

KASHF AS COMPLEMENTARY EPISTEMOLOGY: REASSESSING AL-GHAZĀLĪ IN ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE

Research Article

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Abstract. This study discusses the tendency of contemporary scholarship to reduce kashf to merely an intuitive or psychological experience, thereby overlooking its epistemological significance in Islamic philosophy of science. Its aim is to critically reassess the position of kashf in al-Ghazālī's epistemology and to construct a complementary epistemological framework related to modern scientific observation. This research employs a qualitative philosophical approach using Gadamerian hermeneutics, focusing on the interpretative analysis of al-Ghazālī's works, namely *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl* and *Ḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, and situating them in a dialogue with contemporary philosophy of science. The analysis involves three stages: text interpretation, epistemological comparison, and conceptual synthesis. Findings show that kashf in al-Ghazālī's framework functions not only as mystical intuition but also as a structured epistemic mode based on spiritual discipline, inner verification, and moral purification. This study indicates that kashf complements empirical observation by overcoming its limitations in accessing metaphysical dimensions, while maintaining its own criteria of internal validity. Based on this, the study formulates a complementary epistemological model consisting of three integrated domains: empirical (sensory observation), rational (intellectual reasoning), and intuitive-transcendental (kashf). This model provides a more comprehensive epistemological framework that allows dialogue between Islamic intellectual tradition and modern science, particularly in expanding the scope of valid knowledge beyond empirical reductionism.

Keywords:

Kashf, Islamic Epistemology, Al-Ghazālī, Philosophy of Science, Interdisciplinary Hermeneutics.

Introduction

The relationship between Sufism and modern science remains a central issue in the philosophy of Islamic science, particularly regarding the legitimacy of non-empirical sources of knowledge. Previous studies have tended to prioritize the harmonization of spirituality and rationality rather than critically examining the epistemological differences between the two (Asyibli et al., 2025; Aziz, 2022; Putra et al., 2025). This tendency has contributed to the simplification of Sufism, especially the concept of kashf, which is often reduced to psychological or intuitive experiences. Zacky and Moniruzzaman (2024) argue that Sufism is frequently treated as a cultural heritage that can be explained through a modern rational framework, thereby limiting its epistemological autonomy. As a result, kashf loses its position as a potential

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source of knowledge operating beyond empirical observation and rational reasoning.

The dominant approach in previous studies on kashf and modern science has largely been apologetic and normative. Scholars often attempt to validate mystical experiences by aligning them with empirical standards, thereby obscuring their distinct epistemological character (Atmaja & Mustopa, 2020; Iftikhar et al., 2024). These approaches reduce kashf to a derivative of rational or empirical knowledge rather than treating it as an independent epistemological system. This reduction weakens the critical potential of Sufism as an alternative framework of knowledge, as highlighted in contemporary critiques of Islamic epistemology (Al Haidary et al., 2024). Therefore, a significant gap remains in analyzing kashf as a critical epistemology capable of overcoming the limitations of empirical observation (Hasib et al., 2024).

In classical Islamic thought, al-Ghazālī positions kashf as a superior epistemological mode that transcends sensory perception and rational reasoning. Kashf is understood as a form of inner illumination that provides direct access to truth beyond the limitations of empirical observation (Arif et al., 2020). This epistemological hierarchy differentiates Islamic thought from the modern scientific paradigm, which prioritizes empirical verification and intersubjective validation. Al-Attas (1995) emphasizes that spiritual experience in Islam must be understood within a metaphysical framework rather than reduced to a psychological phenomenon. Therefore, kashf must be analyzed not only as a subjective experience but also as a category of knowledge with significant philosophical implications (Zacky & Moniruzzaman, 2024).

Contemporary philosophy of science provides a critical space to reconsider forms of non-empirical knowledge through its critique of positivism and empiricism. Kuhn (1970) demonstrated that scientific paradigms are shaped not only by empirical data but also by historical and social factors that influence the production of knowledge. Feyerabend (1970) further challenged methodological uniformity by arguing for epistemological pluralism and the legitimacy of diverse knowledge systems. Similarly, feminist and postcolonial epistemologies emphasize that knowledge is shaped by context, experience, and power relations (Naguib, 2021). These perspectives open the possibility of recognizing kashf as a valid epistemological framework within broader philosophical discourse (Ula, 2025).

Based on these considerations, this study aims to critically analyze the epistemological position of kashf within al-Ghazālī's framework in relation to modern scientific observation. The study focuses on examining the fundamental differences between kashf and empirical methods to clarify the epistemological foundations of each. Rather than attempting a superficial integration, this research seeks to position kashf as a critical and independent epistemology. To achieve this, the study employs a qualitative philosophical approach combined with an interdisciplinary hermeneutic analysis of classical and contemporary texts. This approach allows for a dialogical understanding between the Islamic intellectual tradition and modern philosophy of science (Gadamer, 2004).

