

## Contemporary Epistemology of Interpretation: Reconstructing the Relationship between Normative Values and Historicity in the Interpretation of the Qur'an

Ali Sajjad Baaly<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel Surabaya, Indonesia

Correspondence: [Alisajjadbaaly5009@gmail.com](mailto:Alisajjadbaaly5009@gmail.com)

DOI: 10.29240/alquds.v9i3.15718

**Abstract.** The values of normativity and historicity are essential considerations in understanding the Qur'an. This study presents an analysis of the reconstruction of contemporary interpretive epistemology, which cannot be done by contrasting the values of normativity and historicity. Instead, a dialectical synthesis is needed that combines the two in a balanced manner. Through this approach, the Qur'an can still be understood as a universal guide for life while also responding to humanity's social and historical dynamics. In practical terms, this study offers guidance for developing a more dynamic, context-sensitive model of interpretation that remains faithful to the Qur'an's fundamental principles. The research method is a descriptive-analytical approach with a philosophical orientation to unravel the epistemological issues arising in contemporary interpretive practices. This article discusses the epistemology of modern interpretation by highlighting how the relationship between normative values and historical aspects in the understanding of the Qur'an can be reconstructed. The development of contemporary interpretation methodology requires an approach that can overcome the tension between two critical dimensions. First, the universal and normative nature of the Qur'an as divine revelation. Second, the historical and cultural context surrounding the process of revelation and its interpretation.

**Keywords:** Epistemology, Normativity, Historicity, Contemporary Interpretation.

### Introduction

The Qur'an, as the holy book of Muslims, has two fundamental dimensions that cannot be separated: the first is the transcendent dimension of divinity (which cannot be controlled by reason), and the second is the human dimension (historical).<sup>1</sup> The dialectic between these two dimensions has been a long-standing intellectual struggle in the history of Qur'anic interpretation, from the classical to the contemporary.<sup>2</sup> On the one hand, the Qur'an is understood as the kalam of Allah, with absolute and universal normative value that transcends space and time.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, the Qur'an was revealed in a specific historical-cultural context, using 7th-century AD Arabic, and responding to the concrete situation of the Jahiliyah Arab society at that time.

Epistemological problems arise when Muslims in modern times try to understand and apply the teachings of the Qur'an in a socio-cultural context that is much different from the time of revelation or the revelation of the Qur'an. How can a sacred text revealed 14 centuries ago still provide relevant direction and guidance for modern society, with all its complexities? This requires a

<sup>1</sup> Ecep Ismail, "Semantic Analysis Of The Word Ahzāb And Its Derivation In The Quran," *Al-Bayan* 01, no. 02 (December 2016): 140.

<sup>2</sup> Syarif Budiman et al., "Abdullah Saeed's Contextual Interpretation Methodology in the 21st Century Qur'an," *Journal of Education Research* 5, no. 1 (March 2024): 822, <https://doi.org/10.37985/jer.v5i1.836>.

<sup>3</sup> Ahmad Haromaini, "getting to know hermeneutics through muhammad shahrur and hassan hanafi," *rausyan fikir* 15, no. 01 (march 2019): 90.

reconstruction of the methodology of interpretation that is not only textual-linguistic with an emphasis on language, but also considers philosophical, hermeneutical, and contextual aspects.<sup>4</sup>

In the discourse of contemporary interpretation, various approaches have emerged that seek to answer this challenge. Some Muslim scholars who focus on the interpretation of the Qur'an, such as Fazlur Rahman, Mohammed Arkoun, Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, and Abdullah Saed, offer a new epistemological framework that seeks to bridge the gap between normativity and historicity. They argue that understanding the Qur'an requires an awareness of the historical context of revelation (*Asba>b Al-Nuzu>l*) and still capturing the universal moral intensity contained and implied in the Qur'an."

However, this attempt to reconstruct the epistemology of interpretation is not without controversy. Traditionalists consider the historical-contextual approach to have the potential to relativize the Qur'an's absolute values. At the same time, the modernist group holds that ignoring the historical dimension will render the Qur'an a dead text incapable of dialogue with the realities of the times.<sup>5</sup> This tension raises a fundamental question: how to formulate an epistemology of interpretation that can integrate the values of normativity and historicity coherently without reducing either of them.

This article aims to critically examine the epistemological way of thinking in contemporary Qur'an interpretation. The primary focus of this study is on how to rebuild the relationship between the value of normativity (the central teachings that are fixed and binding) and the value of historicity (the historical context behind the descent of verses) in the process of interpreting the Qur'an. The discussion will begin by explaining the basics of epistemology in contemporary interpretation, then continue with an analysis of how the two values, namely normative and historical values, can be harmoniously combined in the practice of interpreting the Qur'an. In the end, this study will show the implications of this integration for the development of an interpretation methodology that is more relevant and in line with today's society's needs.

