



Epistemology, Ontology, and Axiology in Shaping the *Insan Kamil*

Muhdi Alhadar¹, Sahjad M. Aksan¹, Nurhadia Sarmin¹, Ilma Muchsin¹

¹Institut Agama Islam Negeri Ternate, Indonesia

✉ muhdialhadar@iain-ternate.ac.id*

Article Information:

Received June 10, 2026

Revised July 18, 2026

Accepted August 5, 2026

Keywords: *Islamic philosophy of education, Islamic epistemology, human ontology, Islamic axiology, insan kamil*

Abstract

This study provides an in-depth examination of the philosophical foundations of Islamic education, focusing on three main dimensions: epistemology, ontology, and axiology. The philosophy of Islamic education is not merely a theoretical instrument but a normative framework that guides all educational practices toward the highest goal: the formation of the *insan kamil* the perfect human being who integrates the intellectual (*aqliyah*), spiritual (*ruhiyah*), and physical (*jismiyyah*) dimensions. Through a qualitative approach using content analysis and comparative analysis of the thought of classical and contemporary Islamic educational philosophers, this study maps how these three philosophical dimensions interact in shaping a holistic Islamic educational system. The research findings indicate that: first, epistemologically, Islamic education integrates the sources of knowledge revelation (*bayānī*), reason (*burhānī*), and intuition (*irfānī*) as a unified whole that complements one another. Second, ontologically, human beings are viewed as *khalīfah fī al-ardh*, possessing the innate potential (*fitrah*) to achieve perfection. Third, from an axiological perspective, the Islamic values of tawhid, justice, balance (*tawāḍun*), and *ihsan* serve as the moral foundation of education. This study concludes that the revitalization of contemporary Islamic educational philosophy must integrate the richness of the Islamic intellectual tradition with the demands of modernity without sacrificing the essential values of Islamic teachings.

INTRODUCTION

Islamic education is one of the pillars of human civilization that has endured for more than fourteen centuries. However, amid the increasingly rapid tide of modernization, Islamic education is often faced with a fundamental dilemma: should it transform to keep pace with the demands of the times, or should it remain steadfastly committed to established traditional values? This question is not merely a matter of methodology or curriculum; rather, it touches on the deeper philosophical foundations that underpin the entire structure of Islamic education.

The philosophy of Islamic education emerges as a discipline that seeks to answer fundamental questions about the nature, purpose, and values of education from an Islamic perspective (Puteri et al., 2026). Unlike mere practical pedagogy, the

How to cite:

Alhadar, M., Aksan, S. M., Sarmin, N., Muchsin, I. (2026). Epistemology, Ontology, and Axiology in Shaping the *insan kamil*. *Ahlussunnah: Journal of Islamic Education*, 5(2), 738-744.

E-ISSN:

2827-9573

Published by:

The Institute for Research and Community Service

philosophy of Islamic education operates on a metaphysical level, delving into questions about what it means to be human, what humans can know, and what values should guide their actions. These three questions lead, in turn, to three branches of philosophy: ontology, epistemology, and axiology.

Classical Muslim thinkers such as al-Ghazali (1058–1111 CE), Ibn Rushd (1126–1198 CE), Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406 CE), and Ibn Miskawaih (941–1030 CE) laid a solid foundation for the philosophy of Islamic education. Meanwhile, contemporary figures such as Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, Ismail Raji al-Faruqi, and Fazlur Rahman have continued this tradition while responding to the challenges of modernity (Maslikah & Mawardi, 2025; Khaerussalam et al., 2025). Unfortunately, this intellectual wealth has not yet been fully utilized in contemporary Islamic educational practice.

This study aims to: identify the epistemological foundations of Islamic education and their relevance to modern curricula; analyze the ontological concept of humanity in Islam as the basis for the anthropology of education; and map out the axiological values of Islam that should underpin all educational practices. Thus, this study is expected to provide a theoretical contribution to the development of a contextual and comprehensive philosophy of Islamic education.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach using content analysis. Primary data were collected from the original works of classical and contemporary Muslim philosophers, while secondary data were sourced from academic journals, textbooks, and dissertations discussing the philosophy of Islamic education. The analysis was conducted using three complementary methods. The Historical-Philosophical Method: tracing the development of Islamic philosophy of education from the classical to the contemporary period. The Comparative Analysis Method: comparing the views of various figures to identify common ground and substantive differences. Critical Synthesis Method: integrating analytical findings into a coherent and applicable conceptual framework. The analytical framework used refers to the three main dimensions of philosophy: epistemology (theory of knowledge), ontology (theory of being), and axiology (theory of value). These three dimensions were chosen because they comprehensively represent the philosophical foundations necessary for the development of a holistic education system (Zulfa et al., 2025; Fitri, 2026; Efendi et al., 2026; Engkizar et al., 2023; 2024; 2026; Aryasutha et al., 2025; Putri et al., 2025).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Epistemology of Islamic Education: The Integration of Revelation, Reason, and Intuition