The novelty of this research lies in its effort to reposition kashf as an independent epistemological category, rather than merely an object of integration. This study

proposes a complementary epistemological framework in which *kashf* interacts with empirical and rational knowledge without being subjugated to either. The study also addresses limitations of previous literature, which primarily focused on normative integration without critical epistemological analysis. [Sardar \(2006\)](#) emphasizes that the renewal of Islamic epistemology requires a critique of Western methodology and engagement with the classical intellectual tradition. Therefore, this research contributes to the development of Islamic philosophy of science by offering a more critical and inclusive epistemological model.

To guide the analysis, this study formulates several research questions that structure the investigation into the epistemological status of *kashf*. The first question examines how *kashf* is conceptualized within al-Ghazālī's epistemological framework. The second question explores the fundamental differences between *kashf* and empirical observation in the modern scientific paradigm. The third question analyzes how *kashf* can function as a complementary epistemology in contemporary philosophy of science. These questions ensure a focused and systematic analysis of the research issues and their theoretical implications.

Method

This study employs a qualitative research design with philosophical and hermeneutic approaches to analyze the epistemological position of *kashf* in the philosophy of Islamic science. The philosophical approach is used to examine conceptual structures and epistemological assumptions ([Coates, 2021](#)), while hermeneutics, particularly Gadamer's framework, guides the process of interpreting classical and contemporary texts. This combination allows the study to move beyond descriptive analysis toward a critical reconstruction of epistemological concepts.

This research is based on a literature study focusing on primary and secondary sources. The primary sources consist of the main works of al-Ghazālī, particularly *al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl* and *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, which articulate the epistemological foundations of *kashf*. The secondary sources include works in contemporary philosophy of science, especially those by Thomas Kuhn, Paul Feyerabend, and Hans-Georg Gadamer, as well as recent studies on Islamic epistemology. These sources were selected to enable a dialogical analysis between classical Islamic thought and modern epistemological discourse.

The hermeneutic analysis in this study follows three main stages. First, textual interpretation, which involves a careful reading of al-Ghazālī's texts to identify key concepts related to *kashf*, its epistemological status, and its hierarchical relationship with reason and sensory perception. Second, epistemological comparison, where the extracted concepts are systematically compared with modern scientific epistemology, particularly empiricism and rationalism, to identify points of difference and similarity. Third, conceptual synthesis, which integrates insights from both traditions to construct a complementary epistemological framework that situates *kashf* alongside empirical and rational knowledge.

The interpretation procedure is guided by Gadamer's concept of the fusion of horizons (*Horizontverschmelzung*), which emphasizes the dialogical interaction between the historical context of the text and the contemporary perspective of the

interpreter (Gadamer, 2004). In this study, al-Ghazālī's texts are not treated as static doctrine but as sources of dynamic meaning that are reinterpreted based on current philosophical debates. This process involves a repeated movement between parts and the whole, allowing meaning to emerge through a circular and reflective interpretive process.

To ensure the validity of the interpretation, this study employs several strategies. First, textual coherence, by maintaining consistency with the internal logic of al-Ghazālī's epistemological framework. Second, theoretical triangulation, by involving various philosophical perspectives to avoid one-sided interpretations. Third, critical reflexivity, where the researcher remains aware of the scope of their own interpretations and avoids imposing external assumptions on the text. Through these techniques, this study strives to produce a rigorous and accountable hermeneutic analysis.

Results and Discussion

Imam al-Ghazālī in *al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl* emphasized that the certainty of knowledge is not simply born from rational propositions, but from Divine light which reveals the truth through the *kashf* path (Al-Ghazali, 2020). He stated that limiting *kasyf* to postulates means narrowing the breadth of God's grace, because divine knowledge is an abundance of light that goes beyond the reach of the senses and reason. In *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, al-Ghazālī emphasizes that the soul is a medium for revealing knowledge about Allah until it reaches *mukāsyafah*, so that *kasyf* becomes the pinnacle of Islamic epistemology which unites rational, moral and spiritual dimensions (Al-Ghazālī, 1995).