## Result and Discussion

Epistemology, according to Abdullah Amin, is one of the main branches of philosophy that explicitly studies the essence, truth, sources, methods, and structures of knowledge. As a philosophical discipline, epistemology not only explains how humans acquire knowledge but also examines the foundations that make knowledge valid, reliable, and accountable. Therefore, epistemology plays a strategic role in shaping human thinking at both the individual and collective levels.<sup>6</sup>

Discussions on epistemology generally start with an explanation of what is meant by knowledge. This study highlights the process of acquiring knowledge, what needs to be considered to ensure the knowledge obtained is correct, and how to determine the truth and the criteria for doing so. The object of epistemological study includes questions about how knowledge arose, how humans can know it, and how to distinguish it from other things. Thus, epistemology is concerned with the

<sup>4</sup> Ummi Kalsum Hasibuan, Risqo Faridatul Ulya, and Jendri Jendri, "Typology of Tafsir Studies: Methods, Approaches and Patterns in Qur'an Interpretation Partners," *Ishlah: Journal of Ushuluddin Knowledge, Adab and Da'wah* 2, no. 2 (October 2020): 239, <https://doi.org/10.32939/ishlah.v2i2.9>.

<sup>5</sup> Mkhai Hanif Yuli Edi Z Hanif, "TEXTUAL APPROACH; CONTEXTUAL AND HERMENEETIC IN THE INTERPRETATION OF THE QUR'AN," *Al Muhibidz: Journal of Qur'an and Tafsir* 3, no. 2 (September 2023): 104, <https://doi.org/10.57163/almuhafidz.v3i2.69>.

<sup>6</sup> Tira Reseki Pajriani et al., "Philosophical Epistemology," *Primary : Multidisciplinary Scientific Journal* 1, no. 3 (June 2023): 283, <https://doi.org/10.55681/primer.v1i3.144>.

conditions, situations, spaces, and times that affect a person's process of understanding something.<sup>7</sup>

Tafsir itself is a fundamental science in the Islamic scientific tradition. Its function is to understand the meaning contained in the Qur'an. This is crucial because the Qur'an, as the revelation of Allah, is revealed in Arabic and has a depth of meaning that is both comprehensive and complex. This depth cannot be reached through simple language understanding alone; it requires specialized knowledge, methods, and scientific approaches to explain and interpret the message appropriately.<sup>8</sup>

In this context, tafsir not only plays a role in explaining the pronunciation or arrangement of words in the Qur'an, but also serves as a bridge that connects the text of the Qur'an with the reality of human life, which is constantly changing and developing. Tafsir helps Muslims understand how the teachings of the Qur'an can be applied across a variety of social, cultural, and intellectual contexts throughout history.<sup>9</sup> Thus, tafsir is a vital instrument for maintaining the relevance of the Qur'an in daily life, ensuring that the divine message remains understandable and can be practiced in accordance with the needs of the times.<sup>10</sup>

Contemporary means something that is in one era or happening at the same time. In *the Oxford Learner's Pocket Dictionary*, the term *contemporary* has two primary meanings. *First, belonging to the same time*, which means originating from or taking place in the same period. *Second, in the present, modern refers to something related to the present or the contemporary.*<sup>10</sup>

Contemporary thinkers are those who understand and develop science through methods, approaches, and ways of thinking aligned with the needs and challenges of the modern era. They not only maintain old thinking, but are also open to new ideas that can enrich or renew previous thoughts. Thus, contemporary thinking is oriented towards innovation, relevance, and renewal so that science remains in line with the times.

Meanwhile, contemporary interpretation is a form of interpretation or explanation of the verses of the Qur'an that are adapted to the conditions and needs of today. This interpretation seeks to understand the Qur'an's message in the context of modern life, ensuring its teachings remain relevant and address contemporary problems. This understanding aligns with the concept of *tajdīd*, an effort to reform religious experience in harmony with modern life. This update is carried out through the interpretation or recitation of Qur'an verses, taking into account scientific advances, social changes, and community dynamics. Thus, contemporary interpretation not only reads the text literally but also takes into account the ever-evolving social and intellectual realities.<sup>11</sup>

In general, contemporary interpretation is not much different from classical interpretation because both aim to harmonize the universal values contained in the Qur'an with their times. However, in the modern era, technological and scientific developments present new challenges and needs that tafsir scholars did not encounter in previous eras. Changes in society, culture, and the

<sup>7</sup> Dinda Salsabilla et al., "The Meaning of Tafsir and Its Pattern from the Time of the Prophet to the Present," *Journal of Islamic Ethics* 3, no. 1 (December 2024): 338, <https://doi.org/10.61132/jbpai.v3i1.912>.

