



Immanuel Kant's Critical Epistemology from an Islamic Perspective

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ABSTRAK

This study aims to analyze Immanuel Kant's critical epistemology and its relevance from the perspective of Islamic studies, particularly in relation to efforts to integrate sources of knowledge encompassing reason, experience, and revelation. Kant's critical philosophy seeks to synthesize Rationalism and Empiricism through the concept of synthetic a priori judgments, namely forms of knowledge that are synthetic in nature yet not wholly dependent on experience. Kant distinguishes three levels of cognition sensory perception, understanding (intellect), and reason (ratio) to examine the validity of knowledge while simultaneously determining its limits. This study demonstrates that Kant's epistemological framework exhibits significant points of convergence with the Islamic epistemological tradition, which positions revelation, reason, and experience as complementary sources of knowledge. By comparing Kant's thought with the ideas of Muslim thinkers such as Ibn Bajja, al-Ghazālī, Suhrawardi, Muhammad Iqbal, and Mulla Ṣadrā, this research contributes to strengthening philosophical dialogue between Western and Islamic thought and enriching contemporary studies of Islamic epistemology.

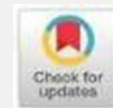
ABSTRAK

Studi ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis epistemologi Kritik Immanuel Kant dan relevansinya dari perspektif studi Islam, khususnya dalam upaya mengintegrasikan sumber-sumber pengetahuan yang meliputi akal, pengalaman, dan wahyu. Filsafat kritis Kant berupaya mensintesis Rasionalisme dan Empirisme melalui konsep penilaian *a priori sintetis*, yaitu pengetahuan yang bersifat sintetis namun tidak sepenuhnya bergantung pada pengalaman. Kant membedakan tiga tingkatan kognisi persepsi indrawi, pemahaman (akal), dan intelektual (rasio) untuk menguji validitas pengetahuan sekaligus menentukan batas-batasnya. Studi ini menunjukkan bahwa kerangka epistemologi Kant memiliki titik konvergensi yang signifikan dengan tradisi epistemologi Islam, yang menempatkan wahyu, akal, dan pengalaman sebagai sumber pengetahuan yang saling melengkapi. Dengan membandingkan pemikiran Kant dengan gagasan para pemikir Muslim seperti Ibn Bajjah, al-Ghazali, Suhrawardi, Muhammad Iqbal, dan Mulla Sadra, penelitian ini berkontribusi untuk memperkuat dialog filosofis antara pemikiran Barat dan Islam serta memperkaya studi kontemporer tentang epistemologi Islam.

Kata kunci

Epistemologi, Immanuel Kant, Kritik, Epistemologi Islam.

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Introduction

The development of modern Western civilization, shaped by the Renaissance and Enlightenment movements, brought about fundamental changes in the way human beings understand knowledge and truth. In the modern era, particularly since the seventeenth century, epistemology has occupied a central position in philosophical discourse. Philosophical inquiry has no longer focused solely on the nature of reality but has increasingly addressed questions concerning the sources, validity, and limits of human knowledge (Hadiwijono, 2014).

Within this context, two major schools of thought emerged and came to dominate epistemological debates: rationalism and empiricism.

Rationalism, represented by figures such as René Descartes and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, positions reason as the primary source of certain and universal knowledge. According to this view, genuine knowledge derives from a priori rational principles that are independent of sensory experience (Brouwer & Heryadi, 2016). In contrast, empiricism—developed by thinkers such as Francis Bacon, John Locke, and especially David Hume—asserts that sensory experience is the sole source of human knowledge. Hume argued that what humans know is merely a sequence of events, without any absolute certainty regarding causal relationships (Strathern, 2015).

Immanuel Kant emerged within this intellectual context through his critical philosophy as an attempt to reconcile rationalism and empiricism. Kant rejected the absolutization of reason characteristic of rationalism while simultaneously criticizing the reduction of knowledge to mere experience as proposed by empiricism. Through the concept of synthetic a priori judgments, Kant argued that knowledge is made possible by a synthesis between a priori elements (the forms and categories of reason) and a posteriori elements (the content of experience) (Kant, 2014). Thus, knowledge arises neither solely from reason nor from experience, but from their interaction within the structure of human cognition. This approach marked a significant shift from dogmatic rationalism and empirical skepticism toward critical philosophy (Acton, 2013).

