Title: Epistemology of Tafsīr, Ta‘wīl, and Hermeneutics: Towards an Integrative Approach

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Epistemology of \textit{Tafsīr}, \textit{Ta'wīl}, and Hermeneutics: Towards an Integrative Approach

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Abstract

The current research comparatively examines the three models \textit{tafsīr}, \textit{ta'wīl}, and hermeneutics for understanding/interpreting the Qur'ānic text. It aims to explore the epistemological structure of \textit{tafsīr} (interpretation), \textit{ta'wīl} (explanation of inner meaning), and hermeneutics, dissect the strengths and weaknesses of each, and propose a creative synthesis between these three elements. By using the comparative method, this research found that \textit{tafsīr} tends to have an objective ethic guided by a linguistic approach (\textit{dalālah luğawiyah}). On the other hand, \textit{ta'wīl} tends to prioritize subjective personalities based on an intuitive and rational approach. Meanwhile, hermeneutics prioritizes intersubjectivity using historical, sociological, and psychological approaches. The argument based on the source of knowledge of \textit{tafsīr} is text, while according to \textit{ta'wīl} it is the "inner experience". However, the source of knowledge for hermeneutics is the world of the text, author, and the reader. Due to their advantages and disadvantages, this research recommends using an integrated approach for understanding the text (al-Quran). \textit{Tafsīr} is used to explore external aspects of the text (language). Hermeneutics helps to understand the reader's contemporary situation with all the prejudices, assessments, and traditions surrounding it. At the same time, \textit{ta'wīl} is necessary to relate the results obtained to the methods of interpretation and hermeneutics. In this case, the task of \textit{ta'wīl} is to find the "deepest meaning" that connects the objectivity of \textit{tafsīr} and the subjectivity of hermeneutics. This "deepest meaning" can be a moral idea \textit{ʿillat al-ḥukm} (ratio legit) or Sharia goals (\textit{maqāshid al-sharīʿah}).

\textbf{Keywords:} epistemology, hermeneutics, integrative approach, objectivism, subjectivism, \textit{tafsīr}, \textit{ta'wīl}

Introduction

The Qur'ān is the main source of Islamic teachings, apart from ḥadīth (prophetic tradition) and \textit{ijtihād} (independent reasoning). Therefore, the Qur'ān has become the main reference in the study of traditional Islamic sciences. Along with the development of science and technology, which impacts societal changes, then the social sciences, and philosophy have recently emerged that try to respond to and criticize these changes. The changes in society require the traditional Islamic sciences to respond proportionally. The dialectics and struggle between traditional Islamic sciences, modern social sciences, and contemporary philosophy have given rise to the demands for a new way of understanding the Qur'ān.

In other words, the Qur'ān needs to be studied using methods of understanding the text relevant to contemporary situations. At least, until today, there are three dominant methods of understanding the Qur'ānic text which are \textit{tafsīr}, \textit{ta'wīl}, and hermeneutics. \textit{Tafsīr} and \textit{ta'wīl} methods grew and developed in classical Islamic scholarship, while hermeneutics developed in the Western tradition,

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Studies of the Qurʾān using the methods of *tafṣīr*, *taʿwīl*, and hermeneutics have been widely carried out. Research in the field of *tafṣīr* (exegesis) has even developed into two typologies of *tafṣīr*, namely *tafṣīr bi al-maʾṭsūr* (Qurʾānic interpretation based on history) and *tafṣīr bi al-raʿyi* (Qurʾānic interpretation based on rational thinking). Even further, *tafṣīr* scholars have developed methods of interpreting the Qurʾān, which include the *tafṣīr tahlīli* (textual analysis of Qurʾānic verse), the *tafṣīr ijmālī* (method to explore the meaning of the verse globally), the *tafṣīr maqārān* (method to reveal the meaning of verses by comparing two or more *tafṣīr* books), and the *tafṣīr maudūʿī* (method to connect one verse with another verse that has a similar theme). Apart from that, some contemporary thinkers also offer *tafṣīr maqāṣid* models (interpretations based on the aim of transmitting the Qurʾān).

