

'IRFĀNĪ EPISTEMOLOGY: REVEALING THE INNER MEANING OF THE QUR'ANIC VERSES IN THE CLASSICAL INTERPRETATION

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Abstract: *Irṣānī* epistemology is one of the Islamic philosophical paradigms for understanding religious texts including the Qur'ānic texts. It maintains that the source of knowledge is intuition that puts emphasis on spiritual cultivation, not text or reason. Although this epistemology is criticized, it has been introduced Muslim scholars since the end of 4th and the beginning of 5th-century hijra as shown by Abū 'Abd al-Rahmān Sullāmī, Abū al-Husayn Nūrī, Abū Mansūr al-Hallāj and Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh through their work *Haqā'iq al-Tafsīr*. 'Abd al-Karīm bin Hawazan Qushayrī, Ibn Sīnā, Ibn 'Arabī, and Şadr al-Dīn Qunāwī, just to mention some, are the next generation of Muslim scholars who are concerned with it. This study examines the construction and the development of *irṣānī* epistemology as it is seen from the work of those scholars. It argues that *irṣānī* epistemology constitutes one important and fundamental Islamic episteme that serves to complete the other types of episteme, such as *burhānī* and *bayānī*.

Keywords: epistemology, *irṣānī*, inner meaning, Qur'anic verses, classic interpretation.

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An Epistemological Necessity to Reveal God's Message

THE QUR'ĀN, as Muslims believe it, is the revelation of God and a guidance for humanity (*hudan li al-nās*).¹ It is always guaranteed from any deviation.² The Qur'ān normative position is a guide for the legal system, social, literary, education,³ politics, logic, knowledge resources, and even a guide to take life in the hereafter.⁴ However, the Qur'an is the greatest miracle of Islam revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. The originality of the Qur'an will never change and cannot be reduced by any changes. That is the meaning of word *al-hifz* in the Qur'an, as stated in the *Sūrah al-Hijr* (15):15. This fact makes the Qur'ān, as recognized by Muslims, not only because as a revelation but also a source of all sources of life for the people.

However, to reveal the content of the Qur'an into a grounded knowledge would require an interpretation (*tafsīr*). Conducting an interpretation of a qur'anic text is a necessity because without giving an interpretation of the texts of the Qur'an we will not be able to understand the intent. In other word, the Qur'an is read but there will be no sound if it is not interpreted. That is why, 'Alī bin Abī Tālib once said that the Qur'ān was able to speak because of the existence of interpreters.⁵ The fact that the Qur'an reads can be seen in the literatures of Islam in general and *tafsīr* (interpretation) in particular. The interpretations have their features such as Islamic law,⁶ linguistic or literary, sociological,⁷ and others. The

¹Qs. *Al-Baqarah* (2): 185, dan *Āli Imrān* (3): 3-4. Further read about the Qur'an as the guidance for mankind, see Maḥmūd Saltūt, *Min Huda al-Qur'ān* (Cairo: Idārah al-Turāth wa al-Dīn, n.d), 6.

²Qs. *Al-Hijr* (15): 9.

³Muhammad Ṣādiq 'Arjun, *Nahwā Minhāji al-Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, vol. II (Jedah: Dār al-Su'udiyah li al-Nashar, 1997), 13.

⁴Read Manna' al-Qatṭān, *Mabāhith fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* (Beirut: Manshūrāt al-'Aṣr al-Hadīth, 1973), 19.

⁵See Khaled Abou el-Fadl, *Melawan 'Tentara Tuban': Yang Berwenang dan Yang Sewenang-wenang dalam Wacana Islam*, trans. Kurniawan Abdullah (Jakarta: Serambi, 2003).

⁶Tafseer which features Islamic law such as the tafseers written by Muḥammad 'Alī al-Ṣabūnī, *Rawā'i' al-Bayān min Tafsīr Āyāt al-Āhkām min al-Qur'ān*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, n.d.). Al-Qurṭubī through *Jāmi' al-Āhkām*.

important position of the Qur'an in the scientific context is a source of Islamic knowledge.

To actualize the Qur'an, the Islamic scholars take a wide variety of paradigms or methods. In Islamic studies, method or paradigm used is referred to as an epistemology,⁸ which is formulated in three formations, namely epistemology *bayānī*,⁹ *burhānī*,¹⁰ and *'irfānī*.¹¹ However, these forms of epistemology are

⁷Sociological tafsir like the work of Muhammad Rashid Rida, entitled *Tafsir al-Manār*

⁸*Epistemology* derives from Greek, *episteme* (Knowledge, science) and *Logos* (Knowledge, information) can be defined as theory of knowledge, Loren Bagus, *Kamus Filsafat* (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 1996), 212.