Although Kantian epistemology has been widely discussed within the Western philosophical tradition—particularly in relation to modern science and metaphysics studies that situate Kant's thought within the perspective of Islamic studies remain relatively limited. This is noteworthy given that the Islamic intellectual tradition, since its early period, has developed an integrative epistemological framework that recognizes revelation, reason, and experience as complementary sources of knowledge. The Qur'an explicitly encourages the use of sensory perception and reason as means of acquiring knowledge, as affirmed in QS al-Nahl: 78 and QS al-Mu'minun: 78 (Azhim, 2013).

In the history of Islamic intellectual thought, epistemological synthesis is evident in the works of Muslim philosophers such as Ibn Bājjah, al-Ghazālī, Suhrawardī, Muhammad Iqbal, and Mullā Ṣadrā. Ibn Bājjah emphasized the role of reason and experience in the acquisition of knowledge; al-Ghazālī critically examined the limitations of sensory perception and rational knowledge while opening space for intuitive knowledge (*kashf*); and Suhrawardī developed Illuminationist philosophy, integrating rational and intuitive dimensions (Bakry, 2013; Bay, 2013). Subsequently, Iqbal and Mullā Ṣadrā formulated epistemological frameworks that integrate rationality, spiritual experience, and revelation into a unified intellectual system (Suyono, 2012).

However, these studies generally stand independently within the tradition of Islamic epistemology and are rarely placed in systematic dialogue with Kantian epistemology. This condition reveals a clear research gap, namely the lack of comparative studies that critically examine the relevance of Immanuel Kant's critical epistemology for the development of contemporary Islamic epistemology. Therefore, the central issue addressed in this study is how Kant's critical epistemology can be understood from the perspective of Islamic studies and to what extent these ideas are compatible with the integrative tradition of Islamic epistemology. This study aims to fill this gap by critically examining Kant's epistemology and situating it in dialogue with the thought of prominent Muslim epistemologists. In doing so, the research aligns directly with the focus and scope of Islamic studies journals, particularly in advancing contemporary Islamic epistemology, interdisciplinary integration of knowledge, and philosophical dialogue between Western and Islamic intellectual traditions.

Literature Review

Leibniz's epistemology stands in opposition to that of Hume. Leibniz argued that the source of human knowledge is reason alone, not experience. In contrast, Hume maintained that experience is the sole source of knowledge. According to Hume, everything known through

experience consists merely of the existence of one thing following another. Humans cannot access or articulate states of affairs beyond the scope of experience. Humans never truly experience something that causes another thing; rather, they only observe one event following another. Hume doubted everything that could not be confirmed by experience. This extreme skepticism undermined many long-held human beliefs, including the existence of God, which has never been directly experienced (Strathern, 2015).

According to Kant, despite Hume's profound skepticism, it remains possible to construct a metaphysics. This metaphysics would function as the foundation for a form of knowledge that is universal and logical knowledge that is immune to Hume's skeptical attacks. Immanuel Kant's metaphysics represents an attempt to establish a fundamental science capable of guaranteeing the certainty of knowledge. Kant introduced what he termed "critical philosophy," which involves a rigorous analysis of epistemology as a study of the foundations underlying human knowledge.

This philosophical approach marked a turning point away from dogmatic rationalism and empirical skepticism, seeking instead to secure the conditions that make knowledge possible rather than merely describing what constitutes knowledge. Kant's critical philosophy carefully investigates the limits and capacities of human reason, laying the groundwork for metaphysics as a science by demonstrating its rational legitimacy and defending it against skepticism. Thus, Kant's metaphysics and critical philosophy represent a systematic effort to reconcile reason and experience. Both aim to provide a robust epistemological foundation, positioning metaphysics not as speculative inquiry but as a critical and rigorous science capable of overcoming doubt and skepticism, particularly the radical skepticism advanced by Hume.