Modern epistemology also shows room for non-empirical knowledge. Kuhn (1970) demonstrated that paradigm shifts are never resolved solely through logic or experimentation because they always involve non-empirical factors such as history, values, and the social dynamics of scientists. Feyerabend (1970) rejected materialistic reduction and asserted that thought, experience, and consciousness cannot be explained solely empirically. Gadamer (2004) added that humanities epistemology rests on a hermeneutical understanding that is always influenced by tradition and historical dialogue. These three approaches open up the legitimacy of intuitive epistemology and transcendental knowledge such as *kashf*.

Previous research has reduced the concept of *kasyf*. Atmaja and Mustopa (2020) positioned it as a rational-normative intuition and limited it within the framework of sharia. Meanwhile, Zacky and Moniruzzaman (2024) viewed it as part of normative spiritual authority without an independent epistemological position. Neither has grasped the position of *kasyf* as proposed by al-Ghazali, who positioned it as the pivot of Islamic epistemology, transcending rationalism and empiricism.

Data synthesis reveals a conceptual gap in the apologetic-normative literature on *kashf*. The classical tradition positions *kashf* as the ultimate source of knowledge, while contemporary philosophy opens up space for non-empirical epistemologies that align with divine intuition. However, modern Islamic literature has yet to articulate *kashf* as an integral and dialogical critical epistemology. Therefore, this study seeks to

fill this gap by constructing an independent, interdisciplinary kashf epistemology that is relevant to the needs of contemporary science.

Within the framework of complementary epistemology, kasyf is understood as an integral element that complements sensory and intellectual knowledge. The limitations of empiricism and rationalism demonstrate the need for an intuitive-transcendental dimension of knowledge (Al-Ghazālī, 1995; Husni et al., 2025). Thus, kasyf does not negate rationality, but rather functions as a critical partner that integrates empirical, rational, and spiritual aspects. This approach opens a productive dialogue between Islamic tradition and contemporary philosophy, thus legitimizing kasyf as a valid, complementary epistemology capable of addressing the complexities of modern knowledge.

Kasyf's Position in Al-Ghazali's Epistemology

Imam al-Ghazālī defines kashf as intuitive knowledge that originates from the overflow of Divine light into the heart of a servant (Al-Ghazali, 2020). This knowledge presents essential certainty beyond the reach of the senses or reason (Al-Ghazālī, 1995). This means that Al-Ghazālī differentiates kashf from ordinary psychological experiences by emphasizing that human inner experiences that are emotional or imaginative are still bound by the construction of nafsiah. Meanwhile Kasyf is a spiritual witness that is born from a soul that has been purified through riyāḍah and mujahadah (Al-Ghazali, 2020). Thus, kasyf has a spiritual-transcendental dimension because it is not just a psychological symptom, but an epistemic path towards ma'rifatullah (Al-Ghazālī, 1995). This epistemic path is only accessible to certain people chosen by Allah, a view reinforced by Gama (2016) research which emphasizes kasyf as the basis of hudhūrī knowledge which is different from everyday psychological experience.

The previously defined transcendent position of kasyf places it at the apex of the hierarchy of knowledge in Islamic epistemology. Al-Ghazālī explains that this hierarchy of knowledge begins with the level of sensory knowledge acquired by humans through the five senses, but it often leads to errors (Al-Ghazali, 2020). He then elaborates on the level of reason, which provides the capacity for abstraction and rational argumentation. However, reason itself remains limited in attaining absolute truth. Furthermore, Al-Ghazālī asserts that the highest level is kasyf, which is intuitive knowledge derived from the abundance of Divine light that directly reveals metaphysical reality (Al-Ghazali, 2020). Within the framework of Islamic epistemology, Al-Ghazālī positions kasyf as the pinnacle of epistemology because it overcomes the weaknesses of the senses and reason and instead presents transcendent certainty (Al-Ghazālī, 1995). This thinking is in line with Wahyudi (2018) study which places al-Ghazālī's epistemology in the 'irfānī category. Thus, al-Ghazālī's epistemological structure places kasyf as the peak and spiritual foundation of all forms of knowledge in Islam.

The assertion of the supremacy of kasyf in this hierarchy is reinforced by Imam al-Ghazali's own statement in al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl. Al-Ghazali stated that reason and the senses are often limited and prone to error because they operate in the realm

of the external and doubtful (Al-Ghazali, 2020). Meanwhile, kasyf provides direct revelation of transcendent reality without the intermediary of the senses or rational deduction, thus achieving the level of *ilm al-yaqīn* that sweeps away doubt (Al-Ghazali, 2020). This position, according to recent studies of Islamic philosophy, makes intuition the pinnacle of al-Ghazali's epistemology, surpassing reason and sensory experience (Renaldi, 2025). Additional support is found in Anam (2022) research, which states that al-kashf or *ilm al-mukāsyafah* is at a higher level than reason due to the clarity of the resulting knowledge and the direct and spontaneous way of obtaining it without a hierarchical process like reason. In this case, the analysis of the al-Munqidh text is strengthened by contemporary literature that positions kasyf not merely as an additional epistemic option, but as epistemological supremacy in al-Ghazālī's tradition of thought.