⁹This epistemology asserts that Islamic knowledge can only be revealed if it turns to the main and essence (*uṣūl*) namely *nāṣi* (texts). Texts (*nāṣi*) in the context of *uṣūl fiqh* is *nāṣi al-Qur'ān* and *al-Ḥadīth*. The characteristics of epistemology *bayānī* in formulating the way to achieve knowledge are: First, refer to texts (*laṭāqī*) with respect to the rules of Arabic language such as *nahw*, *sharaf* as the analysis tool. Second, refer to the meaning of texts by using the ratio as the basis of logic. Muhammad 'Ābid al-Jābirī, *Bunyah al-'Aql al-'Arab* (Beirut: Markāz al-Thaqafī, 1991), 530.

¹⁰In this perspective of epistemology, the way to get knowledge is only through ratio. In addition, a truth will be acceptable as long as the argument of it is logic. In this context, the silogism rules are translated by *qiyās* which refers to the original meaning (*al-Qiyās al-Jāmi'*). It consists of some elements: *ma'qūlāt* (definition), *ibārāt* (statement), and *tahlīlāt* (logic). Thus, the way of *burhānī* thought is actually *manṭiqī* with silogism (*qiyās*). However, it should comply three conditions: First, *ma'rīfah al-hadd al-awṣaṭ wa al-nāṭiḥah*, that is knowing the intermediary terms. Second, *tartīb al-'Alaqah bayn al-Ilāh wa al-ma'lūl*, that is well-suited relational ties between terms and conclusion. And third, *nāṭiḥah*, a conclusion should be by default and does not emerge other conclusions. Ibid., 349.

¹¹This epistemology stated that the source of knowledge is intuition. It means that epistemology *'irfānī* is developed on the spirit of *kashf* and direct touch to *Tasawwuf*. However, this epistemology emphasizes on the inner experience (religious *experience*). When it comes to Islamic discourse, methodological pattern used is esoterism. It means that the meaning of Islamic texts focuses on esoteric meaning. This meaning is seen through the way interpreters (*mutasawwifīn*) understand texts using intuitive approach. Ibid., 435. It is important to note that epistemology *'irfānī* focuses on spiritual cultivation not texts analysis or ratio. With purity of heart, the God will bless the interpreters. From this bless, the interpretations are conceived in mind before addressing to the others. Therefore, as stated by Shahrawardi, spiritual knowledge methodologically at least can be reached through three

the way to understand epistemic effects of Islamic science and find patterns of Islamic thought.

This article will discuss epistemology of *'irfānī*. This epistemology focuses on finding the deepest meaning of the Qur'ān verse which often get sharp criticism from some Islamic intellectuals and even considered as a form of deviation at the content of the Qur'ān. For example, al-Sayyid al-Sharif in *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif* claim to the use of this approach will encourage Muslims to leave the outward interpretation of the Qur'anic verses in daily practices. He states that “esoteric interpretation encourages people to leave outward practices of the verses.”¹²

The theoretical fact, however, remains an important issue. That is why *bāṭini* approach (Islamic esotericism) strayed from the outward meaning of the verses. In fact, in the study of the Qur'ān, there are some Islamic scholars who explicitly confirm that the Qur'ān contains inner and outward meaning. Imam al-Ghazali in *Jawahir al-Qur'ān* expressly said that the Qur'ān implies *zāhir* (exoteric) and the inner meanings (esoteric).¹³

The Trilogy of Al-Jabiri's Epistemology as a Paradigm

In this context, it is interesting to have a look at the mapping of Islamic epistemology by Muḥammad 'Abīd al-Jābīrī in *Bunyat al-'Aql al-'Arabi*. According to him, there are three forms of Islamic epistemology: *bayānī*, *burhānī* and *'irfānī* epistemology. However, these epistemologies are the way to understand epistemic effects of Islamic science and find the shades of Islamic thought.

The first epistemology is *bayānī*. This epistemology asserts that Islamic science can only be analyzed by referring to the texts (*nāsī*). It means that knowledge of Islam will only be found if we return to the principal sources (*Uṣūl*), i.e. the texts (*nāsī*).

steps: preparation, acceptance, and disclosure either orally or in written. Khudori Soleh, *Pemikiran Islam Kontemporer*, ed. Khudori Soleh (Yogyakarta: Jendela, 2003), 214.

¹²Al-Sayyid al-Sharīf, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, vol. 8 (n.p.: al-Sa'ādah, 1907), 388.

¹³Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad bin Muḥammad al-Gazālī, *Mishkat Cabaya-cabaya*, trans. Muhammad Baqir (Bandung: Mizan, 1984), 74.

The texts (*nass*) in the context of Islamic science are *al-Qur'ān* and *hadīth*. The characteristics of epistemology *bayānī* in formulating a way to get knowledge are adhering to the form of texts (*lafaz*) which refer to the rules of Arabic language such as *nahw* and *ṣarf* as the analysis tool, and adhering to the meaning of the text by using logical reasoning as a base.¹⁴

Although *bayānī* justifies the use of logic, the logic should not be at odds with *nass* as reflected in the use of *qiyās* in *usūl fiqh*. Therefore, anything seen as Islamic science in the perspective of *bayānī* is the science that makes *nass* as a source of authority. The text is epistemic authority, an epistemology that reason text. In this context, there is no room for criticism or even an intellectual subversion because the text has authority.