In his essay *Perpetual Peace*, Kant also articulated his views on cosmopolitan law. He sought to formulate the concept of cosmopolitan right in one of the definitive articles for perpetual peace. In the third definitive article, he stated: "The rights of human beings, as citizens of the world, shall be limited to the conditions of universal hospitality" (Dinebari D. Varaba & Dinebari D. Varaba, 2021).

According to Kant, in order to attain synthetic a priori knowledge, there exists a hierarchy within the human cognitive process, which includes the following stages:

1. The Level of Sensory Perception (the First and Lowest Level)

Knowledge begins with observation; however, contrary to the claims of empiricists, knowledge does not arise solely from observation. According to Kant, knowledge is a synthesis of elements that precede experience (*a priori* elements) and elements that arise from experience (*a posteriori* elements). The *a priori* elements function as the form of cognition, while the *a posteriori* elements serve as its matter.

With regard to *a priori* elements, Immanuel Kant maintains that these elements are already present at the level of sensory perception. At this level, there are two *a priori* forms, namely space and time. Sensory perception of objects through the senses is referred to as sensation. Sensation, according to Kant, is merely an awareness of human stimuli—taste on the tongue, smell in the nose, sound in the ear, light on the retina—but this constitutes only the raw beginning of experience and does not yet amount to knowledge. However, when these sensations are synthesized, they become objects situated in space and time (Moh. Muslehuddin, 2015). To demonstrate that space and time are *a priori* forms of knowledge, Kant presents two sets of arguments: the first is metaphysical in nature, and the second is epistemological, which he terms transcendental.

The first set of arguments is derived directly from the nature of space and time, whereas the second arises from the possibility of pure mathematics. Kant's four metaphysical arguments concerning space are as follows:

- a. Space is not an empirical concept derived from external experience, because the existence of space is presupposed whenever reference is made to something external, and external experience itself is only possible through the existence of space.

- b. Space is an absolute *a priori* condition of experience, underlying all external perceptions, because humans cannot conceive of the absence of space, even though they can conceive of space as empty of objects.
- c. Space is not discursive in nature, nor is it a general concept relating to the relations among objects as a whole, because there is only one space. What are commonly referred to as “spaces” are merely parts of space, not space as a totality.
- d. Space is presented as an infinite magnitude that encompasses all parts of space. This relation differs from that between a concept and its instances; therefore, space is not a concept but an “intuition” (in German, *Anschauung*, literally meaning “to see” or “to behold”) (Russell, 2012).

The transcendental (epistemological) argument concerning space is derived from geometry. Kant argues that geometry is known *a priori*, despite being synthetic, meaning that it cannot be derived from logic alone. According to Kant, geometrical proofs depend on intuition. For example, if two straight lines intersect perpendicularly, only one straight line perpendicular to both can be drawn through the point of intersection. Such knowledge, Kant argues, is not obtained from experience. This explains why geometry, although synthetic, is nevertheless *a priori* and apodictic (necessarily true). The argument concerning time is essentially the same, except that arithmetic replaces geometry, insofar as calculation necessarily presupposes time.

2. The Level of Understanding (*Verstand*)

At the level of understanding, in order to attain objective and universal knowledge, what has been obtained through sensory faculties must be processed and articulated by the understanding. At this stage, there are four groups of categories—quantity, quality, relation, and modality—each consisting of three categories, which together accommodate concrete phenomena derived from the sensory domain, resulting in a total of twelve categories. These twelve categories are presented in the table below (Immanuel Kant, 2014).

Table 1
Table of Categories

No.	Categories of Quantity	Categories of Quality	Categories of Relation	Categories of Modality
1.	Unity	Reality	Inherence and Subsistence (Substance–Accident)	Possibility – Impossibility
2.	Plurality	Negation	Causality and Dependence (Cause–Effect)	Existence – Non-existence
3.	Totality	Limitation	Community (Reciprocity between Agent and Patient)	Necessity – Contingency

These categories are referred to as *pure concepts* within the *a priori* synthesis of the understanding. They are further described as *pure concepts of the understanding* because they function solely to render the manifold of intuition thinkable. In other words, they constitute the mind’s intuition of an object (Immanuel Kant, 2014). All twelve categories are subjective in the same sense as space and time.