Al-Ghazālī's avowed supremacy of kashf explains the fundamental difference between his epistemology and modern philosophy. Imam Al-Ghazālī places kashf as the pinnacle of epistemology, ranking above the senses and reason, because kashf provides immediate certainty (Al-Ghazālī, 1995). Meanwhile, modern empiricist epistemology emphasizes that scientific knowledge must be rooted in retestable observation and experimentation (Bowden, 2019). Methodologically, Al-Ghazālī bases the verification of kashf's truth on soul-cleansing and self-reflection, as such truth is personal and transcendent, dependent on the subject's spiritual readiness (Abu-Sway, 1994). In contrast, modern empirical philosophy rejects any appeal to non-measurable or suprasensory experiences as scientific evidence (Vera & Hambali, 2021), thus claims accessible only to certain individuals are generally considered outside the scientific domain. Therefore, the main methodological difference lies in the sources and validation criteria where al-Ghazālī considered the ultimate truth to come through inner enlightenment that is not subject to experimental procedures, whereas modern empirical epistemology considers that truth can and should be tested publicly, repeatedly, and intersubjectively (Taslim, 2025).

The transcendent nature of kasyf, which distinguishes it from modern rationality, has also given rise to interpretive debates among contemporary scholars. Scholars differ in their interpretations of kasyf. Some understand it as rational intuition, while others assert it as a divine or mystical experience. For example, research by Hasib et al. (2024) states that Al-Ghazālī uses terms such as *ilham*, *hads*, *wijdan*, and *mukāsyafah* as variants of intuitive knowledge, and that intuitive knowledge has a rational aspect as long as it does not contradict reason, but still exceeds reason in achieving a level of epistemic certainty. On the other hand, research by Erdoğan and Eryücel (2024) positions kasyf more explicitly as a divine experience in which the revelation of the unseen and secret realities of God occurs after the heart is purified, rather than as a product of logic or ordinary rational deduction. Thus, methodologically the debate lies in whether kashf is integrated into the rational system as an intuition that can be explained and tested based on the premises of reason, or whether kashf should be understood outside the framework of human rationality as a direct and transcendent inner experience.

Interestingly, the space for non-empirical knowledge, which is at the heart of the kasyf debate, has also received unexpected justification from modern

philosophers of science. [Kuhn \(1970\)](#) implied that scientific knowledge is not only rooted in empirical data, but also in non-empirical elements such as aesthetic values, disciplinary traditions, and the beliefs of the academic community. This means that scientific paradigms at any given time contain elements that cannot be fully measured or validated empirically, and this opens up space for non-empirical knowledge that remains valued in the scientific process. Meanwhile, [Feyerabend \(1970\)](#), with his concept of epistemological anarchism, expanded this space further by stating that standard methodological rules are not always an absolute requirement for the validity of knowledge. Theories that initially appear to lack a strong empirical basis can also contribute to knowledge if they explore new possibilities and creatively open up new discourses within the scientific community.

The existence of space for non-empirical elements in modern science, as recognized by Kuhn and Feyerabend, finds indirect relevance to Al-Ghazālī's methodology. Al-Ghazālī stated that *kasyf* is not mystical intuitive knowledge without control within its epistemological framework. He explained that *kasyf* is a critical epistemology that combines moral, spiritual, and rational elements. The process requires purity of heart and spiritual readiness, as well as inner verification that can only be achieved after sensory experience and reason have reached their limits. Research by [Hasib et al. \(2024\)](#) concluded that Al-Ghazālī views *kasyf*, *hads*, *ilham*, and *mukāsyafah* as valid methodologies in knowledge acquisition. This approach not only complements reason and the senses but also corrects their weaknesses. This epistemic approach can be called critical because it rejects claims of certainty that are only built on empirical data or rational arguments without inner experience. Thus, *kashf* in the tradition of Al-Ghazali offers an epistemological alternative to modern philosophy of science. *Kashf* demonstrates that absolute knowledge and understanding of ultimate reality can involve non-empirical methods that possess mechanisms of inner verification, moral awareness, and spiritual connection. Therefore, *kashf* can be developed in contemporary philosophical discourse as a source of criticism against claims of false objectivity and as a basis for a more holistic and inclusive epistemology.