<sup>8</sup> K. Kerwanto, Muhammad Aulal Fikri Al Hasani, and Muhammad Miftah Hamdani, "Contextual Interpretation (Study of Epistemology, History, Variety of Books and Examples of Interpretation)," *QiST: Journal of Quran and Tafseer Studies* 3, no. 3 (October 2024): 453, <https://doi.org/10.23917/qist.v3i3.5737>.

<sup>9</sup> Iman Iffah Nafatu Fina, "Contextual Interpretation," *Essence* 12, no. 01 (January 2011): 164.

<sup>10</sup> Abdul Rouf, "The Contribution of Contemporary Interpretation in Answering the Challenges of the Times," *Al-Amin: Journal of Educational and Social Sciences of the Humanities* 2, no. 1 (September 2024): 26, <https://doi.org/10.53398/alamin.v2i1.367>.

<sup>11</sup> Rouf, "The Contribution of Contemporary Interpretation in Answering the Challenges of the Times," 26.

mindset of modern society demand a more adaptive, responsive interpretive approach suited to the times.<sup>12</sup>

Contemporary mufassirs argue that what is needed today is not only the interpretation of the text in a traditional way, but also the development of models and interpretation methodologies that can read the Qur'an in the context of modern life.<sup>13</sup> This approach is necessary so that the Qur'an is still understood as a perfect holy book, relevant throughout the ages, and able to provide answers to various social and religious problems faced by Muslims today. Thus, contemporary interpretation serves as a bridge between the Qur'an and modern reality, enabling divine messages to be lived and practiced in accordance with the needs of a society that continues to develop.<sup>14</sup>

### Characteristics of Contemporary Interpretation

In the contemporary era, a mufassir seeks to interpret the Qur'an's verses with a more creative and innovative approach. They do not rely only on one particular method of interpreting the Qur'an, but combine two or more methods of interpretation at once. The goal is that the resulting interpretation does not merely repeat previous scientific traditions but offers new understandings relevant to the times. To achieve this renewal, the mufassir also developed a different perspective and interpretation characteristics from the characteristics of classical interpretation. One characteristic of modern interpretation is its use of hermeneutic theory, which emphasizes the epistemological, methodological, and practical aspects of interpreting texts.<sup>15</sup> Through this approach, interpretation is directed toward productive reading, opening up new meanings and expanding one's understanding to avoid being trapped in ideological and tendentious biases.<sup>16</sup>

*Second*, the interpretation approach used is contextual and oriented to the spirit of the Qur'an. This approach is carried out by reading the verses of the Qur'an through various disciplines (interdisciplinary), such as philosophy, semantics, anthropology, sociology, science, and other modern scientific fields. The use of these different scientific tools emerged in response to the idea, held by contemporary mufassirs, that the Qur'an is eternal. Still, its delivery is always related to a specific context. Therefore, even though the Qur'an was revealed in the Arab region and is written in Arabic, its messages are universal and relevant to people in different places and times. Therefore, contemporary figures such as Muhammad Syahrur said that the Qur'an can be said to be *Sha>lib li kulli zama>n wa then>n* if the Qur'an is likened to a book that came down in our time and the Prophet Muhammad as the conveyor of his treatise was sent in our time.<sup>17</sup>

*Third*, the interpretation approach used by contemporary mufassir groups is scientific, critical, and not fanatical towards the madzhab adhered to. It is called scientific because the results of interpretation produced by contemporary circles can be tested for correctness through the consistency of the methodology used by the mufassir, as well as providing space for academic criticism and

<sup>12</sup> Dinni Nazhifah, "Modern and Contemporary Interpretations of the 19th-21st Centuries AD," *Journal of Faith and Spirituality* 1, no. 2 (May 2021): 211, <https://doi.org/10.15575/jis.v1i2.12302>.

<sup>13</sup> Maolidya Fangesty, Nurwadjah Ahmad, and R. Komarudin, "Characteristics and Models of Contemporary Interpretation," *Mashadiruna Journal of Qur'an Science and Tafsir* 3 (March 2024): 55, <https://doi.org/10.15575/mjat.v3i1.34048>.

<sup>14</sup> Muh Makhrus Ali Ridho, "THOUGHT OF THE INTERPRETATION OF THE CONTEMPORARY PERIOD," *Dar El-Ilmi : Journal of Religious Studies, Education and Humanities* 10, no. 2 (October 2023): 128, <https://doi.org/10.52166/darelilmi.v10i2.5111>.

<sup>15</sup> Rasuki Rasuki, "Getting to Know Hermeneutical Theory as a Method of Understanding Texts Objectively," *Kariman: Journal of Islamic Education* 9, no. 1 (June 2021): 107, <https://doi.org/10.52185/kariman.v9i1.173>.

<sup>16</sup> Rasuki, "Getting to Know Hermeneutical Theory as a Method of Understanding Texts Objectively," 113.