Some researchers use these three interpretation methods independently and in isolation from other methods. However, each method has strengths and weaknesses in exploring the meaning of the Qurʾānic text. Therefore, this research attempts to dissect the characteristics of *tafṣīr*, *taʿwīl*, and hermeneutics epistemologically. After that, this research also examined the strengths and weaknesses of each. In the end, this research will offer a new perspective on understanding the text of the Qurʾān without abandoning the Al-Qurʾān text's roots.

2. Definition of Tafsīr, Ta’wīl, and Hermeneutics

According to some scholars, the word tafsīr is a maṣdar form of the words fassara-yufassiru-tafsīran, which is equivalent to the meaning of al-bayān or al-īḍah (which means explanation and interpretation).9 Conceptually, tafsīr is often understood as an attempt to explain the meaning of a difficult sentence.10 Therefore, tafsīr contains methodical steps to understand the text of the Qur’ān along with explaining the meaning and legal implications.11

Subsequently, the term ta’wil is a derivation of the word a-w-l which means "to return" or "to revert." This implies the need of returning to the original meaning of a word for its connotation and meaning.12 Conceptually, ta’wil is often understood in various ways. Manna‘ al-Qathtan, for example, defines ta’wil as an effort to return from an explicit meaning (rājiḥ) to an implicit meaning (marjūḥ) because there is evidence that can be used as an indicator (qarīnah).13 While Al-Zarkasyi defines ta’wil as an effort to return a verse to the meaning it contains.14 Meanwhile, Nasr Abu Zaid said that ta’wil means returning to actions or words to capture the meaning intended by the source (al-aṣl) and the meaning of the context.15 Even though they define ta’wil in various ways, they argue that ta’wil is rooted in the central postulate that everything (text) always has an exoteric-external and spiritual-esoteric dimension.16 This postulate shows that ta’wil tries to find a text’s second meaning (esoteric spiritual aspect). The second meaning is also called the inner meaning as opposed to the literal or exoteric (ẓāhir) meaning.17 Therefore, ta’wil is understood as an explanation of the inner and hidden meanings of the Qur’ān.

Because of this, the work of ta’wil is very different from tafsīr. If tafsīr is related to the exoteric or outer dimension of the text, ta’wil is related to the esoteric or inner dimension. To differentiate between tafsīr and ta’wil, Syed Farid al-Attas gave an example of its application by referring to the verse, "He brings life from death."18

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13Manāl Al-Qatthān, Mabāḥīts Fī Ulūm Al-Qur’ān [Discourses in the Quranic Sciences] (Beirut: Darul Fikri, n.d.).

14Al-Zarkasyi, Al-Burhān Fī Ulūm Al-Qurān [The Proof in the Sciences of the Qur’ān].


18Al-An’ām 6:95.
from eggs, for example, this is *tafsīr*. However, if it is understood that “God prioritizes believers over polytheists or prioritizes the knowledgeable over the ignorant, then this is *ta’wīl*” because it contains a deep meaning.¹⁹

Meanwhile, hermeneutics is a derivation of the word *hermeneuein* (Greek) which means to interpret.²⁰ Card Breaten then defined hermeneutics as a science that attempts to understand words or events in the past that are still abstract in order to make them meaningful in the present situation.²¹ In the hermeneutic view, a text always has a structure of ideas and language that represents these ideas. These two components of ideas and language must be considered crucial in understanding a text.²² Therefore, hermeneutics develops a hermeneutical circle model between text, author, and reader integrally. Implicitly, this triadic structure contains hermeneutic conceptual problems regarding the nature of the text, the methods used to understand the text, and how the presuppositions, beliefs, or horizons of the text's target audience determine understanding and interpretation.²³

3. Construction of the Epistemology of *Tafsīr*, *Ta’wīl*, and Hermeneutics

Epistemology is a philosophical study that discusses the knowledge's nature and scope, basic assumptions, and validity.²⁴ In addition, epistemology is also defined as the philosophical study of knowledge regarding its nature, requirements, and limitations.²⁵ In other words, epistemology is a theory of knowledge that discusses in depth the issues of the nature, source, and validity of the knowledge.

