods, and orientations of knowledge, but complement each other in building a comprehensive Islamic scientific structure. This article aims to philosophically examine the characteristics, sources of knowledge, methods, and relevance of the bayani, burhani, and irfani approaches in the context of the development of contemporary Islamic science. The research method used is a literature study with a descriptive-analytical approach to relevant classical and contemporary works. The results of the study show that the bayani approach has the strength to maintain the authority of the text and the continuity of Islamic teachings, but tends to be normative and textual if not contextualized. The burhani approach plays an important role in developing rationality, logic, and empirical science, but has the potential to neglect the dimensions of values and spirituality. Meanwhile, the irfani approach provides moral and spiritual depth through inner experience, although it is subjective and difficult to verify scientifically. Therefore, this study emphasizes that the integration of these three epistemological approaches is an urgent need in facing the complexity of modern issues, especially in the development of holistic, contextual, and balanced Islamic science and education.

Keywords: Bayani, Burhani, Irfani, Islamic Epistemology

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INTRODUCTION

Epistemology is a branch of philosophy that discusses the sources, methods, and validity of knowledge. In the Islamic tradition, epistemological issues are not only related to rational aspects, but also include the dimensions of revelation and spirituality. Islamic intellectual history records a variety of reasoning styles that developed in line with the social, political, and cultural dynamics of the Muslim community. Starting from his concern about the modern Arab world's inability to keep up with the times, Muhammad Abid al-Jabiri sought solutions to the stagnation in the Islamic world through *Bunyah al-'Aql al-'Arabi*. In short, al-Jabiri attempted to formulate a theoretical framework for three issues facing the Muslim community.

First, the Sufi tendency to reduce everything to the “mystical,” detached from reality. Second, the philosophical tendency to reduce everything to reason. Third, the legal tendency to reduce everything to conformity with the text (Khirallah, 2020). According to contemporary Muslim thinkers such as Muhammad Abid al-Jabiri, these three approaches form the structure of Islamic reasoning, which can be broadly categorized into the main epistemological approaches of bayani, burhani, and irfani (Syarif, 2022). These three approaches form the framework for Muslims' understanding of religion, science, and social reality. However, in practice, these three approaches are often understood partially and even contradicted one another.

In fact, the challenges of globalization, modernization, and the complexity of contemporary life issues require an integrative scientific paradigm. Therefore, philosophical studies of the bayani, burhani, and irfani approaches are important to find common ground and relevance in the development of Islamic science today. The three approaches above represent different ways of thinking in understanding reality, truth, and sources of knowledge. Understanding these three philosophical approaches is important because they form the basis for the development of Islamic sciences, whether normative, rational, or spiritual in nature (Wahid, 2024). Therefore, studies on bayani, burhani, and irfan are relevant to enrich epistemological insights in Islam. In the world of Islamic education, the integration of these three epistemologies is very important to produce students who have intellectual, emotional, and spiritual intelligence. Therefore, this study aims to examine the concepts of bayani, burhani, and irfani epistemology in Islam and their implications in the development of Islamic science and education (Aswandi, Amril, & Dewi, 2025).

METHOD

This research falls under the category of qualitative research, which is research that focuses on *tertius* literacy and produces conclusions based on various readings that have been collected and analyzed. In this research, the data collection method used is literature study with a descriptive-analytical approach, which is a series of activities related to the method of collecting library data (Lindgren, Lundman, & Graneheim, 2020). Literature research is research conducted by reading literature and collecting data from available facilities such as libraries, books, and articles. The results of the collected data are analyzed as in qualitative research in

general. There are two types of sources used: primary and secondary. Primary sources are data obtained directly from the research subjects or from firsthand sources. Secondary sources are data obtained from other parties or secondhand sources (Abdurrahman, 2024).