3. At the Level of Reason or Intellect (*Vernunft*)

Religious experience constitutes an object of study in religious studies based on the assumption that subjective religious experience is objectified into various forms of expression. These expressions possess positive structures that can be systematically examined. Religious experience is expressed in three principal forms:

first, *theoretical* or *intellectualistic* experience, which includes theology, cosmology, and anthropology; second, *practical* or *ritual* experience, namely acts of worship; and third, *sociological* experience, manifested in social interactions.

The theoretical expression (the first form) of religious experience primarily takes the form of myths, doctrines, and dogmas. Such theoretical expressions may be symbolic, oral, or written. The latter includes sacred scriptures and classical texts. In order to understand sacred texts, interpretive literature is required. This category includes the Talmud, the Zend written in Pahlavi, and the Hadith as exegetical explanations of the Qur'an. In India, this tradition is known as *smṛti*; among Protestants, the writings of Luther and Calvin serve a similar function. Major world religions also possess creeds, which constitute concise expressions of belief and faith: the "Twelve Creeds" in Christianity, the "two-sentence creed" in Islam, and the *Shema* in Judaism (Muhammad Afthon Ulun Nuha et al., 2022).

Kant demonstrates that reason constructs arguments guided by three transcendental ideas: the soul, the world, and God.

- a. The *psychological idea* (the soul) is the idea that underlies all inner phenomena. In the field of psychology, this gives rise to paralogsms, in which concepts are employed both empirically and meta-empirically.
- b. The *cosmological idea* (the world) is the idea that unifies all external phenomena.
- c. The *theological idea* (God) is the idea that grounds all phenomena, both internal and external, within an absolute being. In this domain, human reason seeks to demonstrate the existence of God, although such awareness cannot be theoretically proven.

Kant maintains that these three ideas aspire to the unity and completeness sought by reason in organizing the phenomenal world (*phainomenon*: "that which appears," the sensible and observable world). These ideas regulate arguments concerning human experience. Since experience occurs exclusively within the phenomenal realm, the three ideas themselves belong to the noumenal world (*noumenon*: "that which is thought," the invisible realm of ideas and inner reality). They do not constitute concepts of sensible reality, nor do they refer to the *thing in itself* (*das Ding an sich*). Rather, they function as epistemological postulates or axioms that lie beyond the reach of theoretical-empirical proof.

Kant thus arrives at a negative conclusion distinct from that of Hume and nineteenth- and twentieth-century positivists, arguing that a priori proofs of God, freedom, and the soul are fundamentally futile. Metaphysics, understood as a rational explanation of how the world ought to be, must therefore be rejected. There is only one legitimate way to discover the world, namely by investigating it through the methods of the natural sciences, since human beings themselves are part of nature. Nevertheless, the *Critique of Pure Reason* is not entirely negative. Kant asserts that the deterministic world disclosed by natural science is the world as it appears to beings who perceive it through the senses. Humans may nevertheless acknowledge the noumenal possibility of realities that are not subject to causal determination. Neither God nor the immaterial soul can be known scientifically, yet both remain possible. While humans cannot possess theoretical knowledge of God and the soul, there may exist practical grounds for believing in their existence.

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach using a library research method, aiming to conduct an in-depth analysis of Immanuel Kant's critical epistemology and

its relevance from the perspective of Islamic studies. The qualitative approach was selected because the research focuses on conceptual and philosophical examination rather than empirical measurement (Widodo, 2009).

The research procedure was carried out through several systematic stages. The first stage involved the identification and collection of data sources, consisting of both primary and secondary materials. The primary sources of this study are the works of Immanuel Kant, particularly *Critique of Pure Reason*, which contain the fundamental concepts of critical epistemology, such as synthetic *a priori* judgments, *a priori* categories, and the limits of human knowledge (Kant, 2001). Secondary sources include philosophical books, scholarly journal articles, and academic studies discussing rationalism, empiricism, Kantian epistemology, and Islamic epistemology, both classical and contemporary (Tarman & Suherman, 2004; Sinaga & Putri, 2018).