3.1. The Nature of Knowledge

The first issue that arises in epistemological discourse is the nature of knowledge. Two views explain the nature of knowledge, namely realism and idealism.²⁶ Realism has several forms but empirical realism is the most basic form as stated by Immanuel Kant in *the Critique of Pure Reason*. Meanwhile, the basic form of idealism is transcendental idealism.²⁷

In the view of realism, the existence of a being lies within itself (being is being).²⁸ Realism argues that reality is mind-independent or that metaphysics is about the objective world as it is.

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Realism means that "being" (ousia) only belongs to concrete objects. Therefore, the essence of knowledge is a representation or copy of the real world. Consequently, realism adopts an objectivist view. Objectivism believes that there are objects whose existential nature does not depend on the subject.29

Meanwhile, idealism believes that the essence of everything lies in the soul or idea. For adherents of idealism, soul, reason, or ideas occupy an important position. As a consequence, idealism adopts a subjectivist view. Subjectivism believes that knowledge is a subjective mental process. Knowledge is a description according to the subject's point of view. Consequently, searching for knowledge will end in a purely subjective idea or event.30

If examined from these two points of view, tafsīr tends to develop an objectivist character in interpreting the Qurʾān which is supported by a linguistic approach (dalālah lugāwiyyah). Armed with the linguistic rules of the anic text, interpreters try to understand the Qurʾān within the boundaries of external language.31 This objectivist character is based on the theological belief that the Qurʾān is Qadīm (eternal) as found in Ashʿariyah doctrine.32 For Ashʿariyah, the doctrine of the eternity of the Qurʾān has implications for the eternity of the commands and prohibitions of the Qurʾān which transcend history and are free from human interference in its formation.

This concept of the eternity of the Qurʾān then gave rise to the ways for interpreters who tended to exaggerate in cultivating the text, thus giving birth to a shift from a factual historical language to an ahistorical-spiritual text. This assumption is based on the Asyariah doctrine which differentiates the word of Allah into kalām nafsī (ahistorical kalām) and kalām hissī (historical kalām). Apart from that, the concept of the eternity of the Qurʾān has given rise to the belief that there is a unity between meaning (al-maʿna) and text (al-lafż). As a result, the meaning of a text (kalām hissī) must follow the ahistorical kalām (kalām nafsī) so that the meaning of the text becomes closed and no one can penetrate the essence of the kalām nafsī. This concept of the unity of material kalām hissī and immaterial kalām nafsī has become dominant in the tradition of tafsīr epistemology.33


The debate on the theory of the eternity of the Qurʿān can be explained using the terminology of the theory Structuralism by Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913). Saussure distinguished between parole and langue. Parole (conversation) is individual language (speech/language use), while langue is language that is transformed into a language system. If parole is a thought, then langue is an instrument for presenting that thought.34

If applied to the Qurʿān, the Qurʿān has the dimension of both parole (kalām) that is the word of God, and langue (luġat) that is the Arabic language medium used as an instrument to communicate His words. In addressing the relationship between parole and langue, the epistemology of tafsīr places parole and langue as a unity. As a result, textual understanding tends to be more dominant when compared to the attempts to leave out the textual meaning of the verse. In other words, the true meaning of a verse is contained in the internal of that verse itself.35

In contrast to tafsīr, taʿwīl tends to develop a character of subjectivism in interpreting the Qurʿān which is supported by an intuitive approach. This subjectivist character is based on al-Ghazali’s view which greatly emphasizes on the text's inner aspect. Starting from the project of revitalizing religious sciences (ihyāʿ ʿulūmuddin), al-Ghazali has developed the concept of text dualism and differentiated it into the outer and inner aspects of the text (zāhir-bāṭin).36 The inner aspect is the core and substance contained in the text, while the outer aspect is the outer packaging that encloses the text and through which the text appears communicative to human thought. If the episteme of bayānī (tafsīr) makes a difference between al-lafẓ (the text) and al-maʿna (the meaning), the episteme of ‘irfānī (taʿwīl) makes a difference between zhāhir and bāthin. The difference is in the bayānī episteme where one departs from al-lafẓ (the text) towards al-maʿna (the meaning), whereas in the ‘irfānī episteme one departs from al-maʿna (the meaning) towards al-lafẓ (the text) or in al-Ghazali’s view, meaning as core (asl) while text follows meaning (furūʿ).37