The source of problem is the apriori of Islamic scholars especially by the jurists in seeing *lafaz* as the main reference. *Lafaz* must be put on the first level and should not be construed as wild outside the possibilities provided by the grammatical procedure (*qawā'id kalām al-'Arabi*). The meaning must be subordinated to the restrictions given by the grammatical procedure of *lafaz*. Therefore, one of the most crucial requirements of *ijtihād* for jurists is the mastery of language rules (*qawā'id al-lugah*).¹⁵

Revelation (*Wahyū*), as reflected in the verbal text of the Qur'an, is always regarded as a baseline and the source of *par excellence* truth. The mind is the source that opens the possibility for the uprising of the revelations. Therefore, it must be controlled. Among over-textualized jurists like the school of *Zāhirī*, the tension was intensified. The meaning is nearly untold.¹⁶ Departing from the assumption that makes text as epistemological force, then in the context of this epistemology *Bayānī*, anything referred to as *qiyās*, *maṣlahah al-mursālah*, *sādd al-Dhāri'ah*, *al-'urf* and *al-istihsān* will be able to be a force of the law as long as they do not conflict with the sound of the texts.

¹⁴al-Jābirī, *Bunyah al-'Aql*, 530.

¹⁵Ulil Abshar Abdalla, *Membakar Rumah Tuban: Pergulatan Agama Privat dan Publik* (Bandung: Rosda Karya, 2000), 110.

¹⁶Ibid.

The second epistemology is *burbānī*. In this epistemological perspective, knowledge can only be acquired by reasoning (ratio). It is through the facilities of logic. Therefore, a truth would be acceptable for a logical argument. In this context, the argument of syllogism is translated by *qiyās* which refers to the original meaning (*al-qiyās al-jami'*) consists of several elements: *ma'qūlāt* (definition), *ibārāt* (statement), and *tablīlāt* (reasoning). Thus, thinking *burbānī* is thinking *manthiqi* with syllogism (*qiyās*). Nevertheless, it should fulfill three conditions: First, *ma'rīfah al-had al-Awsāt wa al-Nātijah*, that is knowing intermediary terms. Second, *tartīb al-'Alaqah bayn al-Ilāh wa al-ma'lūl*, which means there exist harmonious relational relationship between the terms and conclusions. Third, *nātijah*, a conclusion should appear automatically and presenting so no other conclusion.¹⁷

In any case, epistemology *burbānī* rely on logic as a source of knowledge. For this case, the Islamic philosophers like al-Farabi emphasizes that syllogism be at the level of thought and not on the pronunciation (*lafaz*). When a person's mind has formed a concept of truth then the other new truth will simultaneously appear. So, something that accompanies someone knows something that has not been known is not the pronunciation but the existing concepts in mind, whereas *lafaz* is structured in oral pronunciation. If the pronunciations itself can be assembled in mind in such a way so as to give birth to something else, then the birth, of course, is not the concept or truth. However, in mind it is not the pronunciation but the conceptual meaning.¹⁸

The third epistemology is *'irfānī*. This epistemology views that the source of knowledge is intuition. Consequently, epistemology *'irfānī* is built on the passion of *kashaf* and it has direct contact with Sufism. However, this epistemology focuses on the inner experience (religious experience). But when it entered in the Islamic discourses, methodological pattern used is esotericism. The meaning of Islamic texts refers to the esoteric meaning. It can be seen from the method Sufi understand the texts. This method is called as intuition.

¹⁷al-Jābirī, *Bunyah al-'Aql*, 349.

¹⁸Ibid., 435.

The emphasis of epistemology *'irfānī* is on the spiritual cultivation instead of text analysis or ratio. With a pure heart, we wish God would bestow knowledge to the interpreters. The knowledge is then conceptualized in their mind before addressing to the others. Thus, as stated by Shuhrawardi, methodologically spiritual knowledge is acquired through at least three stages namely preparation, acceptance, and disclosure either orally or in writing. According to Uli Abshar Abdalla, "Exploring the aesthetic theory of Islam is more widely open if we refer to the Sufi. Therefore, this group has done intensive exploration of the possibilities provided by inspiration (*ilhām*), impurity (*badāth*), exposure (*mukāshafah*), and intuition."¹⁹

Sufism, however, is a branch of Islamic study which seriously understands the religious message concerning the esoteric meaning. Thus, in many cases, Sufi will never change a word of esoteric meaning. The Sufis try to find the meaning of a command by searching the meaning behind the text. They are in contrast with the scholars of jurisprudence (*fiqh*) who see the truth only based on the outward meaning of the texts. The meaning which refers to the esoteric meaning of the text in the study of philosophy is seen as a hermeneutic approach.²⁰

Although those epistemological perspectives work with different analytical instruments in fact they keep returning to the text. Only, *bayānī* is struggling to make a verbal text as a measure of the validity of the truth. Meanwhile, *burhānī* and *'irfānī* do not get stuck on the esoteric meaning of the text as explained in the above descriptions.