The Relationship of *Kasyf* to Empirical Observation in Modern Science

Al-Ghazālī explains the difference between *kasyf* and empirical observation by emphasizing that *kasyf* is inner knowledge that originates from the overflow of Divine light into the heart of a servant ([Al-Ghazālī, 1995](#)). Empirical observation produces external knowledge through the five senses that can only capture limited phenomena in the material realm ([McIntosh, 1988](#)), while *kasyf* transcends physical boundaries and reveals metaphysical realities ([Al-Ghazali, 2020](#)). This provides an understanding that *kasyf* requires cleansing of the soul and deep spiritual appreciation, while empirical observation relies on publicly verifiable experiments and repetitions. Thus, *kasyf* operates in a divine-transcendent dimension that is personal and *hudhūrī* ([Gama, 2016](#)), while empirical observation operates in an external-sensory dimension that is objective and intersubjective ([Taslim, 2025](#)). In line with the analysis [Wahyudi \(2018\)](#) Al-Ghazālī's intuitive knowledge still has epistemic legitimacy because it corrects the limitations of empirical methods in capturing the essence of truth.

Although Al-Ghazali firmly positions *kasyf* as transcendent knowledge possessing epistemic legitimacy, dominant perspectives in Western epistemology tend to simplify this privileged position of *kasyf*. Research by Atmaja and Mustopa (2020) shows that Western epistemology, dominated by empiricism and rationalism, is considered an approach that only recognizes the senses and reason as sources of knowledge. This causes metaphysical objects and spiritual experiences such as *kasyf* to be interpreted as intuition, which is almost identical to forms of empirical experience. They state that Islam views objects of knowledge not only as visible and measurable by the senses, but also as metaphysical, accessible only through intuition or revelation (Atmaja & Mustopa, 2020). However, in their explanations, the source of intuition, which can be read as *kasyf*, is often positioned in such a way that its function appears similar to empirical data that can be verified through the senses and reason. Thus, although Atmaja and Mustopa (2020) do not explicitly call *kasyf* empiricism, their argument gives rise to the reading that *kasyf* is reduced to the empirical realm or secular experience that can be proven using sensory-reasonable methods.

Ironically, the reduction of *kasyf* to a realm that equates it with secular experience is exacerbated by internal approaches within the Islamic tradition itself. According to research by Lombard (2024), contemporary intellectuals have criticized the epistemic validity of *kasyf* by viewing its limited verification as a form of non-prophetic knowledge. This demonstrates how contemporary intellectual discourse actively positions *kasyf* as problematic knowledge because it lacks adequate verification instruments within the context of Islamic epistemology. Although *kasyf* is recognized as a method within the scientific tradition, its epistemic claims become vulnerable to misuse and unverification when positioned solely as a defense of doctrine without clear methodological procedures (Afabih & Junianto, 2022; Lombard, 2024). On another occasion, research by Walid et al. (2023) emphasized that the epistemology of 'ilm al-udhri, rooted in direct experience or mukāshafah, is suppressed by the modern academic paradigm that demands verification based on mental representations and external evidence. In this context, the accusation that Al-Ghazālī abandoned reason is often used apologetically, even though his thinking demonstrates an integration of rational criticism and inner experience (Hasib & Khasanah, 2025). Therefore, the apologetic approach is detrimental to the Sufi tradition because it reduces *kasyf* to mere spiritual legitimacy without a critical-transformative function.

The function of *kasyf*, which transcends rationality and empiricism, places it in a position connected to the concept of paradigm shift in modern philosophy of science. Kuhn (1970) emphasized that scientific paradigm shifts are not determined by the accumulation of empirical facts alone, but rather by the inability of the old paradigm to address anomalies that give rise to methodological crises. In the context of Islamic epistemology, *kasyf* can be positioned as an alternative paradigm that has its own epistemological authority outside the framework of empiricism and rationalism (Lombard, 2024). This paradigm affirms inner experience and spiritual intuition as valid sources of knowledge. Just as the new paradigm within Kuhn's framework redefines the rules of the scientific game (Kuhn, 1970), so too *kasyf* shifts the criteria for the validity of knowledge through non-inductive and non-rational paths (Putra et al.,

2025). Based on this, kasyf deserves to be understood as a form of paradigm shift in Islamic epistemology that affirms the legitimacy of non-empirical knowledge.