If we use Saussurean terminology, taʿwīl tends to arbitrarily place the relationship between parole and langue. It means that the Qurʿān as parole (kalām) is eternal, while the Qurʿān as langue (luġat) is historical. Therefore, taʿwīl opens up the possibility of a different understanding between the dimensions of parole (kalām) and langue (luġat). Even from a taʿwīl point of view, understanding parole (kalām) is much more important than langue (luġat) because taʿwīl seeks to go beyond symbols (mitsāl) to penetrate into the inner secrets of the text in order to regain its original meaning. Therefore, taʿwīl can only be carried out by those with intellectual and spiritual authority. As a result, taʿwīl epistemology accommodates subjective understanding.

The subjectivist character of ta’wil is based on the theological arguments that originated from the word of Allah, wamā ya’ lamu ta wilahu illā Allah wa al-rāsikhūnā fi al-‘ilmi. 38 Thus, ta’wil is the inner interpretation (esoteric exegesis), while tafsīr is related to the outer interpretation (exoteric exegesis).39 According to Muhammad Shahrur, what is meant by al-rāsikhūnā fi al-‘ilmi are the scientists in philosophy, science, astronomy, and historians in their capacity as experts in the field of objective-empirical sciences. These collective scientists can then work together according to their scientific specifications in interpreting the Qur’ān.40

Meanwhile, hermeneutics further develops the dialectical character of knowledge between objectivity and subjectivity. Suppose tafsīr assumes the eternity of the Qur’ān (Qadīm). In that case, ta wil assumes the dualism of the Qur’ān into the outer and inner dimensions (zāhir-bāṭin) and views the inner aspect as more important than the outer aspect of the text. Then, hermeneutics develops the idea of the text's historicity to get the moral idea of the Qur’ān. Further on, this moral idea must be brought into the contemporary social world (subjectivity).

The idea of the historicity of the Qur’ān comes from the Mu'tazilah doctrine, which believed in the historicity of the Qur’ān and wanted to answer the problems of the reading community.41 Therefore, the interpreter's task is to make a conceptual analogy between "the world of the human being" and "the world of God," as well as make an analogy between the Arabic social world of the Prophet Muhammad and the contemporary social world of Muslims. Therefore, the interpretation of holy books must be dynamic and contextual to provide solutions to society's problems.42

### 4. The Source of Knowledge

The second epistemological problem is the source of knowledge. Based on the definition of tafsīr, implementing the tafsīr always requires a medium (tafsīrah), namely the text or more specifically, the external dimension of the text. Apart from texts, tafsīr also relies on knowledge that has been previously obtained (a priori) in the form of narrations and other authentic sources in the Islamic tradition.43 However, the main source of knowledge for tafsīr remains the text, especially the Qur’ān and the hadith.

In tafsīr methods, linguistics occupies a primary position. These linguistic sciences include the science of morphological and semantic forms, the relationship between signifiers and signifieds, and the science of deviation and change processes (conjugation). Apart from that, other linguistic knowledge that is very important is the nahwu and i'rāb, as well as the knowledge of balāgah (eloquence or clarity of speech).44

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38 Al-i-Imran 3:07.
39 Esack, Qur’ān Liberation and Pluralism: An Islamic Perspective of Interreligious Solidarity against Oppression.
Even though *tafsīr* has tried to develop aspects related to the chronology of the text. Therefore, there is no place for *ijtiḥād* to correct or compromise the text narrations. These aspects are not semantic-*ijtiḥādiyyah* aspects where the interpreter has a role in determining them. Besides that, *tafsīr* has also positioned *asbāb al-nuzūl* (history of the text) as a source of supporting knowledge. Nevertheless, what is meant by *asbāb al-nuzūl* in the method of *tafsīr* is *asbāb al-nuzūl* which relates to the text. Therefore, *asbāb al-nuzūl* here is often defined as an event or question asked by the companions of the Prophet which was the cause of the revelation of a verse.\(^{45}\)

The hegemony of texts in this *tafsīr* tradition gives rise to the methodical implications for *tafsīr*. It always attempts to trace the relationship between the signified (al-*ma’na*) and the signifier (al-*lafẓ*). Therefore, reasoning is the method related to processes and procedures in obtaining knowledge which leads to *qiyās* (analogy) and prioritizes a deductive thinking framework (*qiyaṣ ʿirfānī*). This analogical reasoning can be *qiyaṣ ʿillah* (based on text similarities) in *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) or *qiyās al-dalālah* (based on similarities in some indicators) in *kalām* (Islamic theology).