The second stage involved data analysis using a descriptive-analytical method. At the descriptive level, the researcher systematically explicates Kant's core ideas regarding the structure of human cognition, the relationship between *a priori* and *a posteriori* knowledge, and the role of reason in shaping experience (Budi, 2016). At the analytical level, these concepts are critically examined to assess their epistemological coherence and to explore their relevance within the context of Islamic studies, particularly concerning the integration of reason, experience, and revelation as sources of knowledge.

The third stage applies a comparative method by juxtaposing Immanuel Kant's critical epistemology with Islamic epistemology. At this stage, Kant's thought is placed in dialogue with the ideas of Muslim thinkers such as Ibn Bājjah, al-Ghazālī, Suhrawardī, Muhammad Iqbal, and Mullā Ṣadrā, who represent rational, empirical, and spiritual approaches within the Islamic intellectual tradition (Wittimena, 2010; Dinata, 2022). This comparative analysis aims to identify points of convergence, divergence, and potential epistemological integration between Western and Islamic thought.

Through these stages, the research methodology is applied consistently to produce a systematic and in-depth philosophical analysis. The qualitative library-based approach, combined with descriptive, analytical, and comparative techniques, enables this study to highlight the contribution of Immanuel Kant's critical epistemology while reinforcing its relevance for the development of contemporary Islamic epistemological studies.

Within the context of Islamic education, research ethics extend beyond merely fulfilling administrative requirements; they involve the internalization of moral values such as honesty and responsibility toward research subjects. Researchers are expected to respect and uphold the dignity of participants, ensuring that the research process is conducted fairly and transparently, from data collection to the reporting of findings (Aliwan, 2025).

Results and Discussion

Immanuel Kant's critical epistemology is a philosophy of knowledge that seeks to investigate the limits of reason as a source of human knowledge. Kant's critique can be regarded as a monumental effort to reconcile rationalism and empiricism by integrating both traditions. This position indicates that, in Kant's critical philosophy, neither reason nor experience is treated as absolute. Instead, Kant harmoniously incorporates elements found in both rationalism and empiricism into a unified source of knowledge. This synthesis is based on Kant's assessment of the respective strengths and weaknesses of the two opposing schools of thought. For Kant, rationalism can

provide universal truths but cannot generate new information because it absolutizes reason in the acquisition of knowledge. Empiricism, on the other hand, can provide new information but lacks universality because it relies exclusively on experience as the source of knowledge.

According to Kant, genuine knowledge must be universally valid and capable of providing new information. Therefore, knowledge is essentially synthetic *a priori*, combining rational and empirical elements through three hierarchical levels, from the lowest to the highest: sensory perception, understanding, and reason. It is undeniable that the success of Kant's *Critique* was built upon the achievements of earlier great thinkers, whose ideas he critically examined by identifying their limitations, correcting doubts, and developing their findings and methods. Beginning with early philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle, continuing through thinkers contemporary with Wolff, and passing through Descartes and Leibniz—especially Hume, whom Kant acknowledged as having awakened him from his “dogmatic slumber”—Kant did not confine himself merely to the objects of knowledge but extended his inquiry to the conditions that shape human understanding (Harb, 2013).

The concepts of reason and experience in Kant's *Critique* as means of acquiring knowledge do not contradict the Qur'an, particularly QS al-Nahl: 78 and QS al-Mu'minun: 78. These verses state: “And Allah brought you out of your mothers' wombs knowing nothing, and He gave you hearing, sight, and hearts so that you might give thanks” (QS al-Nahl: 78), and “And it is He who produced for you hearing, sight, and hearts; little are you grateful” (QS al-Mu'minun: 78).

The content of QS al-Nahl: 78 and QS al-Mu'minun: 78 indicates that the Qur'an invites human beings to employ sensory faculties and intellect simultaneously, encompassing both material and spiritual dimensions. Sense perception and reason complement one another; they are neither separate nor independent, as claimed by empiricist and rationalist philosophers. In this regard, Kant's concept of synthetic *a priori* knowledge—which holds that knowledge arises from both reason and experience—is not incompatible with the Qur'anic worldview.