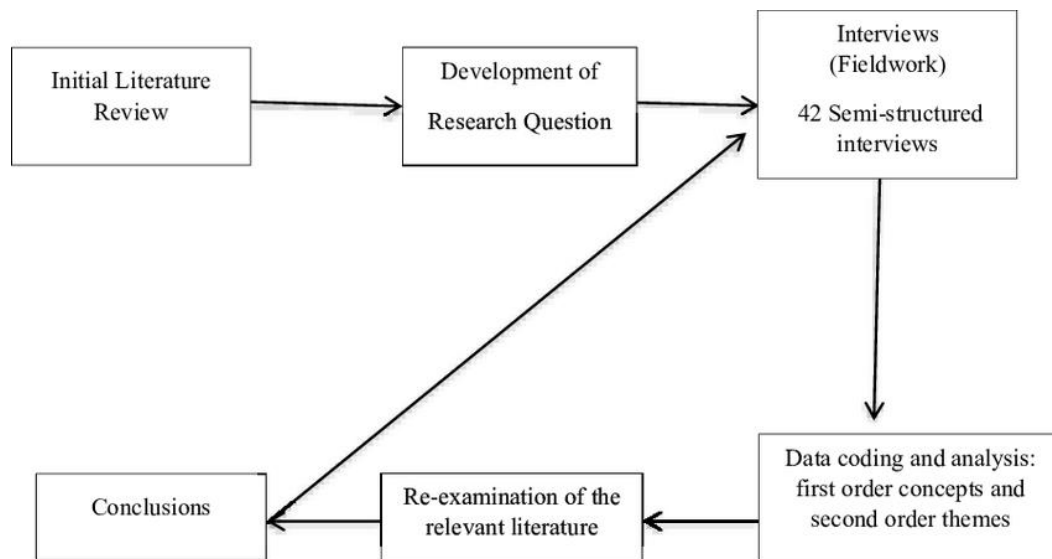


Figure 1. Qualitative Analysis Flow Chart

The primary data source in this study is the scientific work of Mochamad Hasyem, which reviews Islamic epistemology (Bayani, Burhani, Irfani), Al-Murabbi; Journal of Islamic Education. In addition, the works referred to are directly related to the material discussed in this paper. Meanwhile, secondary sources will be taken from other written works, such as journals, dissertations, theses, articles, and others that are reliable and supportive of this research. Therefore, the author analyzes a number of relevant book/manuscript references and articles and draws more specific conclusions in relation to the study described by the author. The data is analyzed by classifying concepts, comparing the characteristics of each approach, and drawing conclusions systematically (Hasyem, 2018). The data analysis technique used is basic inductive. First, data reduction by simplifying the data through summarizing and identifying important points in the primary units. Second, grouping similar data based on themes or concepts that emerge in the secondary units. Third, forming more abstract concepts from the data grouping to answer the research questions. The analysis process involves reading, organizing, integrating, and forming categories, concepts, and themes with careful comparison of the similarities and differences between data (Kyng"as, 2020).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

The results of this study indicate that epistemology in the Islamic intellectual tradition is constructed through three main approaches, namely bayani, burhani, and irfani, each of which has different characteristics in terms of sources of knowledge, methods of reasoning, and mechanisms for validating truth.

Bayani epistemology places texts as the main source of knowledge, which is understood through linguistic analysis and normative interpretation. Meanwhile, burhani epistemology emphasizes rationality, logic, and empirical evidence as the basis for obtaining scientific truth. On the other hand, irfani epistemology views spiritual experience, intuition, and inner depth as sources of knowledge capable of reaching transcendent dimensions that cannot be fully explained through text or reason. In addition to showing the characteristics of each approach, the results of this study also show that the three epistemologies have a complementary relationship in building a more comprehensive Islamic knowledge system, in which texts, rationality, and spiritual experience play an integrative role in the process of knowledge formation.

The Concept of Bayani Epistemology

Bayani epistemology is an approach to knowledge that places texts as the primary source of truth. Within this framework, authoritative texts such as the Qur'an and hadith become the basis for determining truth and scientific understanding. Language functions as the primary instrument for expressing the meaning contained in texts, so that the process of understanding is highly dependent on linguistic interpretation skills. The bayani approach stems from the Islamic scientific tradition that emphasizes the study of texts through systematic interpretation methods. In this context, reason plays a role in explaining, interpreting, and developing understanding of the text, but does not serve to assess or correct the authority of the text itself. Thus, the text is positioned as a normative source of truth that has the highest authority. In the development of Islamic thought, the concept of bayani connects the basic principles of knowledge with its branches of application. This relationship is reflected in the process of deriving laws and understanding the meaning of texts through various methods of reasoning, such as analogy and comparative reasoning. This approach also emphasizes the continuity of intellectual tradition and maintains the accuracy of the meaning contained in religious texts.

Classification of Bayan in the Discourse of the Qur'an

The concept of bayan in the interpretation of the Qur'an can be classified into several forms as shown in the following table.