<sup>17</sup> Alif Jabal Kurdi, "Muhammad Syahrur and the Essence of the Qur'an Shalih li Kulli Zaman wa Makan," *Tafsir of the Quran | References for Tafsir in Indonesia*, December 11, 2020, <https://tafsiralquran.id/muhammad-syahrur-dan-hakikat-al-quran-shalih-li-kulli-zaman-wa-makan/>.

evaluation. This approach is also critical and not tied to their role models (not authoritarian), as contemporary mufassirs do not limit themselves to the views of a single sect. In fact, they critically assess and criticize various opinions of classical and contemporary scholars, so that the resulting interpretation is more objective and not tied to the interests of certain groups.”

Thus, the contemporary interpretation differs from the previous interpretation. Not only in methodology but also in the explanations of classical and modern interpretations, differences arise. As explained by Hasbi AsShiddieqy, the *Tafsir al-Manar* by Rasyid Ridha tends to be more concise than the works of previous mufassir. Ridha simplifies the description that was previously conveyed at length by the classical mufassir. Meanwhile, his teacher, Muhammad Abdurrahman, maintained a strong attention to the structure and rules of the Arabic language. He tries to maintain conformity with the *nashnash* taught by the Prophet PBUH, as well as to use *ijtihad* to understand the verses of the Qur'an. In his interpretation, Abdurrahman consistently sought a relationship between the Qur'an and the development of modern science. He believes that the teachings of the Qur'an do not contradict the essence of science and even contain principles in line with contemporary theories of knowledge. According to him, a reasonable interpretation cannot contradict human reason.<sup>18</sup>

The book of *tafsir* compiled in the contemporary era is no less important as a guide in understanding modern life. Modern interpretations not only explain the meaning of the verse textually but also help readers rethink various activities and problems faced in daily life in the modern era. Modern mufassir affirm that, in interpreting the Qur'an, Islamic teachings do not contradict contemporary scientific development. It is based on the belief that Islam is a religion of *rahmatan lil alamin*. Hence, its teachings are always relevant to the living conditions of society and the changing times, anytime and anywhere.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, mufassirs like Muhammad Abdurrahman seek to open a new perspective on the Muslim ummah so that they can continue to develop and not live in a state of *jumud*.<sup>20</sup>

### Contemporary Interpretation Methods

Along with the development of the times and increasingly complex social changes, various approaches and theories have emerged, proposed by several scholars in interpreting the Qur'an. This approach and theory seek to understand the Qur'an by considering the contexts surrounding it, such as language, history, culture, and social conditions at the time of the Qur'an's revelation or when the mufassir was alive. Contemporary interpretive methods, including linguistic, historical, and social approaches, seek to provide a more relevant understanding of the needs and challenges of modern society. Through this approach, the interpretation of the Qur'an not only focuses on the textual meaning but also considers the background and circumstances that shape the descent of a verse. Thus, the resulting interpretation is expected to be more relevant and able to answer various problems that arise in the lives of Muslims in the modern era.<sup>21</sup>

The fundamental difference between hermeneutics and classical methods of interpretation lies in their workspace and orientation. Hermeneutics works through three horizons: the author's, the text's, and the reader's. This approach includes an analysis of texts, contexts, and contextualizations of contemporary life. The three horizons relate to methodological and epistemological aspects of the

<sup>18</sup> Ahmad Ridho Syakiri, “The Contribution of Contemporary Interpretation in the Modern Era: A Study of the Concept of Thought and Methodology of Interpretation,” *AQWAL Journal of Qur'an and Hadis Studies* 3, no. 2 (December 2022): 179, <https://doi.org/10.28918/aqwal.v3i2.5784>.

<sup>19</sup> Ahmad Ridho Syakiri, “The Contribution of Contemporary Interpretation in the Modern Era,” 179.

<sup>20</sup> Harun Nasution, *Reform in Islam (History of Thought and Movements)* (Jakarta: PT. Bulan Bintang, 1992), 62.

<sup>21</sup> Umar Al Faruq et al., “Understanding the Method of Qur'an Interpretation: Traditional and Contemporary Approaches in Understanding the Message of the Divine Message,” *Ta'limDiniyah: Journal of Islamic Education Studies* 4, no. 1 (October 2023): 215, <https://doi.org/10.53515/tdjpai.v4i1.82>.

interpretation process. On the other hand, the classical interpretation focuses more on the verse itself and does not expand the study much into the current socio-historical context. Although the early elements of the hermeneutic approach have appeared in the Islamic intellectual tradition, their scope remains limited to the bayani mindset. It has not evolved into a more analytical and rational Burhani approach.<sup>22</sup>

One of the contemporary methods of interpretation that scholars often hear of Qur'an interpretation is Fazlur Rahman's *Double Movement* hermeneutic theory. The theory is an elaboration on implementing the Qur'an, using two steps: *First*, looking at the conditions at the time the Qur'an was revealed; *Second*, going back to the time when the Qur'an was interpreted. The urgency of the historical approach is *Asbabun Nuzul*, micro and macro, to understand the social conditions of the Arab people at the time the Qur'an was revealed, because the Qur'an is Allah's response to those conditions. Then generalize the verses specifically in terms of socio-historical conditions and ratio legis. The main goal is to find the moral intensity of a verse and then apply it to the current context. In particular, this theory is applied in understanding the legal verses in the Qur'an."