This paradigm shift concept was later strengthened and expanded by Paul Feyerabend through the idea of epistemological anarchism. Feyerabend (1970) rejected the existence of a single, universal scientific method that binds all forms of knowledge. He argued that the plurality of methods actually encourages the birth of new knowledge that does not always conform to empirical standards (Feyerabend, 1970). Within this framework, kasyf can be understood as a legitimate method that possesses epistemic legitimacy alongside empirical and rational methods. Kasyf presents inner experiences and spiritual intuitions that cannot be reached by sensory observation (Al-Ghazali, 2020). Feyerabend's view opens up space for kasyf to be recognized as an alternative epistemological paradigm, not simply a complement to empiricism. Thus, kasyf gains a legitimate position within the discourse of contemporary epistemological pluralism.

The recognition of kasyf as a legitimate method within the discourse of epistemological pluralism leads to an understanding of kasyf as a complementary epistemology within the framework of Islamic thought. Kasyf here does not intend to replace empiricism, but rather fills its limitations in accessing the metaphysical dimension. If empiricism only operates in the realm of external phenomena that can be publicly verified (Kusuma, 2024), then kasyf opens the way to hudhūrī knowledge through the purification of the soul and inner experience (Wahyudi, 2018). Al-Ghazālī (1995) emphasized the integration of reason, senses, and kasyf so that all three function complementary in the epistemic process. This perspective is reinforced by Chittick (2010) who states that Sufi experience presents a form of symbolic and transcendent knowledge that cannot be reduced to empirical methods. Similarly, Nasr (1989) emphasized that modern science loses its sacred dimension by rejecting the spiritual aspect of knowledge, which is precisely restored through the epistemology of kasyf. This leads to the position of kasyf being seen as a complementary paradigm that maintains the balance between the rational-empirical and the spiritual-transcendent within the horizon of Islamic epistemology.

Based on the above description, the position of kasyf as a complementary paradigm that integrates spiritual and rational aspects should be understood not in a subordinate relationship, but rather as a complementary dialogue in expanding the horizon of knowledge. Al-Ghazālī (1995) emphasized that reason, senses, and kasyf operate in an integrated manner so that knowledge is not trapped in empirical reductionism or mysticism alone. From a contemporary perspective, Sufi epistemology presents a balance between reason, cosmological symbolism, and inner experience (Chittick, 2011). Furthermore, Sufism offers an epistemic methodology that links spiritual experience with the Islamic intellectual framework (Nasr, 1989). Therefore, the dialogue between kasyf and empiricism actually enriches human understanding of reality, both external and transcendent. Thus, the relationship between the two can be positioned as a creative dialectic that emphasizes the plurality of Islamic epistemology within an interdisciplinary framework.

Critical Reconstruction of Kashf as Complementary Epistemology

Based on the previous analysis, this study goes beyond descriptive comparison towards a critical reconstruction of kashf as a complementary epistemology. The epistemological tension between kashf and modern scientific observation lies in the criteria of validity and the means of accessing truth, which are fundamentally different. While empirical science relies on intersubjective verification and repetition, kashf is based on inner experience that is neither publicly accessible nor methodologically reproducible. This difference raises critical questions regarding whether kashf can be considered epistemologically valid within a scientific framework that prioritizes objectivity. Efforts to reduce kashf into empirical or rational categories fail to resolve this tension, as they disregard its transcendental nature and experience. Therefore, rather than forcing integration, it is necessary to acknowledge the irreducible epistemological difference between these two ways of knowing.

Previous studies that attempted to align kashf with empirical knowledge often adopted an apologetic stance that ultimately weakened its epistemological significance. By translating kashf into psychological intuition or rational insight, these approaches eliminate its metaphysical and transcendental dimensions. Such reduction not only misrepresents al-Ghazālī's epistemology but also reinforces the dominance of the empirical paradigm. As a result, kashf is positioned as secondary rather than as a critical epistemological alternative. This indicates the need to move beyond integrative frameworks toward a more critical and reconstructive approach.

Instead of integration or subordination, this study proposes a complementary epistemological model based on functional differentiation between epistemic domains. In this model, empirical observation operates within the domain of physical reality and provides knowledge that can be publicly verified through sensory data and experiments. Rational knowledge functions as a mediating structure that organizes, interprets, and systematizes empirical findings into a coherent conceptual framework. Meanwhile, kashf occupies the transcendental domain, offering access to metaphysical truths that cannot be reached through empirical or rational means. These three domains do not compete but interact dialogically, each addressing different dimensions of reality while maintaining their epistemological autonomy.

The interaction between these epistemological domains occurs not through methodological unification, but through critical dialogue and mutual limitations. Empirical science is limited in accessing metaphysical reality, while kashf cannot provide knowledge that can be intersubjectively verified as required in scientific investigation. Rationality plays an important role in mediating between these domains by preventing empirical reductionism and uncritical mysticism. Thus, complementary epistemology does not imply synthesis into a single system, but rather coordination between different modes of knowledge. This framework allows for epistemological pluralism while maintaining the integrity of each domain of knowledge.