Table 1. The concept of bayan in the interpretation of the Qur'an

Type of Bayan	Description
Bayan explained directly by the Qur'an	Explanations that are explicitly stated in the Qur'an and therefore do not require additional interpretation or clarification.
Bayan clarified by the Sunnah for general Qur'anic statements	Qur'anic verses whose meanings are general (mujmal) and are further clarified in detail through the Sunnah of the Prophet.
Bayan in which the Sunnah interprets the Qur'an	The Sunnah functions as an interpretative explanation that elaborates the general meanings found in Qur'anic verses.

Type of Bayan	Description
Independent Bayan of the Sunnah	Statements in which the Sunnah provides guidance independently and can serve as an authoritative source without requiring further explanation from other texts.
Bayan through Ijtihad	Explanations derived from analogical reasoning (qiyas) based on clear principles found in the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

This classification shows that the process of understanding religious texts does not only depend on the text of the Qur'an directly, but also involves the Sunnah and scientific reasoning. Thus, bayani epistemology provides a methodological framework for understanding religious texts through a combination of textual authority and human intellectual activity. In the context of Islamic education, the bayani approach plays an important role in exploring the meaning of religious texts, which can then be developed and contextualized in accordance with social realities. This process is carried out through interpretation activities aimed at finding a deeper meaning from the text.

In addition, bayani epistemology emphasizes the relationship between the origin (al-ashl) and the branch (al-far'), as well as between the form of language and its meaning. This approach makes the text the main foundation in determining the direction of truth, while reason acts as a tool to maintain and explain the meaning contained within it.

The Concept of Burhani Epistemology

Burhani epistemology is an approach to knowledge that emphasizes the use of reason, logic, and rational proof. In this approach, truth is obtained through a systematic, coherent, and rationally testable process of reasoning. The burhani method of thinking relies on rational arguments constructed through observation, deduction, and empirical analysis. This approach makes logic the main instrument in constructing knowledge, so that a conclusion is considered true if it can be proven through a consistent reasoning process.

The main framework in burhani epistemology is the use of syllogisms or deductive reasoning. Through this method, knowledge is obtained by drawing conclusions from premises that have been rationally accepted. Thus, the process of knowledge in the burhani approach is highly dependent on logical argumentation structures. The burhani approach has made important contributions to the development of science, philosophy, and science. Reason is not only used to understand empirical reality, but also to explain broader phenomena, including the relationship between reality and religious teachings.

Within this framework, the law of causality becomes an important principle in understanding the relationship between cause and effect. Knowledge is considered incomplete if it does not understand the causal relationship between a phenomenon and its cause. Therefore, the burhani approach places rationality as the main foundation in the development of science.

The Concept of Irfani Epistemology

Irfani epistemology is an approach to knowledge that emphasizes intuition, inner experience, and spiritual awareness as the main sources of

knowledge. In this approach, knowledge is obtained through a process of deep spiritual experience and existential closeness to God. Irfani knowledge is not only obtained through intellectual activity or empirical observation, but through inner experience gained through a process of purification of the soul and spiritual practice. This process involves various stages of spiritual experience that lead individuals to a deeper understanding of reality.

The irfani approach places direct experience as the primary means of understanding transcendent truths. The knowledge produced is personal and profound because it is obtained through individual spiritual experience. In the tradition of Islamic thought, irfani epistemology developed in the traditions of Sufism and illuminationist philosophy. This approach emphasizes that not all truths can be reached by reason or language, because there are dimensions of reality that can only be understood through spiritual experience.

In the context of Islamic education, the irfani approach plays an important role in shaping the moral and spiritual dimensions of students. This approach helps individuals understand spiritual and ethical values that cannot always be explained through logic or textual analysis alone.

Integration of the Bayani, Burhani, and Irfani Approaches

These three epistemological approaches form a complementary system of knowledge. The bayani approach provides a normative basis through textual authority, the burhani approach provides a rational and analytical framework, while the irfani approach brings a spiritual and moral dimension to the process of seeking knowledge. The integration of these three approaches enables the formation of a comprehensive Islamic scientific paradigm. In this paradigm, knowledge is not only understood through texts or reason alone, but also through spiritual awareness that gives depth of meaning to reality. This integrative approach makes an important contribution to the development of Islamic science that is able to respond to the challenges of modernity without losing its fundamental values.