Furthermore, within the Islamic intellectual tradition, epistemology employs various methods and sources of knowledge to attain truth and reality. Differences in fundamental ontology naturally lead to differences in epistemological methods, such as sense perception, reason, intuition, *kashf*, and other approaches. These methods reveal both the strengths and limitations of epistemological systems in validating knowledge (Wibisono et al., 2016). In this context, Miska Muh. Amien defines Islamic epistemology as a human effort to deeply investigate issues of objectivity, methodology, sources, and validation of knowledge, using Islam as the foundational point of departure.

Thus, epistemology in Islam also occupies a central position as a normative framework that defines goals and delineates boundaries. Islam itself recognizes three main epistemological frameworks:

1. Bayānī Epistemology, a philosophical study of a system of knowledge that places text (revelation as absolute truth) at the center, while reason occupies a secondary role, functioning primarily to justify the text. The Bayānī method focuses on understanding and analyzing texts to uncover meanings embedded in words and to derive legal rulings, particularly from the Qur'an. The role of reason in this method is limited to the validation of textual interpretation.
2. Burhānī Epistemology, a philosophical study of a system of knowledge that positions reason, experimentation, and logical laws as primary sources of

knowledge. The Burhānī approach is grounded in the power of reason through logical instruments such as induction, deduction, abduction, symbolic reasoning, procedural logic, and other methods.

3. 'Irfānī Epistemology, which refers to knowledge acquired through inspiration (*ilhām*) and unveiling (*kashf*), a method known prior to Islam. The 'Irfānī method relies on inner experiential instruments such as *dhawq*, *qalb*, *wijdān*, *baṣīrah*, and intuition (Pradana & Teluk ZTF, 2013). As mapped by al-Jābirī, Islamic sciences—including kalām, fiqh, taṣawwuf, and Islamic philosophy—can be categorized into these three epistemological forms: Bayānī, 'Irfānī, and Burhānī (A. Khudari Shaleh et al., 2013).

In this regard, M. Amin Abdullah, within the Muslim intellectual discourse, identifies three commonly discussed types of knowledge theories:

1. Rational Knowledge, namely knowledge derived from reason, represented by figures such as al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, Ibn Bājjah, Ibn Ṭufayl, Ibn Rushd, and others.
2. Sensory Knowledge, knowledge limited to the classification of sources of knowledge, which has not been extensively developed into a comprehensive theory by philosophers.
3. Kashf Knowledge, knowledge obtained through inspiration and spiritual unveiling.

Among these three theories of knowledge, rational knowledge has exerted the most dominant influence on the Islamic philosophical tradition. Meanwhile, sensory (empirical) knowledge has received relatively less emphasis, despite the Qur'an's strong encouragement to employ the senses as sources of knowledge. Nevertheless, among the three forms of Islamic epistemology, integration or combination among them—or with additional epistemic elements—is by no means impossible.

For instance, Ibn Bājjah, as a Muslim philosopher in the Western Islamic world, explained that knowledge can be acquired through experimental methods. Experimentation necessarily involves the senses. However, Ibn Bājjah also asserted that sensory observation alone is insufficient for attaining truth and must be elevated to the level of intellectual observation (reason). With regard to God, human beings can know Him through philosophy: *“By thinking independently (philosophizing), humans can attain ma'rifah of the highest intellect, namely God Almighty”* (Bakry, 2013). It may therefore be concluded that Ibn Bājjah's thought represents a synthesis of reason and empirical observation. In the realm of factual knowledge, he employed a rational-empirical method, while in matters concerning divine truth, he maintained that truth can be known by human beings once they attain intellectual awareness.

Similarly, al-Ghazālī, as a central figure in Sufism, developed a distinctive mystical mode of thought. Studying al-Ghazālī's epistemology is as complex as examining Immanuel Kant's critical epistemology, particularly in understanding the internal structure of his reasoning. Al-Ghazālī's method begins with doubt—comparable to that of René Descartes. However, the doubt that characterizes al-Ghazālī is not skepticism in the strict sense. Rather, he doubted—or more precisely, suspended trust in—the reliability of the senses and reason until they had been critically examined. As he stated, after doubt and suspicion arise, one realizes that knowledge based merely on conviction does not constitute certain knowledge. Any unit of knowledge that is uncertain or undefined cannot be considered true knowledge.