In contrast to *tafsīr*, *ta’wīl* does not always require a medium (*tafsīrah*). In *tafsīr*, the medium is text and *asbāb al-nuzūl*, while for *ta’wīl* the source of knowledge is the “inner” *experience,”* which in the *Iṣyrāqi* tradition will give birth to *‘ilm al-hudlūrī* (direct experience). Therefore, the method of acquiring knowledge of *ta’wil* is *qiyās ʿirfānī* (analogical reasoning based on similarities in the deepest meaning).

This model of *qiyās ʿirfānī* is different from *qiyaṣ ʿayānī* as developed by *tafsīr*. If *qiyaṣ ʿayānī* requires element ratio *legis* (*’illat*) to build the relationship between the signified (al-*ma’na*) and the signifier (al-*lafẓ*) then *qiyās ʿirfānī* does not require any conditions.\(^{46}\) Apart from that, in *qiyaṣ ʿayānī* an interpreter departs from the signifier (al-*lafẓ*) to the signified (al-*ma’na*), so in *qiyās ʿirfānī* someone departs from the signified (al-*ma’na*) to the signifier (al-*lafẓ*) or from *bātin* to *zāhir*. In the relationship built by *qiyās ʿirfānī*, the signified (al-*ma’na*) is *āsλ*, while the signifier (al-*lafẓ*) is *furū‘*.\(^{47}\)

Therefore, *qiyās ʿirfānī* is not conquered to any particular formal rules. It starts from similarities in the relationships between structures then draws a common pattern that unifies the two.\(^{48}\) *Qiyās ʿirfānī* attempts to adapt the knowledge obtained through the *kasīf* (al-*āsλ*) within the text (al-*furū‘*). In other words, *qiyās ʿirfānī* follow the principle *qiyaṣ al-ghaib ʿala al-syāhid* (analogizing ideality with reality) or the written text is adjusted to the ideas of the mind based on *isyārāt* (inner guidance).

If the origin of knowledge (source of knowledge) in the *tafsīr* is text and in the *ta’wil* is “inner *experience*” then the origin of knowledge in hermeneutics is more broadly not only the text and the world of the author, but also the world of the reader. These three sources of knowledge are then put into dialogue in a "hermeneutical circle" logic as stated by Schlieermacher and further developed by Wilhelm Dilthey in a *part-whole-part* movement.\(^{49}\) Consequently, hermeneutics does not understand the Qur’ānic text in isolation and atomism but relates to other parts of the text.

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\(^{45}\)Al-Zarqani, *Manāḥīl Al-‘Irфан Fi Ṭulūm Al-Qur‘ān* [Manahil Al-Irфан in the Sciences of the Qur‘ān].


\(^{47}\)Al-Ghazali, *Mishkat Al-’Awnār* [The Niche of Lights].


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The hermeneutic circle can also be used to understand the social world of authors and readers as historical beings for the individual’s internalization takes place in the social system. At the same time, the social system is also influenced by individuals. Therefore, the Qur’ān must be understood in the historical-sociological context of the Arab society when the Qur’ān was revealed. Apart from that, the social world of the reader of the text must be understood in its entirety because the reader’s social world is very different from that of Arab society at the time of the Prophet. This understanding of the reader's social world will be the basis for the proper formulation and application of general principles, values, and objectives of the Qur’ān in actual situations.