That is, and should be recognized, ontological reality of Islamic knowledge whether departing from epistemology of *bayānī*, *burhānī*, and *'irfānī*, they are still theocentric. In this case, the discourse of the three epistemologies is too metaphysical and less grounded because they remain in the shadows of the hegemony of the text. The hegemony of the text is the real problem of Islamic knowledge especially when dealing with the problems of contemporary humanity. Therefore, the re-

¹⁹Abdalla, *Membakar Rumah*, 111.

²⁰Hasan Sutanto, *Hermeneutik, Prinsip dan Metode Penafsiran al-Kitab* (Malang: Seminar al-Kitab Asia Tenggara, 1989), 1.

formulation of methodological approaches and theoretical framework is necessary.

Harold L. Brown, as quoted by Amin Abdullah, states that:

Most scientific research consists, in this view of a continuing attempt to interpret nature regarding a presupposed theoretical framework. This framework plays role in determining what problems must be solved and what are to count as solution to these problems; the most important events in the history of science are revolution which change the framework...Perhaps the most important theme of the new philosophy of science is its emphasis on continuing research, rather than accepted result, as the core of science.²¹

It should be recognized that the Islamic sciences such as *tafsīr*, *hadīth*, Islamic jurisprudence, and other sciences in the history of their journey experienced great development. They have played significant roles in building the society at the level of social, cultural and intellectual. Without ignoring the contribution of early Islamic scholars, the methodological framework should be reconstructed by changing the approach. The philosophy of science, however, is a science that can help, for example, by using the approach of hermeneutics.

The Tradition of Epistemology *'Irfānī* in Islamic Exotericism

Epistemology *'irfānī*²² is one of the Islamic philosophical paradigm for understanding religious texts including the Qur'ānic texts. It is one of the Islamic epistemology built on the spirit of exposure (*kashaf*) and direct contact with Sufism. However, this epistemology pays close attention on the inner experience (religious experience). When it enters into the Islamic discourses, the methodological pattern used is esotericism. It means that the meaning of the texts of Islam emphasizes esoteric meaning. It can be seen from the way Sufis understand the texts which can be seen in an approach known as intuition.²³

It is worth noting that the discourse about the tradition of interpretation by using this paradigm is not limited among

²¹Amin Abdullah, *Pengembangan Metode Studi Islam*, 9.

²²Read al-Jābirī, *Bunyah al-'Aql*, 215.

²³See *ibid.*

Muslims or 'urafā only. Non-Muslims also use this paradigm. Philo Alexandria (400 AD), for example, for the first time used this method for interpreting the Torah. He stated that "The holy book has the outward and the inner dimension. Where the inner level is superior and transcendent than its outward degree. The paradigm of Philo Alexandria passed by Origen Alexandria (185-254 AD), a Catholic dignitary. According to him, "With the multiplicity of meanings of the sacred texts require their allegorical and symbolic interpretation." Nelson, a longtime historian of philosophy stated, "The important insight of Origen about interpretation (*tafsīr*) and Bible is the *mūhkam* and essential verses, for example, a verse which says that God had a hand." According to Origen, this kind of verse shall be *ta'wil*.²⁴

Epistemic construction has also been actualized among Muslim scholars since the end of the 4th and the beginning of 5th-century hijra as shown by Abū 'Abd al-Rahmān Sullāmī, Abū al-Husyain Nūri, Abū Mansūr al-Hallāj and Ibn 'Atā' Allāh through their work entitled *Haqā'iq al-Tafsīr*. The tradition of academic in the 5th-century hijra was followed by 'Abd al-Karīm bin Hawazan Qushayri through his work *Laṭā'if al-Ishārah* and the others like Ibn Sīnā with *Asrār al-verse* and *al-Ishārah wa al-tanbihāt*; Ibn 'Arabi through *al-Futūhāt al-Makkiyyah*, *Fuṣūṣ al-Hikām*, *Rahmah min al-Rahmān fī Tafsīr wa Ishārat al-Qur'ān*, and *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*; and Ṣadr al-Dīn Qunāwī through *Tafsīr Ijāz al-Bayān fī Tarjamah al-Qur'ān*.²⁵

In general, the paradigm of '*irfānī* and *ta'wil*' in those works is sometimes used as a method of symbolic interpretation and *ishārah*. Both of these approaches are the effort made by the interpreters of Islam in understanding the revealed texts which have different pattern from most interpretations formally and publicly. However, the use of such methods do not reduce the value of the interpretation, but rather a different approach when dealing with the Qur'an. Thus, it is clear that the actualization of epistemology of '*irfānī*' as one of the esoteric approaches (non-

²⁴Read Akmal Kamil, "Epistemologi '*irfānī*: Menembus Batasan Tafsir Eksoteris," (2000), <http://islamalternatif.net/iph/content/view/173/33/>. Accessed on 20 November 2010.