After questioning the reliability of the senses, al-Ghazālī also cast doubt on reason. This is evident in his discussion of *maḥsūsāt* (sense-perceived knowledge), where he suggests that beyond the determinations of reason, there may emerge other relations that render rational judgments potentially erroneous. From this doubt, al-

Ghazālī transformed his method of seeking truth. Initially relying on the senses and reason, he eventually turned to the heart (*qalb*), a transition that marked the development of his Sufism.

Historians note that prior to the emergence of al-Ghazālī's Sufi synthesis, Muslim intellectual history was characterized by intense conflicts between jurists (*fuqahā'*) and Sufis, as well as between Sufis and the Ash'arite theological school. Al-Ghazālī played a decisive role in reconciling these opposing camps. As a result, jurists came to accept Sufism, and Sufis came to acknowledge the authority of jurisprudence. For al-Ghazālī, Sufism was not an independent doctrine separate from Sharī'ah. This is clearly reflected in his *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, which represents a harmonious integration of fiqh, Sufism, and theology (*kalām*).

In addition, Suhrawardī is renowned for his *Ishrāqī* (Illuminationist) philosophy, which synthesizes discursive and intuitive methods. Suhrawardī's Illuminism marks a significant shift in Islamic philosophical thought due to its mystical orientation. Through *Ishrāqiyyah*, Suhrawardī sought to demonstrate the inability of pure reason to grasp the essence of truth, while simultaneously criticizing al-Ghazālī's Sufism for its excessive reliance on intuition.

He proposed a new intellectual construction by uniting religious truth and metaphysics derived from ancient Persian philosophy, Iranian traditions, Greek philosophy, and Islamic thought. By bridging rationality (discursive reasoning) and mysticism (intuition), Suhrawardī aimed to uncover the essence of truth. This reconstructive effort resembles what Kant later described—by analogy—as a “Copernican revolution.” Prior to Kant, it was generally assumed that human cognition must conform to objects; Kant reversed this assumption by arguing that objects must conform to the structures of human cognition. Although Kant himself did not explicitly use the term “Copernican revolution,” he referred instead to a “revolution in the mode of thinking” (*Revolution der Denkart*) (Hutabarat, 2021).

The central concept of *Ishrāqiyyah* lies in symbolic representations that integrate traditional thought with Hermeticism and the philosophies of Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, Zoroaster, and other traditions. The core of Illuminist doctrine centers on the nature and symbolism of light (*nūr*). In *Ishrāqiyyah*, light is immaterial and indefinable. All reality consists of layers of light and darkness. Suhrawardī refers to absolute reality as the divine, infinite, and limitless light—the *Light of Lights* (*nūr al-anwār*). *Ishrāqiyyah* allows reason to explore truth while simultaneously offering religion, philosophy, and Sufism as means for attaining spiritual truth (Fathoni, 2014).

Furthermore, Muhammad Iqbal, as a major Islamic philosopher after Ibn Rushd, particularly in *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, sought to integrate the legacy of classical Islamic knowledge, especially *kalām*. He not only combined Sufism and Islamic philosophy—an integration that had already emerged in the late classical or early medieval period with the rise of philosophical Sufism—but also sought to integrate *kalām* with philosophy and to reconcile theology with Sufism. In this regard, Gibb expressed surprise at Iqbal's ambition to reconstruct Islamic theology, noting that what Iqbal proposed was not orthodox theology but rather a Sufi-oriented theology.

Iqbal's *vision* of integrating *kalām* and Sufism is clearly expressed in his conception of the unity of existence, as he stated:

“The Supreme Ego, as revealed in the Qur'an, is Self-sufficient and independent of the world. For *Him*, the non-ego does not exist as an opposing other; otherwise, our limited ego would stand in a partial relationship with something external to it.

What we call the world or the non-ego is merely a fleeting moment in the life of God” (Suyono, 2012).

Subsequently, Mullā Ṣadrā, renowned for his *al-Ḥikmah al-Muta’aliyah* (Transcendent Theosophy), introduced a new perspective in Islamic intellectual history based on the synthesis and harmonization of nearly all major Islamic schools of thought. He was an intellectual figure who unified the aims of revelation, the essence of truth attained through *dhawq* and *kashf*, and rational reasoning and demonstration. In this synthesis, the harmonious integration of *’irfān*, philosophy, and religion is clearly evident.