### ***Epistemological Problems in Contemporary Interpretation***

As explained above, contemporary interpretation can also lead to contradictions. Although it offers a more dynamic approach, the epistemology of modern interpretation still faces some fundamental problems. One of the main problems is relativism, the concern that the emphasis on context and the diversity of interpretation can eliminate an objective measure for determining whether an interpretation is correct. If every interpretation is considered valid only because it is in accordance with the social, cultural, or experience context of the reader, then there is a risk of *interpretive anarchism*, which is a situation in which all interpretations are considered equally valid without any criteria distinguishing between acceptable or unacceptable methodologies and rules of interpretation—especially the hermeneutics they take from the thoughts of Western scientists. So many scholars say that interpreting the Qur'an must be in accordance with conventional systems, such as reliance on the Qur'an and Hadith.<sup>23</sup>

One of the leading centers of Islamic education that rejects the use of Hermeneutic methods in understanding the Qur'an is Al-Azhar University. Many scholars and Shaykhs of Al-Azhar expressed their disagreement with the application of Hermeneutics in the interpretation of the Qur'an. They put forward several reasons. *First*, Hermeneutics is considered capable of undermining the sacredness of the Qur'an. Since ancient times, Muslims have agreed that the Qur'an is divine, that is, its truth can be proven both textually and rationally. The Qur'an is believed to be a holy book revealed by Allah SWT. However, some modern thinkers view the Qur'an as a text formed through historical processes or as a cultural product. One example is Nashr Hamid Abu Zayd, who called the Qur'an a cultural product, suggesting that its laws can change over time. In his view, although the Qur'an was originally divine and eternal, it eventually became a human text.

*Second*, in applying the Hermeneutic method, the proponents of this approach do not explicitly distinguish between definite legal verses (qat'i) and legal verses that still allow for discussion or review (zanni). They hold that all legal verses in the Qur'an are relative, so that the law's provisions can change with social, cultural, and temporal developments. In other words, no law is considered permanent, since everything is understood in response to a particular historical context.

<sup>22</sup> Abdul Rasyid Ridho, "Hermeneutic Methods and Their Implementation in Interpreting the Qur'an," *AlBurhan: Journal of the Study of Knowledge and Cultural Development of the Qur'an* 17, no. 2 (December 2017): 286, <https://doi.org/10.53828/alburhan.v17i2.93>.

<sup>23</sup> Al Fiqri Ardiansyah, "Criticism of Hermeneutics in the Tafsir of the Qur'an: The Perspective of Traditional and Contemporary Scholars," *Al-Mubith: Journal of Qur'an and Hadith* 4, no. 1 (January 2025): 2, <https://doi.org/10.35931/am.v4i1.4232>.

This view is clearly seen in the thinking of Nashr Hamid Abu Zayd. He explained that the law can change; it can be adjusted to benefit humans as human symptoms change.<sup>24</sup> He also argued that some of the legal provisions in the Qur'an, such as the haram of khamar, should be considered different today. According to him, the prohibition arose due to social conditions at the time of revelation, so that in the current era, khamar is no longer considered haram. Likewise, the haram of pork, he believes that pigs are no longer considered haram at this time.

The scholars of Al-Azhar reject this view because it is considered to have the potential to cause chaos in understanding the Qur'an, especially regarding the legal verses that have been clearly established since the beginning and have not changed throughout the history of Islamic thought. According to them, treating all the verses of the law as relative will open up opportunities for distortion of meaning, blurring the boundary between divine provision and human interpretation, and weakening the authority of Islamic law itself.

In addition, the hermeneutic approach that places the Qur'an as a historical text that is entirely subject to the changes of the times is considered not in line with the basic principle in the Islamic scientific tradition, namely that the Qur'an has a Divine dimension that is fixed and unchanging. Therefore, Al-Azhar scholars affirm that although the social context can influence the application of the law, this does not mean that the rules established can be definitively changed or renegotiated.<sup>25</sup>

One of the scholars who criticizes modern interpretation is Mahir Munajjad, who criticizes modern interpretations such as Muhammad Syahrur. He said there were 15 errors in the contemporary interpretation of Muhammad Syahrur, including:

- a. Destruction of the character and system of the Qur'an Language
- b. Inability to read and understand dictionaries and interpret words that differ from their meanings
- c. Contraindications with some dictionaries, such as Maqayis Al-Lughah, and other dictionaries
- d. Falsification of linguistic information and claims against non-existent data
- e. Contrary to Al-Jurjani's theory of language system, it is out of context and different from the actual meaning
- f. Exploring language knowledge, such as Sarraf and word branching
- g. Contradiction with the shari'a of ignorance
- h. Harassing the rationality of the reader and ignoring the scientific method
- i. Manipulates the scientific character and truth of a hypothesis of a particular proposition, thereby eliminating arguments and their meanings
- j. Starting from the results of thought and principles, Arxism and forcing the verses of the Qur'an to legitimize
- k. Using the verses of the Qur'an as a camouflage for his thoughts and opinions, which destroy the relationship between the language format in the verse and the meaning placed outside the context
- l. Utilizing mathematics and several terms of science and technology to influence the inferiority of readers
- m. Making the basic theory of fiqh fragile by using prepositions that are unacceptable, both scientifically, linguistically, and logically
- n. Determine conclusions first before making hypotheses and explain various propositions that are not interrelated, so that in the end they cannot be reasoned

<sup>24</sup> Yusep Rafiqi, "Hermeneutic Criticism and Contextualization of Legal Verses," *AHKAM: Journal of Sharia Science* 17, no. 1 (January 2017): 233, <https://doi.org/10.15408/ajis.v17i1.6088>.

<sup>25</sup> "Instagram," accessed December 14, 2025, [https://www.instagram.com/p/DR8uTQ1ke0p/?img\\_index=1](https://www.instagram.com/p/DR8uTQ1ke0p/?img_index=1).

o. It lacks scientific beliefs, explicit references, and attention to scientific study methods.<sup>26</sup>

## Reconstructing the Relationship between Normative Values and Historicity in the Interpretation of the Qur'an in the Contemporary Era

### *The Normative Value of the Qur'an*

The morphative value of the Qur'an refers to the Universal and Transcendent principles given by Allah SWT. These values are believed to be absolute truths (not limited by time and place). Among these values are creed (tauhid), fundamental moral principles (justice, compassion, honesty, and responsibility), and the goals of shari'a known as *Maqa>sid As-Shari>ah*, such as maintaining religion, safeguarding one's descendants, taking care of oneself, protecting property, and maintaining reason. Thus, the holy book of the Qur'an, revealed by Allah SWT through the angel Jibril to the Prophet Muhammad PBUH, is the primary foundation that there is no doubt about its truth and purity.<sup>27</sup> As explained in the Qur'an:

ذَلِكَ الْكِتَبُ لَا رَبَّ لَهُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ

“There is no doubt in this book (the Qur'an); (it is) a guide for the righteous” (Al-Baqarah: 2).<sup>28</sup>

مَا فَرَّطْنَا فِي الْكِتَبِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ

“There is nothing that we have omitted in the Book” (Al-An'am: 38).<sup>29</sup>

With the above verse, it is appropriate that the Qur'an is unquestionably true, and includes all aspects and instructions for human life.

The normative value of the Qur'an lies in its status that comes from Allah SWT, who is the highest authority for Muslims. Its absolute nature (not limited by time and place) is proof and affirmation that the Qur'an is not a product of history or the contingency of human culture. Still, the Kalam of Allah was revealed to the last apostle, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).<sup>30</sup>

In the study of the epistemology of interpretation, recognition of the normative dimension of the Qur'an is significant so that the Qur'an is not understood only as a historical document or a cultural text. This normative dimension emphasizes that the Qur'an contains fixed principles that serve as a reference for Muslims in various situations. The normativity of the Qur'an also helps maintain the continuity of Islamic identity over time. Through stable ethical and moral values, the Qur'an provides guidelines that Muslims can hold to despite changing social conditions. Thus, the Qur'an is not only relevant in a specific historical context, but remains a reliable source of value in dealing with the dynamics of life.”

<sup>26</sup> Faisal Abdul Aziz Arbi, *Dynamics of Contemporary Tafsir Methods*, n.d., 117.

<sup>27</sup> Yeti Sri Maryati, Agus Susilo Saefullah, and Abdul Azis, “Religious And Philosophical Normative Foundations In The Development Of Islamic Religious Education Methodology,” *Qolamuna: Islam, Education, Literacy and Humanities* 1, no. 2 (April 2025): 67.

<sup>28</sup> Ministry of Religion Team, *Al-Qur'an Ministry of Religion Revised Edition-2019* (Jakarta, 2019), 2.

<sup>29</sup> Ministry of Religion Team, *Al-Qur'an Ministry of Religion Revised Edition-2019*, 178.

<sup>30</sup> Nasitutul Janah, “The Normativity and Historicity Approach and Its Implications in the Development of Islamic Thought,” *Cakrawala: Journal of Islamic Studies* 13, no. 2 (December 2018): 104, <https://doi.org/10.31603/cakrawala.v13i2.2331>.