5. The Validity of Truth

The third issue related to epistemological problems is the validity of truth. As explained above, the source of knowledge in taafsīr is language (text) and asbāb al-nuzūl, so the validity of truth in taafsīr is the closeness of the signifier (al-lafẓ) to the signified (al-maʿna). In other words, the closer the interpretation results are to the text's literal meaning, the more valid they will be. As a result, taafsīr is less accommodating to liberal interpretations that try to abandon the text's literal meaning.50

Different from taafsīr, the source of knowledge in ta’wīl is inner experience. As a result, the validity of the truth in ta’wīl lies in direct appreciation by intuition (ḏauq) so that the resulting understanding is subjective.51 A quite popular Sufi quote says, “a person cannot possibly taste the sweetness of honey if he has never tasted it himself.”52

Meanwhile, the source of knowledge in hermeneutics is the relationship between the world of the text, the world of the author, and the world of the reader. As a result, the validity of the truth in hermeneutics is more dialogical and dialectical between the three. As a consequence, the truth produced by hermeneutics is pluralistic and flexible. Therefore, the message of the Qur’ān that is relevant in a certain context is not necessarily relevant in another context. One of the results of hermeneutic interpretation is the equality of men and women and the accommodation of Islam to the democratic system. This interpretation is the product of a dialectic between the text of the Qur’ān, the Arabic social situation at the time the Qur’ān was revealed, and the contemporary social situation.

6. Integrative-Dialectical Understanding Method: An Offer

Based on the description of the nature of knowledge, sources of knowledge, and the validity of knowledge developed by the epistemology of taafsīr, ta’wīl, and hermeneutics, all three have several advantages and disadvantages. The advantage that stands out from the taafsīr method is its emphasis on the character of objectivism in interpreting the Qur’ān. This objectivism will give birth to the interpretive products that are free from the ideological intervention and the interpreter's interests (al-talwīn).53

. The tradition of taafsīr contains weaknesses from the perspective of modern hermeneutics because taafsīr does not accommodate the dialectical relationship between the text, interpreter, and contemporary reality which cannot be ignored while finding the meaning of a text.54 Meanwhile, the dialogical relationship in taafsīr only goes in two directions, namely between the Qur’ān as the object being interpreted and the interpreter himself. Understanding of the text is limited to aspects of the

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50Abdullah, “Al-Ta’wil Al-’ilmī: Ke Arah Perubahan Penafsiran Kitab Suci [Al-Ta’wil Al-’ilmī: Towards Transformation in the Interpretation of Scripture].”


53Zaid, Naqd Khitāb Al-Dīnī [Criticism of Religious Discourse].

54Harvey, “Hermeneutics.”
language and historicity of the text (asbāb al-nuzūl), while the social world of the reader is ignored.\textsuperscript{55} Therefore, \textit{tafsīr} methodologies always fail to make the explicit performative function for the reader. In addition, interpretive objectivism will narrow the interpretation of the Qurʾān. The Qurʾān very likely contains a very deep and rich meaning that cannot simply be reduced to just the meaning of the "skin and surface" of the language of the text.

The epistemology of \textit{tafsīr} also often treats verses from the Qurʾān in isolation. As a result, the interpretation of the Qurʾān is often atomistic and partial and separated from other verses. Even though in the \textit{maudlūʿī tafsīr} method (thematic interpretation), the \textit{mufassir} (interpreter) tries to relate one verse to another and the choice of verses is done in an isolated and atomistic manner, therefore it is difficult to find a "world-view (weltanschauung) of the Qurʾān." The world-view of the Qurʾān itself is the ethics of the Qurʾān…which is the philosophical basis for interpreting the Qurʾān.\textsuperscript{56}

As a consequence, the concept of the eternity of the Qurʾān (qadīm) which is the background to the assumptions developed by the epistemology of \textit{tafsīr} has given birth to the view of eternal and single meaning in interpreting the verses of the Qurʾān. This view will then cause the loss of some understanding of time and evolution or historical perspective. In the \textit{mufassir}'s view, every present connects with the past and almost all past, present, and future periods are flat and unmoving. Consequently, the products of \textit{tafsīr} in the past must be applied constantly in the present and future.