²⁵Ibid.

official interpretation) toward the Qur'ān. The construction of epistemology *'irfānī* as mentioned above are reflected through the concept of *ta'wil* by Ibn' Arabī He says:

Anyone who interprets his opinions (*tafsīr bi al-ra'yī*) then he is a disbeliever. The *ta'wil* cannot be abandoned because *ta'wil* is different and vary according to the condition of the listener and time he had spent in mysticism and different degree. Every time He uphill (perfected) the level it will be opened for him a new understanding and sublimity of new meaning.²⁶

It should be emphasized that the actualization of epistemology *'irfānī* perpetrated by the Islamic theosophism is not only based on the historical arguments but also it bases itself on theological arguments both *al-Qur'ān* and *al-Hadīth*. In the Qur'an mentions "He bestows wisdom upon anyone He wills, and he who is given wisdom is in fact given great wealth, but only those who have common sense learn lessons from these things".²⁷

This verse indicates that the character of the qur'anic texts inspires or emphasis on the principle of symbolic values, as actualized in the Sura Luqmān: 20

"Do you not see that Allah has subjected to you whatever is in the earth and the heavens, and has bestowed on you all His favors, visible as well as invisible?"²⁸

Another similar point is given in the *Sura Āli ʻImrān*: 7. Thus, a text always contains the explicit and implicit meanings, as Ghazzali says.²⁹ Finding the values of the religious text is not enough to rely on *lafaz* (literal texts) alone without looking to the meaning or the secret behind the text itself. In this regard, Nur al-Din al-Mukhtar bin Khādimī suggested that in exploring Islamic law we need to consider substantive meaning in texts of Islamic law. al-Khādimī states that "it is not enough (sufficient) by directing attention to *lafaz* structure, outward side of the

²⁶Muhyī al-Dīn Ibn 'Arabī, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* (n.p.: n.p.p., n.d.), 4., 4.

²⁷Qs. *al-Baqarah*: 269

²⁸Qs. *Luqmān*: 20.

²⁹al-Gazālī, *Mishkāt*, 74.

texts, and the laws without regard to meaning, secret, the aspects of *ta'wil*, and other legal reason.³⁰

Humans as independent subject are required to make efforts so that the interpretation of religious texts can be understood. And at the same time, the meanings can be revealed either explicitly (literal) or implicitly (substantial). In a *hadīth*, the Prophet Muhammad mentions "I (God) was a hidden treasure. I want to be known, so I created a creature."³¹

The *hadīth* provides an important affirmation that man was created to explore the hidden dimensions and truth of the revelation of God. It should be emphasized that the Sufistic expression is not a *hadīth*. According to al-'Ajlūnī Isma'il al-Jarāhī, the statement is held by the scholars of Sufi but it is not a *hadīth*. This opinion is based on the view of Ibn Taymiyyah who said that the phrase is not an utterance of the Prophet, unknown *sanad* and the source as stated by al-Zarkasyi, al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar, al-Suyuti and other scholars of *hadīth*. However, according to al-Qari, regarding meaning (substance) the phrase was nice.³² Another *hadīth* stated that "The Qur'an was revealed in the form of seven letters. Each letter was contained outward and inner meaning, and the meaning of the beginning and end."³³

The *hadīth* still requires *ta'wil* of what constitutes these inner and outward meaning. However, Imam Baqir as, in interpreting this excerpt stated that "The outward of the Qur'an is its *tanzīl* and the inner is its *ta'wil*. Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī when interpreting the *hadīth* said that:

³⁰Nūr al-Dīn bin Mukhtār al-Khādimī, *al-Ijtihād al-Maqāsidī Hujjijiyatuhu, Dawābituhu, Majalātuhu*, vol. 1 (Qatar: Wizārah al-Awqāf wa al-Shuūna al- Islāmiyah, 1998), 57.

³¹Muhammad bin Muhammad al-'Amādī Abū Su'ūd, *Irshād al-'Aql al-Salīm ilā Mazāyā al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, vol. 8 (Beirut: Dār Ihyā al-Turāth al-'Arabi, n.d.), 145.

³²Ismā'il al-'Ajlūnī al-Jarāhī, *Kashf al-Khīfā'i wa Mazīl al-Ilbāsī 'Amma Ishtabara min al-Abādīth 'alā al-Sunnah*, vol. 2 (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risālah, 1405), 173.

³³I searched the source of the *hadīth* and found in the book of *tafsīr* al-Tābarī. See Abū Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarīr al-Tābarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wil Āyāt al-Qur'ān*, vol. 1 (Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bāb al-Halabī, 1968), 122.