This reconstruction demonstrates that kashf should not be understood as an alternative that replaces empirical knowledge, but as a critical partner that reveals

its epistemological limitations. By positioning *kashf* within a complementary framework, this study challenges the universal claims of empiricism without dismissing its methodological significance. Such an approach aligns with contemporary critiques of epistemological monism while offering contributions distinct from the Islamic intellectual tradition. Therefore, the significance of *kashf* lies not in its compatibility with science, but in its ability to expand the horizons of knowledge considered valid. This position marks a shift from defensive integration towards critical epistemological reconstruction.

Repositioning of *Kasyf* in The Philosophy of Science

A repositioning of the epistemology of *kasyf* is necessary because previous literature tends to be normative-apologetic, limiting the scope for critique and methodological innovation. Such studies often emphasize the defense of doctrine by reductively interpreting *kasyf* as mere moral intuition or religious experience without a clear methodological foundation (Atmaja & Mustopa, 2020). This apologetic approach has implications for the loss of *kasyf*'s potential as a critical epistemology capable of dialogue with contemporary philosophical traditions (Zacky & Moniruzzaman, 2024). Some studies even emphasize harmonization with Western empiricism or rationalism, reducing the transcendental dimension of *kasyf* to merely psychological or moral experience (Al-Aidrus, 2018; Al-Attas, 1995). Therefore, a repositioning of *kasyf* is urgent to restore its role as the pivot of Islamic epistemology that is integral, critical, and open to modern interdisciplinary discourse.

Using Gadamer's hermeneutics, the dialogue between the horizons of Islamic tradition and modernity can be understood through the concept of fusion of horizons, which emphasizes the productive encounter between the past and the present (Gadamer, 2004). Islamic tradition carries a horizon of meaning shaped by sacred texts, spiritual practices, and the authority of scholars, while modernity presents a new horizon in the form of rational criticism, scientific methods, and contemporary historical experience. Gadamer (2004) emphasizes that these horizons are not closed, but are constantly moving and can be integrated into a new, broader understanding. Within this framework, the repositioning of the epistemology of *kasyf* can be read as an effort to avoid apologetic reduction by allowing the Islamic tradition to engage in critical dialogue with contemporary philosophy of science. This process does not mean fully assimilating the tradition to the modern paradigm, but rather building a historical awareness that understanding is always shaped by the dynamic interaction between intellectual heritage and the demands of the times. In this way, this hermeneutical dialogue allows *kasyf* to emerge as a critical, transformative, and relevant Islamic epistemology for modern interdisciplinary discourse.

In Al-Ghazali's Islamic epistemological tradition, *kasyf* is a valid alternative epistemology (Al-Ghazali, 2020). *Kasyf* complements the senses and reason in understanding reality because it presents a dimension of inner knowledge that cannot be reached by empirical methods alone (Al-Ghazali, 2020). In this position, *kasyf* can actually coexist with observation- and reason-based epistemology, adding a critical approach to empirical and rational limitations. As research by Syafaq et al. (2023) presents an explicit argument that balances revelation, rationality, and *kasyf*'s inner

experience as three pillars in the reconstruction of contemporary Islamic epistemology. The aim of this reconstruction is an effort to gain deeper and more relevant knowledge to the challenges of the times. Furthermore, research by [Maulud and Syaifuddin \(2025\)](#) states that the dominance of the modern empirical paradigm has led to the marginalization of spiritual experiences, even though these experiences have a significant epistemic function in the Islamic tradition. Based on this view, kashf is not merely a marginal or mystical alternative but rather a valid critical epistemology that provides instruments for testing, enriching, and correcting empirical and rational epistemology in contemporary philosophical discourse on science.

Feminist and postcolonial epistemology criticize Western empiricism for often asserting a culturally biased model of knowledge. Epistemic feminism rejects the dominance of observational and experimental methods that ignore women's experiences and social location ([Haraway, 1988](#); [Harding, 1986](#)). Postcolonialism demands recognition of local, spiritual, and traditional knowledge neglected by mainstream Western knowledge ([Settler, 2025](#)). Similarly, [Al-Ghazālī \(1995\)](#) kashf offers a valid alternative epistemology because it places inner experience, spiritual intuition, and morality as essential elements in validating knowledge. Comparing these two, it can be seen that kashf enables the epistemic inclusivity desired by feminists and postcolonials. Kashf provides space for subjects of knowledge that have been marginalized by Western empiricism. This condition makes kashf not only relevant in traditional Islamic discourse but can also contribute strongly to critiques of the dominance of modern scientific methodology.