Epistemology, a branch of philosophy that discusses the nature, sources, and limits of knowledge, occupies a central position in the philosophy of Islamic education (Alifah et al., 2026). Unlike the Western epistemological tradition, which tends to regard reason or sensory experience as the sole valid source of knowledge, Islam introduces an integrative, three-source epistemology.

In his work *Takwin al-'Aql al-'Arabi*, Muhammad Abid al-Jabiri identifies three epistemic systems that have developed within the Islamic intellectual tradition. *Bayani* (text or revelation-based epistemology): a system of knowledge derived from the Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet. Bayânî knowledge is normative and transcendent, providing a certainty that cannot be attained by human reason alone. *Burhani* (rational demonstration-based epistemology): a system of knowledge that employs demonstrative logic (*burhan*) as developed by Aristotle and refined by Muslim philosophers such as al-Farabi and Ibn Sina. *Irfani* (intuition or *kashf*-based

epistemology): a system of knowledge obtained through the purification of the soul and closeness to God. The Sufi and illuminist traditions (al-Suhrawardi) build their entire epistemology upon this foundation.

In the context of education, the integration of these three epistemological systems has very concrete implications. An ideal Islamic education curriculum not only incorporates the *naqliyyah* sciences (revelation-based) and the *'aqliyyah* sciences (reason-based), but also provides space for the development of the spiritual dimension through spiritual exercises (*riyadhab*) (Alifah et al., 2026; Aulia & Rosidy, 2026; Izzah & Nugraha, 2025; Nurlaila et al., 2023). Al-Ghazali, in his magnum opus *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, explains that knowledge without *tazkiyat al-nafs* (purification of the soul) will only lead to intellectual arrogance, not true wisdom.

Contemporary thinker Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas further develops this concept through his idea of the Islamization of Knowledge. Al-Attas argues that the crisis in contemporary Islamic education stems from the infiltration of a secular Western epistemology that separates knowledge from religious values. The solution is not merely to add religious studies to the science curriculum, but to undertake a fundamental epistemological transformation that places tawhid as the organizing principle of all knowledge.

The Ontology of Humanity in Islam: *Khalifah*, *Fitrah*, and the Potential for Perfection

Ontology, a branch of philosophy that examines the nature of existence in the context of Islamic education, focuses on fundamental questions: Who is the human being, and what is the purpose of their existence? The answers to these questions determine the direction of all educational theories built upon them (Nurmayuli et al., 2023; Naisa et al., 2025).

The Qur'an assigns two primary ontological attributes to human beings that are directly relevant to education. First, human beings are *'abd Allah* (servants of Allah), as stated in Surah al-Dzariyat: 56, which affirms that the purpose of human creation is to worship Him. Second, humans are *khalifah fi al-ardh* (Q.S. al-Baqarah: 30), which entails the trust to manage the earth in the best possible way. These two attributes do not contradict one another but rather form a dialectical unity: true worship is realized through responsible stewardship.

The concept of *fitrah* humanity's primordial inclination toward truth and obedience to Allah serves as the most fundamental foundation of Islamic educational anthropology (Qusairi, 2026; Syafitri et al., 2025). The hadith narrated by al-Bukhari and Muslim: "*Kullu maw'ludin yuladu 'ala al-fitrah*" (every child is born in a state of *fitrah*) serves as the fundamental premise that education is not a process of "creating" character from scratch, but rather a process of "developing" and "purifying" existing potential.

In his work *Tahdzib al-Akhlaq*, Ibn Miskawaih developed a concept of human ontology based on Aristotelian philosophy that had been Islamized.¹¹ For him, humans possess three faculties of the soul: i) *al-nafs al-nabatiyyah* (the vegetative soul): responsible for the functions of eating, growth, and reproduction; ii) *al-nafs al-hayawaniyyah* (animal soul): the seat of desire and anger; and iii) *al-nafs al-natiqah* (rational soul): the capacity for thought, which is unique to humans. Education aims to ensure that the rational soul controls the two lower souls, thereby creating harmony and moral perfection (*fadhilah*).