I argue, first, outward and inner have lots meanings and one of them is that if you discuss the inner of the verses then it is analogically deduced with the outward meaning of the verse and you find the true meaning. Second, the interpretation of a verse performed by a people and other people practice the verse as revealed by Ibn Su'ud anchored in the Ibn Abi Hatim. Third, the outward of the verses is their sentence and the inner is its *ta'wil*. Fourth, Abū 'Ubyaid said that the argument is closer to the truth. In fact, the stories told by God about some people at past time and the punishment they received, its outward meaning is to tell the upcoming people the damage the people did in the past. While its inner meaning is to give a warning to those who came later not to perform actions such as those in advance so that they will be crushed (torture) as they have accepted. Ibn Naqib told the fifth meaning is that the outward meaning of the verses is the variety of outward meanings for the experts of *zāhir*. Meanwhile, the inner is the secrets given by God to *arbāb al-haqā'iq* which lies behind the verses.³⁴

Furthermore, al-Alusi also provided an opinion that the search for the outward and inner meaning is a concept of Islam. Al-Alusi said³⁵

Not supposed to be for someone who has a low intelligence level (simple) to deny the use of the Qur'an toward the deepest meanings (esoteric) the Lord has given some people He will. However, I also wondered to what will be done by those who deny the meaning of the word of God "I did not leave anything at all in the book (the Qur'an)

Acknowledging the truth of the Divine words contained in the Qur'an is not to be understood solely through the redaction of the Qur'an that have outward characteristics but also through its inner meaning. Thus, esoteric interpretation is not an interpretation that is out of line with any grammatical or the texts of the Qur'an. That is why, the Sufis in understanding the intentions of the Qur'an is not "wild" but also they stick to the values of the Qur'an. In fact, it can be said that the approach of esotericism is a beautiful blend between the outward texts with the inner texts of the Qur'an.

³⁴Abū al-Faḍl 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Bakr ibn Muḥammad Jalāl al-Dīn al-Khuḍayrī al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Itqān fi 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, n.d.), 185.

³⁵Abū al-Thanā' Shihāb ad-Dīn Sayyid Maḥmūd ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Husaynī al-Ālūsī, *Rūb al-Ma'āmī fi Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm wa-al-Sab' al-Mathānī*, vol. 1 (Beirut: 1987), 7.

The motivation of '*urafā*' uses symbolic language and *ishārah*, according to Ibn Khaldun (the great historian and sociologist in 8th-century hijra), is a transformation process of *lafaz* used by *urafā* to the meanings and nature that they desire. Therefore, according to Ibn Khaldun, the argument of evidence used by the Islamic theosophism cannot be rejected or accepted, because it is the result of their findings.³⁶ The transformation process of *lafaz* to meanings is called the concept of *tanāzzul* and *tanzil*. In the hermeneutics, the process to understand the meaning is done through intermediary of *lafaz*. This process is then called as *ta'wil*. Therefore, *ta'wil* differs from *tanzil*. *Ta'wil* is characterized as *su'udi* (uphill) while *tanzil* is *nuzūlī* (dip). *Tanzil* is the process of reduction of the meanings of God to the creature while *ta'wil* is the process of ascension and the climbing of man from the creature to the Creator and the journey from exoteric to the esoteric domain. The hermeneutical procedure or *ta'wil* like this can only be done by people who have the spiritual ability and intuition which directs the invention in the texts (*nass*) as it seems, to the view of spiritual essence (*haqīqah*) or inner confidential (*sirr*).³⁷

When a man listens to the common *lafaz* used in the discipline of '*irfānī*', it bases itself on the transcendental and the universality of its manifestation. On this basis, it can find various meanings behind *lafaz* vertically, top-down. As the reception of the meanings and natures rests on the level of human beings, an understanding of editorial and the *ishārah* of meanings rest on the degree of human existence. According Ulil, original text of the Qur'an tends to be poetic. It contains a wide and complex ambivalence which open possibility for various interpretations (multi-interpretable). The text is alive and authentic then it changes fundamentally and radically, restricted in semantic field by strict and rigid procedure.³⁸

³⁶Abū Zayd ‘Abd ar-Rahmān ibn Muḥammad Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah Ibn Khaldūn* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, n.d.), 525.

³⁷Md. Salleh Yappar, "Ziarah ke Timur: Ta'wil Sebagai Bentuk Hermeneutika Islam," *Jurnal Ullumul Qur'an* 3, no. 3 (1992): 9.

³⁸Abdalla, *Membakar Rumah*, 109.

The semantic confine makes excessive dependence on the literal meanings of texts. This dependence is believed as a result of using strict and rigid grammar as found in mainstream Islamic studies especially *fiqh* and theology. In this case, Ulil said:

“The jurists face serious problems related to *lafaz* (words) and *ma'na* (meaning). In this case, the jurists had always assumed that the *lafaz* should be won and should not be construed as "wild" outside the possibilities provided by the existing grammatical procedure. So that, the meaning should be subordinated to the limits given by the grammatical procedures of *lafaz*.... While meaning is considered as the source of opportunities for subversion or rebellion over the words (*lafaz*).”³⁹

Thus, epistemology *'irfānī* provides a vehicle for an interpretation of universal ideas to find esoteric meaning of the Qur'an. The practice of this interpretation has found its historical-theological argument in the classical-medieval Islamic texts.