Rational demonstration in the Islamic philosophical tradition does not stand independently but exists in a dialectical relationship with the Qur’an and the Prophetic tradition. This relationship is reinforced by *’irfānī* doctrine, which conceives knowledge as intellectual illumination achieved through spiritual purification and symbolic interpretation of sacred texts. Within this framework, reason is not positioned as the sole epistemic authority but functions alongside revelation and intellectual intuition (*dhawq*) in the pursuit of truth (Nasr, 2006; Corbin, 1993). Unlike modern Western rationalism, which tends to elevate reason as the supreme source of knowledge, Islamic epistemology particularly within the *ḥikmah ishrāqiyyah* tradition—situates reason within an integrative epistemic structure.

Mullā Ṣadrā systematically classified the intellect into four levels—potential intellect, actualizing intellect, actual intellect, and acquired intellect—to demonstrate that human rational capacity is gradual and requires spiritual perfection (Ṣadrā, 1981). This framework implicitly critiques epistemologies that confine knowledge to discursive rationality alone. Ṣadrā argued that truth cannot be attained through literal imitation of religious texts without rational inquiry, while simultaneously rejecting the claim that reason alone can reach ultimate truth without the guidance of revelation. Thus, religion and reason are positioned in a complementary relationship in which each completes and corrects the other (Ṣadrā, 2002).

From a comparative perspective, Immanuel Kant’s critical epistemology reveals both fundamental convergences and divergences with Islamic epistemology. Kant sought to reconcile rationalism and empiricism through the concept of synthetic *a priori* judgments by restricting the operation of reason to the phenomenal realm and asserting the impossibility of metaphysical knowledge through pure reason alone (Kant, 2001). While this move successfully secured the validity of modern scientific knowledge, it simultaneously closed off epistemic access to metaphysical reality (*noumena*). In contrast, Islamic epistemology—as reflected in Mullā Ṣadrā’s thought—not only acknowledges the limits of reason but also affirms the possibility of metaphysical knowledge through revelation and intellectual intuition as epistemically legitimate sources (Nasr, 2006; Iqbal, 2012).

The principal contribution of this study lies in its argument that Kant’s critical epistemology may be understood as an important methodological stage toward the integration of knowledge, yet one that does not reach the level of ontological integration developed within Islamic epistemology. By placing Kant in dialogue with Muslim philosophers such as Mullā Ṣadrā, this study demonstrates that Islamic epistemology offers a more comprehensive integrative model, as it not only synthesizes reason and experience but also integrates them with revelation as a source of transcendent truth (Al-Attas, 1995; Amin Abdullah, 2014). These findings enrich contemporary Islamic epistemological discourse and open critical space for dialogue

between Western philosophy and Islamic thought in articulating a holistic paradigm of knowledge.

Conclusion

This study contributes to the development of Islamic epistemological discourse by offering a critical reading of Immanuel Kant's critical epistemology within a dialogical framework that engages the Islamic intellectual tradition. Its primary contribution lies in the argument that Kantian epistemology represents an important methodological approach toward the integration of knowledge, yet it does not reach the level of ontological integration developed within Islamic epistemology, which synthesizes reason, experience, and revelation. In this way, the study expands contemporary Islamic studies through a comparative and cross-traditional philosophical approach.

The theoretical implications of this study indicate that the integration of knowledge in Islamic studies should not be confined to a rational-empirical synthesis alone, but must also incorporate the transcendental dimension as a legitimate source of epistemic authority. Practically, these findings provide a conceptual foundation for the development of an Islamic scientific paradigm, particularly within Islamic higher education, by offering guidance for formulating more holistic models of knowledge integration grounded in the principles of Islamic epistemology.

Future research is encouraged to extend this analysis by engaging contemporary Muslim thinkers and addressing current issues such as the integration of religion and science in Islamic education, Islamic research methodologies, and curriculum development based on integrative epistemology. Furthermore, empirical studies examining the implementation of integrative epistemological paradigms within academic practice and Islamic educational institutions constitute an important agenda for future scholarly inquiry.

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