DISCUSSION

Epistemology bayani in the Islamic intellectual tradition departs from the basic assumption that authoritative texts are the main source of truth. Within this framework, the Qur'an and hadith are positioned as the normative foundation that serves as the main reference in determining the validity of knowledge. Language becomes the primary medium for expressing and understanding the messages contained in these texts. Therefore, the process of interpreting texts is highly dependent on linguistic analysis, semantic structure, and linguistic rules that have developed within the Islamic scientific tradition (Muh. Fadel As'ad, Ahmad Musyahid, & Lomba Sultan, 2025). This approach places the text at the center of knowledge so that intellectual activity is directed toward systematically understanding the meaning contained within it.

In the historical development of Islamic thought, the bayani system evolved through the integration of the fiqh reasoning method formulated by Imam Shafi'i and the rhetorical tradition developed in the works of Al-Jahiz. This integration was later reinforced by the fiqh and kalam traditions of thought, which

placed textual argumentation as the main foundation in the formation of law and religious understanding (Al-Hawawsheh, Meqdad, Abu-Rahme, & Al-Shamali, 2022). This framework enables the formation of a relatively stable and structured knowledge system because it is based on the authority of texts that are considered to have strong religious legitimacy.

However, bayani epistemology also faces a number of limitations in the context of contemporary Islamic scientific development. An approach that places too much emphasis on textual authority has the potential to produce a tendency toward rigid textualism, especially when dealing with complex and ever-changing social realities. Amin Abdullah asserts that the limitations of the bayani approach become apparent when textual interpretation must interact with diverse social realities, including cultural differences, societies, and other religious traditions (Abdullah, 2024). This condition shows that the bayani approach requires dialogue with other epistemological approaches in order to be able to respond to modern scientific challenges in a more adaptive manner.

Within its epistemological framework, bayani places reason in a subordinate position to the text. Reason functions as an instrument for explaining, interpreting, and formulating laws from textual sources, but it does not have the authority to assess or correct the truth that has been established by revelation (Mukti, 2025). The consequence of this position is the emergence of a normative and relatively stable knowledge structure. The advantage of this approach lies in its ability to maintain the continuity of Islamic teachings and provide legal certainty in various aspects of Muslim life. However, at the same time, this approach also has limitations when faced with new issues that are not explicitly regulated in the text, which can lead to a tendency toward rigidity in interpretation (Ulliyah & others, 2024).

Unlike bayani epistemology, which focuses on texts, burhani epistemology places rationality and logical proof as the main basis for acquiring knowledge. In this approach, truth is not only determined by the authority of texts, but also by the validity of rational arguments that can be tested logically and empirically. The burhani concept emphasizes the importance of *dalil aqli*, or rational arguments that can be verified through observation, deduction, and scientific analysis (Al-Farabi, Tanjung, & Irawan, 2021). Thus, the process of knowledge formation in the burhani approach is highly dependent on the human mind's ability to understand the relationships between various phenomena.

Abed Al-Jabiri explains that rational activity in burhani epistemology is formed through two main categories, namely active reason and dominant reason. Active reason plays a role in forming universal conclusions through the analysis of relationships between observed phenomena, while dominant reason functions by using generally accepted rational principles as the basis for constructing scientific arguments (Ahmad, Syakarofath, Agustin, & Kusmana, 2024). This structure of reasoning allows for the formation of a knowledge system that is more open to scientific developments and social change. Historically, the burhani approach developed through intellectual interaction between Muslim thinkers and the Greek philosophical tradition, particularly Aristotelian logic. Figures such as Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, and Ibn Rushd played an important role in developing this

method of rational reasoning in various scientific fields, including metaphysics, natural sciences, ethics, and political philosophy (Sari & Mansur, 2025). Through the burhani approach, Islamic intellectual tradition was able to develop various disciplines based on rational and empirical methods.

One of the important principles in burhani epistemology is the recognition of the law of causality as the basis for understanding the relationship between cause and effect. Ibn Rushd asserted that rejection of the law of causality is tantamount to rejection of rationality itself, because knowledge of a phenomenon will not be complete without understanding the underlying causes (Ulliyah et al., 2024). Therefore, the principle of causality is an important foundation in the development of science and scientific methods. However, the burhani approach is not without criticism. An excessive emphasis on rationality and logic has the potential to neglect the dimensions of values, spirituality, and subjective human experience. Some critics argue that this approach tends to reduce reality to a narrow rational framework, thereby failing to fully explain the existential and spiritual dimensions of human life (Latunrung & others, 2025). Therefore, the burhani approach needs to be complemented with other epistemological perspectives that are capable of explaining the non-rational dimensions of human experience.