The concept of the *insan kamil* (perfect human), introduced by Ibn 'Arabi (1165–1240 CE) and developed by 'Abd al-Karim al-Jili, represents the pinnacle of Islamic educational ontology (Sitika et al., 2026). The *insan kamil* is not merely a person who is intellectually intelligent or ritually pious, but rather a person who has achieved perfect integration among all dimensions of their humanity and reflects the

divine attributes (*al-asma' al-husna*) in their concrete life. This concept serves as the most comprehensive telos, or ultimate goal, of Islamic education.

Axiology of Islamic Education: The Values That Inform Educational Praxis

The study of values, norms, and ethics in Islamic education known as axiology cannot be separated from the concept of tawhid as the principle of universal unification (Bahrudin et al., 2025). Ismail Raji al-Faruqi, in *Al-Tawhid: Its Implications for Thought and Life**, asserts that tawhid is not merely a theological statement about the oneness of Allah, but rather a comprehensive “worldview” that has profound implications for all aspects of human life, including education (Al-Faruqi, 2026).

At least four core Islamic values must be prioritized in the development of an authentic Islamic education system: First, Tawhid as the Principle of Integration. All branches of knowledge from the natural sciences to the social sciences must be viewed as reflections of Allah’s oneness and majesty. This approach rejects the dichotomy between religious studies and secular studies, which has weakened Islamic education for centuries. Second, *‘Adl* (Justice) as a Social Value. Islamic education must be committed to justice in access, justice in treatment, and justice in outcomes. This means that Islamic education must structurally prioritize marginalized groups. Third, *Tawazun* (Balance) as a Holistic Principle. Islam rejects all forms of extremism, including in education. Balance between this world and the hereafter, between the individual and the community, and between tradition and innovation is a hallmark of healthy Islamic education. Fourth, Ihsan (Perfection/Beauty) as an Ethical Standard. The famous Hadith of Jibril defines *ihsan* as “worshiping Allah as if you were seeing Him.” In education, *ihsan* means doing everything wholeheartedly and to the highest standards of quality not because of external oversight, but out of an awareness of Allah’s presence.

In his work *Islam and Modernity*, Fazlur Rahman adds a critical dimension to the axiology of Islamic education (Marasabessy, 2025; Putra, 2025). According to him, contemporary Islamic education has failed to integrate universal Islamic values with the needs of the times because it is trapped between two extremes: conservatism, which rejects all forms of renewal, and modernism, which sacrifices substance for the sake of relevance. The solution lies in a dynamic Islamic hermeneutics the ability to read classical texts within their original historical contexts and then extract universal principles that can be applied in new contexts.

Relevance to Contemporary Islamic Education

An examination of the three philosophical dimensions above reveals a productive tension that poses the primary challenge for contemporary Islamic education: how to preserve an authentic Islamic identity while intelligently responding to the ever-changing demands of modernity? In the realm of epistemology, the greatest challenge is integrating modern scientific methodologies rooted in empiricism and rationalism into an Islamic epistemological framework that acknowledges the limitations of reason in the face of revelation. This does not mean rejecting science Islamic tradition, in fact, has a glorious scientific history but rather placing scientific activity within a broader context: that science is one means of recognizing the greatness of Allah (*tafakkur fi al-afaq*), not an end in itself.

In the realm of ontology, the identity crisis experienced by many Muslim students can be traced to the failure of education to instill a solid understanding of who they are from an Islamic perspective. When students lack clear and convincing answers to these existential questions, they are vulnerable to identity crises, radicalism, or, conversely, a form of secularism that overlooks the transcendent dimension (Sutirmah et al., 2026).

In the field of axiology, the challenge is to ensure that Islamic values remain a living ethos in educational practice, rather than mere rhetoric. This requires profound

reform not only of the curriculum, but also of the institutional ethos, the character of educators, and the evaluation systems used, because what is evaluated tends to become what is practiced.

CONCLUSION

This study has mapped out three philosophical dimensions that form the foundation of Islamic education: integrative epistemology (*bayani-burhani-irfani*), the ontology of humanity as vicegerents endowed with innate potential, and an axiology grounded in tawhid, justice, balance, and *ihsan*. These three dimensions are not abstract concepts detached from practice, but rather a normative framework that directly determines how the curriculum is designed, how educators interact with students, and how educational success is defined. The revitalization of authentic Islamic educational philosophy requires the intellectual courage to escape two traps simultaneously: romantic nostalgia for the golden age of classical Islam, and blind imitation of Western educational models. What is needed is a creative synthesis the ability to stand on the shoulders of earlier Muslim thinkers while looking ahead with a fresh and contextual vision.