Kashf, in Al-Ghazali's view, is unique because it is directly rooted in metaphysical reality and transcendence, transcending the physical and sensory realms. Kashf is not merely a psychological intuition but an inner experience that connects the soul with Divine Light ([Al-Ghazali, 2020](#)). This is evident in terms such as *ilham*, *hads*, and *mukāsyafah*, which are direct manifestations of spiritual intuition ([Hasib et al., 2024](#)). In his research, [Hasan \(2012\)](#) emphasized that Divine light is the key to the revelation of knowledge through kashf, not merely intellectual enlightenment or external sensing. The methodological difference arises because empirical epistemology tests something through external evidence and observation, while kashf tests itself internally through inner readiness, morality, and purification of the heart. Therefore, kashf offers a legitimate alternative epistemology within the Islamic tradition. Kashf becomes a medium for understanding aspects of reality that cannot be reduced to mere empiricism or rationalism. This uniqueness makes kashf not merely a mystical escape, but rather an epistemic component capable of broadening and deepening the horizons of contemporary science.

Kashf as an epistemological paradigm presents important implications for Islamic philosophy of science because it affirms spiritual experience as a valid source of knowledge. In interdisciplinary studies, Kashf opens a dialogue between theology, philosophy, psychology, and social sciences to comprehensively understand the inner dimensions of humankind. Kashf's involvement in the scientific realm enriches contemporary Islamic research methods by adding an often-overlooked transcendental horizon. Globally, Kashf offers a unique contribution to epistemological discourse by challenging the universalism of Western methods and

affirming epistemic pluralism. This aligns with [Kuhn \(1970\)](#) notion of paradigm shift and [Feyerabend \(1970\)](#) epistemological anarchism. This means that Kashf can be positioned as an alternative epistemological offering relevant in academic conversations across disciplines and cultures, not simply a legacy of the Sufi tradition.

Based on the above explanation, the repositioning of kasyf offers a new paradigm in Islamic philosophy of science that places inner experience and spiritual intuition alongside rationality and empiricism. Kasyf is not merely a religious experience, but a critical epistemic framework capable of dialogue with modern interdisciplinary discourse. In a global context, kasyf contributes to the critique of Western methodological universalism and affirms the epistemic pluralism championed by feminist and postcolonial epistemology. This paradigmatic offering allows Islamic philosophy of science to broaden the horizons of knowledge and incorporate transcendental and moral dimensions as instruments for validating truth. Thus, kasyf can be positioned as a critical capital for building an inclusive, dialogical, and relevant knowledge ecosystem for contemporary global civilization.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that kashf in al-Ghazālī's epistemology cannot be reduced to psychological intuition or normative religious experience, but must be understood as an independent epistemological category with its own validity criteria. By critically analyzing its relationship with modern scientific observation, this study shows that kashf operates in a transcendental domain that complements, rather than replaces, empirical and rational knowledge. The proposed complementary epistemological model establishes a three-part structure consisting of the empirical, rational, and intuitive-transcendental domains, each addressing different dimensions of reality while maintaining epistemological autonomy.

The theoretical implications of this study lie in its contribution to the reconstruction of Islamic philosophy of science, particularly by challenging the dominance of empirical reductionism and reaffirming the legitimacy of non-empirical knowledge. However, beyond its theoretical contributions, this study also offers several practical implications. First, in the field of Islamic higher education, this model can be used as a framework for developing an integrative curriculum that combines empirical sciences with spiritual-epistemological perspectives, particularly in programs of philosophy, theology, and Islamic studies.

Second, in the context of interdisciplinary research, this model provides a methodological orientation for integrating non-empirical dimensions, such as ethical intuition, spiritual experience, and metaphysical reflection, into scientific inquiry without violating empirical standards. This is particularly relevant in fields such as transpersonal psychology, religious studies, and philosophy of science, where subjective experience plays an important role. Third, in the realm of epistemological critique, the concept of kashf can serve as a critical tool to evaluate the limitations of empiricism, especially in addressing questions related to meaning, value, and ultimate reality that cannot be fully comprehended through sensory observation. In this regard, kashf does not compete with science but rather expands the scope of what is considered valid knowledge.

Finally, this study suggests that future research should move beyond theoretical reconstruction toward the development of applied epistemological models, particularly in designing research methodologies that explicitly integrate empirical, rational, and intuitive dimensions. Comparative studies across intellectual traditions are also necessary to further test the relevance of kashf in global epistemological discourse.

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