In this context, irfani epistemology emerges as an approach that emphasizes spiritual experience and intuition as sources of knowledge. Irfani knowledge is obtained through a process of spiritual purification, spiritual practice, and deep inner experience in the relationship between humans and God. This tradition developed in the world of Sufism and illuminationist philosophy, which emphasized the importance of direct experience in understanding transcendent reality (Munawarah & Normuslim, 2025). Philosophically, the irfani approach stems from the view that not all truths can be reached through reason or language. There is a dimension of reality that can only be understood through direct and existential spiritual experience. Therefore, truth in irfani epistemology is personal, subjective, and transcendent (Abshor, 2018). This approach provides space for the inner dimension of human beings, which is often not accommodated in rational or textual approaches.

In the Sufi tradition, the irfani approach is also related to the metaphysical concept of *wahdatul wujud*, which views that the only true reality is Allah, while the entire universe is a manifestation of Him. This view was developed by Sufi figures such as Ibn Arabi, Abdul Karim al-Jili, and Hamzah Fansuri (Indra Purnamanita, 2023). This perspective places spiritual experience as the primary means of understanding the relationship between humans, nature, and God. Although it has made an important contribution to the formation of the moral and spiritual dimensions of humanity, irfani epistemology has also faced criticism, mainly due to its subjective nature and difficulty in scientific verification. In the context of the development of modern science, this approach is often considered to fall short of scientific objectivity standards because it relies on individual experiences that cannot always be empirically tested (Al Walid, Miri, Rijal, Gama, & Norman, 2025). Therefore, irfani epistemology cannot be used as the sole basis for the formation of public knowledge systems such as law or social policy.

In the context of contemporary Islamic scientific development, the integration of bayani, burhani, and irfani epistemologies is a methodological necessity. These three approaches have different characteristics but complement each other in building a comprehensive knowledge system. Bayani provides normative legitimacy through textual authority, burhani provides a rational and analytical framework, while irfani brings a spiritual and ethical dimension to the process of seeking knowledge (Hendrizar, Beggy, Masduki, & Roza, 2024; Rohman et al., 2024). The integration of these three epistemologies is also in line with the scientific paradigm in the Islamic tradition, which does not separate rationality, values, and spirituality. By combining these three approaches, Islamic science can develop more holistically because it is able to accommodate textual, rational, and spiritual dimensions simultaneously. This allows for the formation of a scientific paradigm that is not only normatively and logically strong, but also has ethical and spiritual depth (Sari & Mansur, 2025).

Furthermore, this integrative epistemological approach has important implications for the development of research methodologies in various disciplines. By recognizing the legitimacy of spiritual intuition alongside rationality and textual authority, Islamic epistemology offers a broader methodological framework for understanding social and human realities. This framework is particularly relevant for research in psychology, sociology, anthropology, and the humanities, which often deal with complex phenomena that cannot be explained through empirical approaches alone (Muzammil, Harun, & Alfarisi, 2022). Thus, the integration of bayani, burhani, and irfani is not only a philosophical discourse, but also has practical implications in the development of science, education, and the formulation of social policies based on Islamic values. This integrative paradigm enables the formation of a scientific approach that is not only rational and empirical, but also ethical and spiritual, thereby providing a more comprehensive contribution in facing the challenges of the modern world (Hafiz & Rijal, 2024).

CONCLUSION

Epistemology, as a branch of philosophy that examines the nature of the sources and limits of human ability to acquire knowledge, occupies a fundamental position in the Islamic scientific tradition. From an Islamic perspective, knowledge is understood integrally through three main forms of reasoning, namely bayani, burhani, and irfani. Bayani reasoning places revelatory texts and religious authority as the main sources of truth, thereby maintaining the authenticity of meaning and methodological discipline, although it has the potential to be rigid if not contextualized. Burhani reasoning is oriented towards logical-empirical proof that produces objective and systematic knowledge, but risks neglecting the dimensions of value and meaning. Meanwhile, irfani reasoning emphasizes intuition and spiritual experience that enrich the moral and spiritual depth of knowledge, although it is subjective. Therefore, the integration of these three epistemological approaches is a strategic step in building comprehensive, balanced, contextual, and relevant Islamic scholarship in line with the dynamics of the times.

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