The Portrait of Epistemology *Irfānī* in the Interpretation of the Qur'an

The exploration of academic interpretation of Islamic esoterism with *ta'wil* approach as the realization of epistemology *'irfānī* paradigm seen from the way they (the exoterism) interpret the Qur'an orients to their perspective and religious experience and tends to differ from mainstream interpretation. Spiritual experience or the conscience of Sufism in the perspective of Islamic Sufism apparently is a necessity. Because, according to Mulla Sadra, the Qur'an and humans respectively have a level of inner and outer, exoteric and esoteric. The inner of the Qur'an is perceived by the human spirit, not through the senses and outward perception. Of course, after crossing the outward level and the degree of *lafaz*, taking into account other forms of outward, the human will reach the inner level and degree of meaning.

On this track, interpreters explore the meaning with *shuhud* (seeing) and *mukāshafah* (exposure). Here is the significance of the existence of spiritual reasoning (*al-qalb*), not a rational reason

³⁹Ibid., 106.

(*al-'aql*) in the perspective of the theosophist when present in *ma'rifah ilāhiyah*. 'Abd al-Hakim Hasan, in his book entitled *al-Tasawwuf fi al-Shi'r al-'Arabi* said:

Heart in the view of a Sufi is more important than mind or reason, even for those the heart is everything. Therefore, they make the heart (like a throne for God).⁴⁰

The views above illustrates that an intuitive approach is applicable paradigm among the Islamic theosophism. Therefore, most of the *sufi* especially philosophical *sufi* find difficult to translate their religious concepts. Through this spiritual reason, the Islamic theosophism will be able to find their identity so they can shape themselves into individuals who can "communicate" with God. For example, when the shufi interpret the following verse "We have given you seven verses that are worthy of recitation over and over again, and We have also bestowed on you the glorious Qur'an".⁴¹

The word *al-sab'u al-mathānī* in the verse, according to the theosophism, is the real in His existence, either the nature or His seven characteristics. So, *al-sab'u al-mathānī* is the seven attributes of God.⁴² Furthermore, according to them, this verse is a sign to a substance and not to show the day of the verse given nor at the place. But, it refers to absolute substances, a substance which collected all the attributes or phenomena. That is why, the word Qur'an in that verse is accompanied by the words *al-'Aṣīm*.

The interpretation is in contrast with the general interpretation that asserts that *al-sab'u al-mathānī* is the seven verses repeatedly read namely *al-Fatībah* which consists of seven verses. Most of the interpreters say seven long verse, i.e. *al-Baqara*, *Āli Imrān*, *al-Mā'idah*, *al-Nisā'*, *al-A'rāf*, *al-An'ām*, and *al-Anfāl* or *al-Tawbah*.

The pattern of epistemology *'irfānī* can be captured in *al-Fatībah*. Imam Khomeyni in his work presents a perspective of *'irfānī* such as when he interprets⁴³ the verse *al-Ḥamdu li Allāh*

⁴⁰^c 'Abd al-Hakim Hasan, *al-Tasawwuf fi al-Shi'r al-'Arabi*, 19

⁴¹ *QS. al-Hijr*: 87

⁴² al-Ālūsī, *Rūb al-Ma'āmī*, 9.

⁴³ <http://mtdmiftahulhuda.blogspot.com/2010/08/tafsir-irfani-surat-al-fatihah.html>

Rabb al-‘Ālamin. According to Imam Khomeyni, *al-Hamd* means the existence of human perfection is the ultimate goal of *tarbiyah* (teaching) of the Divine. So, the Lord deserves to be praised and exalted. He also said:

Because the rules of nature composed of a series of astronomy-celestial sphere, elements, substances and accidents-accidents, is the preamble of the embodiment of the perfect man. So essentially the embodiment of perfect man is at the core of the real nature and the ultimate purpose of the creation of the whole of the universe, which is why he is a last creation. Additionally, due to the universe moves with substantial motion and the motion always leads to perfection then wherever the motion is finite, that is where the purpose of creation and the estuary of the trip... therefore, the value of God teaching in all nature incarnate in human teaching. Man is the beginning and the end.

Furthermore, the word *al-Hamd*, is the ultimate purpose of creation. And human teaching is the substance of God, the return of man to God, the path of Lord, by the hand of God and towards Him. On this case, Imam added:

The purpose of what has been stated is in particular action and from the standpoint of the level of being. Meanwhile, from the viewpoint of absolute God act, no purpose other than the Essence of God... therefore man is created by God and for God... The purpose of mystical trip of the man is in order to come at the door of God, mortal (melt) in God's substance, '*ukuf* (pull) in mortality in the Essence, turn to to the real truth, from Him, in Him and with Him as revealed in the verse "and in fact We are the only place they come."⁴⁴

While other creatures return to God through the medium of the man, the returned place for other creatures is the man as stated in the *jam'i'ah* manuscript when explaining the various degrees of place and the region, "and the returned place for creature is you and their reckoning is upon you."⁴⁵

Imam Khomeyni, while explaining that the goal of all praise is God, after mentioning the verse "To Us they have to return; then it is for Us to call them to account,"⁴⁶ explained that the final journey of perfect man is God and mortal in His Essence. He also added that this verse is the secret of monotheism secrets

⁴⁴Qs. *al-Gāshiyah*: 25.