### ***The Historical Value of the Qur'an***

The historical value of the Qur'an shows that it was not revealed empty-handed but came down in the midst of the life of the Arab people at that time. When the Qur'an was revealed, it used the Arabic of the Society in which it was revealed. Not limited to language explanations, the Qur'an also contains expressions, mindsets, and social conditions of society at that time. Therefore, many verses of the Qur'an address real problems, such as social conflicts, patriarchal eochism, and the habits of people at that time in worship and rituals.<sup>31</sup>

However, the attachment to the historical context at the time the Qur'an was revealed is not a limitation of the messages contained in the Qur'an for humanity. On the contrary, the history of the Qur'an shows how Allah SWT conveys His messages most effectively: through language, symbols, and situations that humans can understand at that time. Thus, the historical value of the Qur'an opens space for scholars to appreciate its values, which are then lived and developed by subsequent generations in their own time, without losing their fundamental values.<sup>32</sup>

Understanding the history of the Qur'an is an essential epistemology for a mufassir in understanding the verses of the Qur'an. *First*, according to the mufassir who understood *Asbabun Nuzul*, the social context of Arab society at that time was critical. This step is required to understand the purpose of the text being revealed. Without knowledge of the context, a mufassir runs the risk of misinterpreting a verse, which can cause misinterpretation or literal application that is contrary to the spirit of the Qur'an.<sup>33</sup>

*Second*, awareness of the history of the Qur'an can open the door to distinguishing between universal and particular values. For example, the Qur'an's command to deliberate in everyday affairs is a universal principle of democracy. Meanwhile, the verses about slavery are understood not as permanent or permanent legitimacy, but as a gradual strategy to erase the habits of the people who have practiced the slavery system.<sup>34</sup>

*Third*, understanding the History of the Qur'an can make the Qur'an remain dynamic and relevant in every era. If the Qur'an is understood without reference to its historical context or textual structure, it will become a static text, losing its transformative power. And vice versa: if the Qur'an is understood in its historical context, the mufassir can reinterpret it in accordance with the demands of the times.<sup>35</sup>

### ***The Dialectical-Integrative Model: A Synthesis of Normativity and Historicity***

The epistemological reconstruction of contemporary interpretation requires an approach that can combine normative and historical values, rather than sideline one another. With this integrative approach, normative and historical values are not two conflicting aspects in understanding the Qur'an, but rather two mutually complementary elements that must be understood in their entirety to produce a perfect interpretation.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Nisfu Kurniyatillah, Mahmud Arif, and Mohamad Syawaluddin, "The Existence of Asbabun Nuzul and Tafsir Ilmi in the Qur'an," *AN NUR: Journal of Islamic Studies* 15, no. 1 (June 2023): 103, <https://doi.org/10.37252/annur.v15i1.438>.

<sup>32</sup> Nur Annisa, Nasrullah Bin Sapa, and Halimah Basri, "Pentng Knows Asbabun Nuzul," *Al-Mubarak Journal: Journal of Qur'an Studies and Tafsir* 9, no. 2 (December 2024): 86, <https://doi.org/10.47435/al-mubarak.v9i2.3372>.

<sup>33</sup> Annisa, Sapa, and Basri, "Pentng Knows Asbabun Nuzul," 86.

<sup>34</sup> Abdurrahman Nasution et al., "Asbabun Nuzul and Its Urgency in the Study of Ulumul Qur'an," *Sulawesi Tenggara Educational Journal* 4, no. 3 (December 2024): 248, <https://doi.org/10.54297/seduj.v4i3.874>.

<sup>35</sup> Nasution et al., "Asbabun Nuzul and Its Urgency in the Study of Ulumul Qur'an," 248.

<sup>36</sup> M Khai Hanif Yuli Edi Z et al., "Contextual Textual Approaches and Hemeenuetics in the Interpretation of the Qur'an," *DIMAR: Journal of Islamic Education* 4, no. 2 (June 2023): 59, <https://doi.org/10.58577/dimar.v4i2.89>.

This interpretation model can be described in three methodological stages. The first stage is historical-contextual analysis, which seeks to reconstruct the historical context of revelation to understand the problems of society addressed by the verse and the literal-textual meaning understood by the recipient. This stage requires knowledge of history, sociology, anthropology, and classical Arabic linguistics. The purpose is not to reduce the Qur'an to a historical product, but to know and understand the meaning of Allah in the Qur'an through the early history of its revelation.

The second step is to look at the universal principles, namely the effort to know and analyze the ethical and moral values that are the main cause of a verse. This process allows the maqasidi approach to understand the moral goals it contains. To understand these principles, it is necessary to have a comprehensive view of the Qur'an, so that we not only understand the text literally, but also acquire the universal moral values that are the basis of Islamic law.”