In contrast to \textit{tafsīr}, the advantage of \textit{ta’wīl} lies in its success in freeing oneself from the entanglement of the text, so that a freer model of interpretation will emerge for understanding the text in accordance with the intuitive function of the interpreter. However, \textit{taʾwil} also contains several weaknesses as \textit{Taʾwil} only relies on the inner dimensions of the text. Hence, the priority is not the text or the text's historicity but rather the transcendental reality that confirms the factual reality. This transcendental reality is a reality that has an idealistic, metalinguistic, and metatheoretical character. This view is influenced by Sufism, which divides existence into \textit{al-ẓāhir} and \textit{al-bāṭin}. In the view of Sufism, the visible form (\textit{al-ẓāhir}) is seen as an imaginary reality (\textit{ḥayal}). If it is connected to the text of the Qurʾān, then it is seen as an imaginary reality behind which there is an ultimate reality (\textit{al-bāṭin}). Therefore, every interpretation must go beyond the textual meaning to the inner meaning of the text.\textsuperscript{57}

Meanwhile, hermeneutics has the advantage of building interpretations that are more open, tolerant, flexible, and of pluralistic character, so that its interpretation will avoid the phenomenon of sacralization of religious thought (\textit{taqdīs al-afkār al-dīnī}).\textsuperscript{58} However, hermeneutics also contains several weaknesses. Hermeneutics develops a relativistic interpretation model due to which there is no final interpretation from a hermeneutic point of view. Every religious follower always needs certainty in carrying out the religious activities based on certainty regarding their understanding of the teachings of the religion. Apart from that, hermeneutical assumptions regarding the historicity of the Qurʾān have given rise to lawsuits against the sacredness of the text of the Qurʾān. In turn, hermeneutical interpretation may lead to the erosion of a religious believer's faith.

A creative synthesis is needed as an integrative understanding method based on the strengths and weaknesses of the three models for understanding the Qurʾānic text. The first stage uses the \textit{tafsīr}...  

\textsuperscript{55} Hanafi, \textit{Qudāyā Muʾāshirah: Fī Fikrinā Al-Muʾāshir [Contemporary Issues in Our Contemporary Thought]}.  
\textsuperscript{56} Fazlur Rahman, \textit{Major Themes of the Qurʾān} (Chicago: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1980).  
\textsuperscript{57} Zaid, \textit{Mafhūm Al-Nashsh: Dirāsah Fī 'Ulūm Al-Qurʾān [The Concept of Text: Study of Quranic Sciences]}.  
\textsuperscript{58} Al-Jabiri, \textit{Bunyah Al 'Aql Al 'Arabī: Dirāsah Tahliiliyyah Naqdiiyyah Li Nudzīm Al Maʿrifah Al-'Arabīyyah [The Composition of Arabic Reason; Analytical and Critical Study for Arabic Epistemology]}.
method. The methods of Tafsīr are required to explain the external dimensions of the text (langue). On the other hand, grammatical text analysis is required to obtain an objective understanding. At the same time, micro and macro social setting analysis (asbâb al-nuzûl) is also required to look at the historicity aspect of the Qur’ān and see the manner used by the Qur’ān to solve problems at that time. This first step can be called the objective historical reproduction step and it must be supported by linguistics (grammatical) and historical knowledge.

The second stage uses hermeneutics which is used to understand the contemporary situation of the readers and society. Based on the Gadamerian paradigm, the reader's or society's subjectivity must be studied with all the prejudices, preconceptions, and traditions surrounding it. Social dynamics and changes are also required to study for seeing the relevance of the messages of the Qur’ān in terms of contemporary situations. This step may produce the subjectivity of the reader's factual ideas. This further requires the help of social sciences, especially sociology, psychology, anthropology, economics, and political science. These sciences are to explore the external and internal aspects experienced by the society in present times.

The third stage is about using ta’wīl. Ta’wīl is required to bridge the findings obtained by the methods of tafsīr and hermeneutics. The gap between findings obtained through reproductive methods (objectivism) and productive methods must be reintegrated through the ta’wīl method. In this case, the task of ta’wīl is to find the "deepest meaning" that connects the objectivity of interpretation and the subjectivity of hermeneutics. This "deepest meaning" can be moral ideas ʿillat ḥukm (ratio legis) or maqāṣid al-sharīʿah (moral principal of the Qur’ān).