⁴⁵Imam Khomeyni, *Tafsir-e surey-e hamd*, 43.

⁴⁶Qs. *al-Gāshiyah*: 25 & 26,

which suggests that the final place for the perfect man is God, they are mortal in the Essence and *bāqa* (immortal) in the eternity of God. In them there are no more sightings of existential (*ta'ayyun*), selfish and egoism. But they are part of *asma'* *al-husnā* and *ismi a'zām*.⁴⁷ He added that the Qur'an is loaded with *'irfānī* studies that can only be understood by people who are qualified, which is the top secrets that cause the grandeur and greatness of the Qur'an. The glorious Qur'an is full of secrets, the nature, the noble meanings of monotheism in which the *ma'rifat* experts stunned. And this is the great miracle (the Qur'an).⁴⁸

Another explanation of *al-Hamd*, Imam Khomeyni explained that, "it is not true if *al-hamd li Allāh Rabb al-Ālāmīn* only be interpreted as praise to the Lord, but the meaning is that praise would never be praised except for God alone".⁴⁹ Furthermore, Khomeyni said that *al-Fātiḥah* contained in the Qur'an, the first letter, made recitations of prayers in which without reading it the prayer is not valid (Hurrū 'amīlī, volume 4, hal.732) is the verse that contains all knowledge. But, it should be emphasized that we should study them. It is true, we are not the experts, we just recite "*al-hamd li Allāh Rabb al-Ālāmīn*" meaning that everything should praise for Him. However, the Qur'an does not say so, the Qur'an says that all the praise will not be addressed except for Him. The pagans also claimed that praise belongs to God and not theirs. It means that the problem is due to our foolish and ignorance".⁵⁰

Conclusion

Epistemology as a foundation of the construction of philosophy, however, is inevitable. In Islamic philosophy, *'irfānī* epistemology strives to provide an idea that Islamic teachings can be seen from two perspectives, formal and substantial. In the context of this substantive meaning, *'irfānī* epistemology is

⁴⁷Imam Khomeyni, *Tafsīr-e surey-e hamd*, 44.

⁴⁸*Ibid*

⁴⁹Imam Khomeyni, *Hurrū 'amīlī*, volume 4, 732

⁵⁰Imam Khomeyni, *Tafsīr-e surey-e hamd*, 200.

one method to uncover the substantive values of Islam such as in some interpretation of the Qur'an.

Some *tafsīr* of the Qur'an which show dimension of epistemology *'irfānī* are: *Tafsīr Rūb al-Ma'āmī* and *Tafsīr Asan* by Muḥammad Jawād Najafi Khomeyni; *Ala' Rahmān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* by Muḥammad Jawād Balagi Najafi; *Āyat al-Ahkām* by Muḥammad bin 'Āli Istar Abadi; *Tafsīr Abū Hamzah Thumālī* by Abū Hamzah Thumālī; *Āyat al-Ahkām (Tafsīr Shahī)* by Sayyid Amīr Abū al-Futūh Jarjānī; *Tafsīr Itsnā Ashārī* by Husayn bin Aḥmad 'Abd al-Azīm; *Tafsīr Aḥsān al-Hadīth* by Sayyid 'Alī Akbar Qurashi; *Irshād al-Adhan fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* by Muḥammad bin Ḥabīb Allāh Sabzawari; *Asbāb al-Nuzūl* by 'Alī bin Aḥmad Wāḥidī; *Asbāb al-Nuzūl* by Muḥammad Ja'far Islāmī; *Asbāb al-Nuzūl* by Sayyid Muḥammad Bāgir Hujjati; *al-Asfā* by Mullā Muhsin Fā'iz Kasyani; *Atyab al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* by Sayyid 'Abd al-Husayn Ṭayyib; *Ijāz al-Bayān* by Muḥammad Khajawi; *I'rāb al-Qur'ān* by Abū Ja'far Aḥmad bin Muḥammad bin Ismā'īl bin Nuhas; *al-Amthāl fī Tafsīr Kitāb Allāh al-Munzal* by Nāsir Makārim Shirāzī; *Anwār al-Tartīl wa Asrār al-Ta'wīl* by 'Abd Allāh bin 'Umar Baydāwī; *Anwār al-Irfān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* by Abū al-Fadl Dawar; *Anwār Derahshan* by Sayyid Muḥammad Husayn Husaynī Ḥamadīhānī; *Baday' al-Kalām fī tafsīr āyāt al-Ahkām* by Muḥammad Bāgir Miliki Mianji; *al-Burhān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* by Sayyid Hāshim Bahrānī; *al-Balagh fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān bil-Qur'ān* by Muḥammad Ṣādiqi Teherānī; *Bayān al-Sa'ādah* by Sultān Muḥammad Ginabadi; *Partui al-Qur'ān* by Sayyid Mahmūd Tāliqānī; and *Tāj al-Tarajim fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān li al-'A'ajim* by Abū Mudhaffar Shahfur.

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