REFERENCES

- Al-Faruqi, I. R. (2026). *Al-Tawhid-Its Implications for Thought and Life*. FKB Publishing Solutions.
- Alifah, A. N., Mubarak, F., & Tyas, Y. P. N. (2026). Epistemologi Pendidikan Islam: Kajian Filsafat Tentang Sumber dan Hakikat Ilmu Dalam Islam. *Al-Furqan: Jurnal Agama, Sosial, dan Budaya*, 5(3), 1496-1517.
- Aryasutha, R., Azizah Ria Kusriani, N., Nurul Ulya, J., & Syamsiah Septiani, N. (2025). Opportunities and Challenges for Islamic Education Teachers in Using Artificial Intelligence in Learning. *Muaddib.Intischolar.Id*, 2(1), 43. <https://muaddib.intischolar.id/index.php/muaddib/article/view/6>
- Aulia, R., & Rossidy, I. (2026). Integrasi Ilmu dalam Islam Perspektif Quraish Shihab dan Relevansinya dengan Pengembangan Kurikulum Pendidikan Islam. *Tarbiyatuna Kajian Pendidikan Islam*, 10(1), 365-384. <https://doi.org/10.69552/ys7cd603>
- Bahrudin, A., Sukardi, I., Astuti, M., Bustomi, M., & Afriansyah, A. (2025). Filsafat pendidikan Islam: Ontologi, epistemologi, dan aksiologi. *Jurnal Ilmiah Dikdaya*, 15(1), 44-51. <http://dx.doi.org/10.33087/dikdaya.v15i1.735>
- Efendi, E., Jaafar, A., & Engkizar, E. (2026). Muslim Women's Leadership in Conflict Management in Higher Education. *Tadris: Jurnal Keguruan Dan Ilmu Tarbiyah*, 11(2), 826-838. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.24042/tadris.v11i2.30474>
- Engkizar, E., Jaafar, A., Hamzah, M. I., Fakhruddin, F. M., Oktavia, G., & Febriani, A. (2023). Changes in Students' Motivation to Memorize the Quran: A Study at Quranic Higher Education Institutions in Indonesia. *International Journal of Islamic Studies Higher Education*, 2(3), 240-258. <https://doi.org/10.24036/insight.v2i3.240>
- Engkizar, E., Jaafar, A., Hamzah, M. I., Syafril, S., Oktavia, G., Febriani, A., & Albizar, A. (2026). Tartil Method as an Effective Strategy for Transforming Students' Positive Attitudes in Learning the Qur'an. *Journal of Quranic Teaching and Learning*, 2(1), 50-63. <https://doi.org/10.67055/y3htyp95>
- Engkizar, E., Jaafar, A., Sarianto, D., Ayad, N., Rahman, A., Febriani, A., Oktavia, G., Puspita, R., & Rahman, I. (2024). Analysis of Quran Education Problems in Majority Muslim Countries. *International Journal of Islamic Studies Higher Education*, 3(1), 65-80. <https://doi.org/10.24036/insight.v3i1.209>
- Fitri, Z. (2026). Kajian Ontologi, Epistemologi, dan Aksiologi dalam Filsafat