In addition, because ta’wīl ignores the text's dimensions and the text's historicity, the interpreter is seen as the only autonomous subject and has the authority to choose meaning even in forms of symbolic expressions that are difficult to understand. However, the emergence of truth claims cannot be avoided because interpreters have reached the level of transcendental tradition (maqām al-maʿrifah) which is very subjective. In addition, ta’wīl also recognizes the importance of reality but this reality is a metaphysical reality that is ahistorical and ignores the reality of empirical society. As a result, the problematic realities of empirical society receive less attention.

This integrative approach will give rise to several consequences in future studies of the Qur’ān. First, integrating the epistemology of tafsīr, ta’wīl, and hermeneutics will result in a paradigm shift in studying the Qur’ān. A linguistic approach has so far dominated the study of the Qur’ān and is monodisciplinary. With this integrative approach, the study of the Qur’ān will use a linguistic approach for understanding the text of the Qur’ān intra-linguistically and extra-linguistically, as well as being interdisciplinary. Understanding the Qur’ān intra-linguistically means understanding the Qur’ān based on the language rules that apply to the text (Qur’ān).

Meanwhile, understanding the Qur’ān extra-linguistically means understanding the text of the Qur’ān by paying attention to the aspects that surround the language and influence directly or indirectly the interpretation of the Qur’ān. These aspects can be the social and political situations behind the production of a text. These social and political situations occurred in the past when text production occurred. At the same time, that text also interacts with the reader’s contemporary social and political situations. Even this extra-linguistic study can touch the inner dimension of the text or the hidden meaning behind the text. Therefore, the Qur’ān is no longer suitable to be approached in a monodisciplinary manner but rather in a multidisciplinary manner by utilizing various social and philosophical sciences that emerged in the post-positivism era.

Second, studies of the Qur’ān always face polemics between the choice of objectivism or subjectivism. This integrative approach offers a concept of harmonization between objectivism and subjectivism. In other words, the contextualization that attempts to be built by hermeneutics which is based on the contemporary situation and ta’wīl which is based on the inner meaning of the text, will bring consequences to the subjective understanding of the Qur’ān. However, on the other hand,
the linguistic approach that is relatively dominant in the *tafsīr* tradition will ensure that the subjectivity brought by hermeneutics and *ta'wīl* remains based on the text. This integration will ultimately give birth to an objective-subjectivism or subjective-objectivism approach for interpretation.

### 7. Conclusion

*Tafsīr*, *ta’wīl*, and hermeneutics have strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, a creative synthesis is required in the form of an integrative understanding method. In this synthesis, the *tafsīr* method is required to explain the external dimensions of the text (langue). Grammatical text and social setting analyses are required to obtain an objective understanding. Hermeneutics is used to understand the reader's contemporary situation with all the prejudices, preconceptions, and traditions surrounding it. Social dynamics and changes are also required to study to see the relevance of the messages of the Qur’ān to contemporary situations.

Meanwhile, *ta’wīl* is required to bridge the findings obtained by the methods of *tafsīr* and hermeneutics. The gap between findings obtained through reproductive methods (objectivism) and productive methods must be reintegrated through the *ta’wīl* method. In this case, the task of *ta’wīl* is to find the "deepest meaning" that connects *tafsīr*’s objectivity and hermeneutics's subjectivity. This "deepest meaning" can be moral ideas ʿillat ḥukm (ratio legis) or maqāshid al-sharīʿah.

This integration of *tafsīr*, *ta’wīl*, and hermeneutics gives rise to three important ideas in understanding texts: intra-linguistic and extra-linguistic understanding, inter-disciplinary understanding, and objectively subjective understanding. Intra-linguistic and extra-linguistic understanding indicates understanding the text based on the linguistic and socio-political aspects surrounding it. Then, this intra-linguistic and extra-linguistic study requires an interdisciplinary approach involving social sciences and philosophy to explore actual empirical data related to the text. Therefore, the reader’s subjectivity will remain controlled by empirical data obtained objectively.

### Conflict of Interest

The authors of the manuscript have no financial or non-financial conflict of interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

### Data Availability Statement

The data associated with this study will be provided by the corresponding author upon request.

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