The third stage is contextualization, which is an effort to apply basic principles that are universal to today's life in a new way that is adapted to the cultural conditions of modern society. This stage is a form of dialogue between text and context, meaning the Qur'an is not read literally but is connected to the realities of the community's activities.<sup>37</sup>

Thus, the dialectical-integrative approach is a way for readers to read with a balanced text, which is not rigid, not all relative, but still relevant and relevant to the life of the times and adheres to solid basic principles.

### ***Interpretive analysis: Implementation of contemporary issues***

To understand how the dialectical-integrative model works, consider contemporary issues that are prevalent at this time. For example, in the context of gender equality, many scholars of interpretation seek to reconstruct interpretations of verses related to women. One of the feminist figures in Indonesia who offers an understanding more in line with gender justice is K.H. Husein Muhammad.<sup>38</sup> They not only understand the verses of the Qur'an textually but also consider their historical and current contexts. The verses about the relationship between men and women are understood in the context of 7th-century Arab society, which was still patriarchal.<sup>39</sup> With an understanding of the history of Arab society at that time, the dialectical-integrative approach seeks a more basic normative message: the principle of gender justice and respect for universal human dignity. This principle was then used as a foothold to address the challenges and drastic changes of the times, including social, economic, and cultural structures that no longer reflected Arab society. Thus, the Qur'an is not understood as a rigid, static text, but rather as a source of living values and relevance for establishing justice in the modern context.

One example of a contemporary interpretation that integrates normative and historical values is the Double Movement method used by Fazlur Rahman to understand the Qur'an. Fazlur Rahman identifies two stages for understanding the Qur'an. *First*, to understand the text of the Qur'an in its original context, namely, to study the verses of the Qur'an in relation to the situation that caused the

<sup>37</sup> Mkhai Hanif Yuli Edi Z Hanif, “Textual Approach; Contextual And Hermeneetic In The Interpretation Of The Qur'an,” *Al Muhafidz: Journal of Qur'an and Tafsir* 3, no. 2 (September 2023): 107, <https://doi.org/10.57163/almuhafidz.v3i2.69>.

<sup>38</sup> Yusuf Rahman, “Feminist Kyai, K.H. Husein Muhammad: The Feminist Interpretation on Gendered Verses and the Qur'an-Based Activism,” *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 55, no. 2 (December 2017): 294, <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2017.552.293-326>.

<sup>39</sup> Abdus Shomad, “Male and Female Authority: A Study of Abdullah Saeed's Contextual Interpretation of Qs. an-Nisa 4:34,” *Jurnal AlifLam: Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities* 3, no. 1 (July 2022): 6, <https://doi.org/10.51700/aliflam.v3i1.432>.

verse to come down. *Second*, it extracts moral and ethical principles from the time and context, and adapts them to the current context to remain relevant to contemporary society.<sup>40</sup>

Fazlur Rahman criticized the traditional interpretation carried out by classical interpreters; he said that conventional interpretation tends to focus too much on literal and textual meanings, that is, on the interpretation of words in the text, and not on how these verses can be relevant to changing times. Fazlur Rahman considers that such interpretations are often cut off from the social and cultural context, so that the normative values contained in the Qur'an are irrelevant or even challenging to apply in different situations or in modern life. Thus, Fazlur Rahman argues that a mufassir must combine a deep understanding of historical context with the ability to use the normative values of the Qur'an in daily life. In addition, he emphasized that the Qur'an is a book complete of universal principles and values, not just rules limited to the time of the Prophet Muhammad, PBUH, with many contemporary mufassirs interpreting through an integrative dialogue model between normative and historical values to apply the Qur'an's teachings to changing situations.<sup>41</sup>

## Conclusion

The reconstruction of contemporary epistemology of interpretation is a significant need for interpreting the Qur'an at this time. The goal is to overcome the problems and tensions that arise in modern society by integrating normative values with historical values, such as the social, cultural, and historical contexts that underlie the interpretation of the Qur'an. This research suggests that releasing normative and historical values in interpreting the Qur'an creates a dichotomy in interpretation. At the same time, the Qur'an, as a divine revelation, is inseparable from the normative dimension that is both transcendent and historical, as well as immanent. Thus, the two dimensions are not opposites in interpreting the Qur'an, but rather aspects that overlap with each other. Both are complete wholes, in which normative values explain universal values, while historical values provide relevance and connection to human life in their historical context.

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<sup>40</sup> Ma'had

<sup>41</sup> Nurul Hidayah, "Conceptual Understanding Of Gender Equality In Classical And Contemporary Interpretations Of Q.S Al Hujarat Verse 13," *Journal of Social Dynamics and Science* 2, no. 5 (June 2025): 746, <https://doi.org/10.60145/jdss.v2i5.172>.

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