- Pendidikan Islam: Suatu Analisis Aplikatif. *IHSAN: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 4(3), 1793-1800. <https://doi.org/10.61104/ihsan.v4i3.8349>
- Izzah, I. N., & Nugraha, M. S. (2025). Filsafat Ilmu dan Pengaruhnya Terhadap Pengembangan Kurikulum dalam Pendidikan Islam. *Innovative: Journal of Social Science Research*, 5(1), 4400-4414. <https://doi.org/10.31004/innovative.v5i1.17137>
- Kamila, H. N., & Jannah, S. (2026). Reconstructing Islamic Philosophy of Education in Response to Societal Problems in the Era of Globalization. *AFHAMUNA: Journal of Islamic Thought*, 1(3), 279-290. <https://doi.org/10.66928/afhamuna.v1i3.94>
- Khaerussalam, A., Khaqiqi, A. F., & Siregar, A. (2025). Revitalisasi Peradaban Islam: Menjembatani Teori Reformis dan Realitas Kontemporer. *GHAITS: Islamic Education Journal*, 6(2), 282-293. <https://doi.org/10.62159/ghaitsa.v6i2.1742>
- Marasabessy, M. A. F. (2025). Integrasi Pemikiran Fazlur Rahman tentang Pendidikan Islam dengan Epistemologi Filsafat Kontemporer Kritis. *An Najah (Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Dan Sosial Keagamaan)*, 4(5), 1-23.
- Maslikah, S., & Mawardi, K. (2025). Respon Islam Terhadap Modernitas Barat: Studi Kritis Atas Adaptasi, Penolakan, dan Sintesis Dalam Konteks Peradaban Islam Kontemporer. *An-Nuur*, 15(2), 30-42. <https://doi.org/10.58403/annuur.v15i2.601>
- Naisa, Z. A., Khobir, A., Fauziah, A. M., Shalihah, M., & Rahmania, A. S. (2025). Peran Ontologi Filsafat Pendidikan Islam terhadap Pemahaman Eksistensi Manusia Ideal. *Didaktik: Jurnal Ilmiah PGSD STKIP Subang*, 11(04), 231-248. <https://doi.org/10.36989/didaktik.v11i04.9711>
- Nurlaila, S. W. N., Rojab, T. F., & Agustin, U. (2023). Epistemologi Ibnu Khaldun dan relevansinya terhadap kurikulum pendidikan agama Islam di Indonesia. *Jurnal Filsafat Indonesia*, 6(3), 376-383. <https://doi.org/10.23887/jfi.v6i3.57097>
- Nurmayuli, N., Harmaini, K., Rijal, Y., Jannah, R., Khaira, M., Lubis, T. H., & Nurhidayah, B. (2023). Ontologi Filsafat Manajemen Pendidikan Islam. *Desultana: Journal Education and Social Science*, 1(2), 84-106. <https://doi.org/10.69548/d-jess.v1i2.16>
- Puteri, S. M., Musthan, Z., & Hadisi, L. (2026). Filsafat Pendidikan Islam Kegunaan Hikmah dan Hakikat Serta Hubungannya dengan Filsafat Ilmu. *Arus Jurnal Psikologi Dan Pendidikan*, 5(1), 230-241. <https://doi.org/10.57250/ajpp.v5i1.2273>
- Putra, K. S. (2025). Epistemologi Pendidikan Islam Dalam Pemikiran Fazlur Rahman. *Madrasa: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan Dan Teknologi*, 1(2), 42-55.
- Putri, N., Noprianti, A., & Oktavia, G. (2025). The Qur'an as a Source of Solutions for the Global Moral Crisis. *Journal of Quranic Teaching and Learning*, 1(2), 90-105. <https://joqer.intischolar.id/index.php/joqer>
- Qusairi, M. (2026). Revitalisasi Pendidikan Islam: Konsep Fitrah Dan Hanif Sebagai Landasan Filosofis Dan Praktis. *Jurnal Inovasi Pembelajaran dan Teknologi Modern*, 10(1).
- Sitika, A. J., Inayah, H. N., & Purwanto, D. W. (2026). Insan Kamil as a Model of Spiritual Perfection in Islamic Sufism. *Values: Jurnal Kajian Islam Multidisiplin*, 3(2), 182-190. <https://doi.org/10.61166/values.v3i2.149>
- Surtimah, S., Hasanah, U., Jalaluddin, J., Muslim, M., & Ruslan, R. (2026). Filsafat Pendidikan Islam dan Krisis Identitas Generasi Digital: Analisis Ontologis dan Aksiologis. *INTEGRASI: Jurnal Ilmiah Keagamaan dan Kemasyarakatan*, 4(01), 272-285. <http://dx.doi.org/10.61590/int.v4i01.287>
- Syafitri, N., Yunar, E., Salsabila, C., Wibowo, P. R., Khumaira, S., & Ramadhani, A. A. (2025). Konsep Manusia dalam Islam dan Implikasinya terhadap Pendidikan

Karakter di Indonesia. *PENDALAS: Jurnal Penelitian Tindakan Kelas dan Pengabdian Masyarakat*, 5(1), 32-53. <https://doi.org/10.47006/pendalas.v5i1.423>
Zulfa, A. Z., Romansyah, N., & Wulandari, T. (2025). Refleksi konsep pendidikan Islam dalam filsafat pendidikan: Sebuah analisis ontologis, epistemologis, dan aksiologis. *Pandai: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 1(1), 1-9.

Copyright holder:

© Alhadar, M., Aksan, S. M., Sarmin, N., Muchsin, I.

First publication right:

Ahlussunnah: Journal of Islamic Education

This article is licensed under:

CC-BY-SA