

Islamic Epistemology from Al-Buti's Perspective: Criticism of Positivism in the Preface to the Book of Kubra al-Yaqiniyyat al-Kawniyyah

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Abstract:

This research is motivated by the hegemony of Western materialistic positivist epistemology, which reduces science to the empirical realm, triggers an epistemological crisis, and delegitimizes metaphysical truths. The study addresses how Shaykh M. Said Ramadhan Al-Buti's Islamic epistemology critiques materialistic positivism and evaluates its methodology as an effective antithesis. The objectives are to analyze Al-Buti's *manhaj ilmi*, evaluate his critique of positivism, assess its methodological effectiveness, and outline its implications for contemporary Islamic theology in counteracting atheism. The framework relies on Al-Buti's integrative epistemology, synergizing the senses (*al-hiss*), reason (*al-'aql*), and valid news (*al-khabar al-sadiq*) to achieve certainty (*al-yaqin*). Employing a qualitative literature study with philosophical-epistemological, historical-sociological, and dialectical-critical approaches, the primary data source is the Preamble of *Kubra al-Yaqiniyyat al-Kawniyyah*, supported by secondary literature on science philosophy. Data collected via critical reading and proposition extraction were analyzed using descriptive-analytical, comparative, and dialectical-critical methods. Results demonstrate that Al-Buti's *manhaj ilmi* rejects the reason-revelation dichotomy by establishing proportional standards of proof based on the object's nature (empirical for physical matter; analytical-transmissive for metaphysics). His critique successfully falsifies positivism by exposing internal contradictions within its verification principles and taxonomic reductions. Critical reflection reveals that despite suspending *qiyas mantiqi*, Al-Buti's methodology remains a highly effective counter to modern positivism. Its implications offer a philosophical resolution refuting scientism and establishing a sound argumentative foundation for faith education. In conclusion, Islamic theology possesses an independent, objective scientific methodology that dismantles Western positivism's monopoly on truth while restoring the authority of revelation and reason.

Keywords: al-Buti; contemporary theology; Islamic epistemology; *manhaj ilmi*; positivism.

INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, Western epistemology has become hegemonic, and Scientism—also known as modern science—is considered the sole source of truth (Sari, 2020). In the global intellectual landscape, the definition of “science” has become severely restricted. Initially, the term “science” meant “knowledge” in its entirety, but now it only means “natural science,” that is, the material-based sciences (Russell & Jatmiko,

2004). This paradigm establishes a strict double standard: "something can only be verified empirically (seen or touched), measured quantitatively (mathematically), and retested in laboratory experiments." All knowledge that does not fit these parameters, such as revelation, intuition, or metaphysics, is automatically excluded from the "scientific" category and relegated to cultural myth or "personal belief" (Al-Būṭī, 1960).

The relationship between Islam and modern science has been a major topic of Muslim intellectual discussion in recent decades. Many scholars and preachers use an approach called scientific exegesis or scientific interpretation to demonstrate how modern scientific findings relate to the Quran. This approach interprets Quranic verses by referring to modern scientific theories such as geology, cosmology, and embryology. This phenomenon has become widespread in popular literature, religious discourses, and academic discussions (Rawanita & Syabuddin, 2024). This phenomenon has given rise to what philosophers of science call scientism, or scientism. Scientism is a dogmatic belief that natural science is the only reliable way to discover truth, and that other methods are considered useless or merely imaginary (Azka, 2023). In the ontological reductionism of scientism, the richness of physical and metaphysical reality is subsumed within the boundaries of materialism (Pigliucci, 2013). As a result, fundamental human questions about the "meaning of life," the "existence of God," and the "afterlife" are rendered irrelevant or meaningless because observational instruments such as microscopes or telescopes cannot capture these objects. This storyline significantly dominates popular literature, public policy, and higher education curricula, promoting the idea that religion is antithetical to the progress of reason (Peels, 2023).

This hegemony of scientism has triggered an epistemological crisis in the Islamic world, particularly among Muslim students and academics. The phenomenon of intellectual inferiority occurs when Islamic beliefs, such as the existence of God, Angels, and Miracles, are often criticized for lacking a Western rational-empirical basis (Lumbard, 2024). This phenomenon is demonstrated by the emergence of collective skepticism or apologetic efforts that force Quranic verses to conform to changing modern scientific theories, as if the truth of the Quran can only be maintained if it is recognized by Western science. This phenomenon indicates a crucial difference: Muslims believe in the supernatural ritually, but they think materialistically, which actually rejects the supernatural (Sabri, 1981). A further phenomenon in the religious landscape, both in the United States and globally, is experiencing a massive shift in the form of a shrinking number of religious followers, replaced by a rapid increase in unaffiliated groups and atheists. This exodus from major religious institutions is not an impulsive event, but rather deeply rooted in a central fulcrum: the collapse of faith due to perceived irrationality of religious doctrines. When individuals begin to engage in independent inquiry, they often discover logical contradictions between sacred texts and modern science, as well as the moral inconsistencies of their religious institutions (Nica, 2020). This rejection of irrational dogma drives a deliberate psychological process of deconversion, in which individuals actively abandon their old beliefs in order to achieve autonomy of thought, transforming them from devout believers into secular individuals (Pérez & Vallières, 2019).

Although driven by a rational search for truth, the process of leaving religion is often accompanied by significant emotional and social consequences. Some individuals choose to become closeted exiters, namely hiding changes in belief and maintaining formal religious practices to avoid rejection from family and community. This process of identity reconstruction demonstrates the complexity of breaking away from traditional religious frameworks. Sociologically, the phenomenon of deconversion is associated with increased education and changing social conditions that encourage critical thinking. This is understood as part of a global paradigm shift in thinking, where the influence of Western epistemology, through modern education and academic culture, strengthens the dominance of scientism, which emphasizes empirical verification and tends to downplay metaphysical and religious claims (Catto et al., 2023).

Theoretically, the source of this epistemological crisis can be found in the early philosophical school of Logical Positivism, popularized by the Vienna Circle in the early 20th century. This view proposed a strict standard called the Verification Principle. According to this principle, a statement only has cognitive meaning if it can be empirically proven through sensory observation or is a logical (mathematical) tautology (Ayer, 1981). This division gave rise to the assumption that non-empirical propositions are meaningless. Logical positivism was later criticized by Popper and Kuhn (Karl R. Popper, 2002). Kuhn then pointed out that the development of science is revolutionary, not cumulative, because research always takes place within a certain paradigm framework and no observation is completely neutral, thus the assumption that scientific objects can be measured objectively and are theory-free is collapsed (Kuhn, 1962). These criticisms, continued by Feyerabend and the post-positivism school, expose the epistemological weaknesses of logical positivism, especially in ignoring the normative, contextual, and historical dimensions of scientific practice (Berke, 2024).

Although logical positivism has been widely criticized in the philosophy of science, modern research practice remains heavily influenced by its legacy. Quantitative research continues to emphasize empiricism, objectivity, and statistical testing. Many scientists take a post-positivist stance, acknowledging the limitations of positivism but still adhering to the principles of measurement, generalization, and replication. Academic institutions' support for measurable research makes the contemporary scientific paradigm a hybrid one: philosophically critical, yet methodologically dependent on a positivistic framework (Adeniyi et al., 2022). In contemporary science, theology is often considered irrelevant due to the dominance of the positivistic paradigm. Metaphysical entities such as God, angels, and the afterlife are deemed empirically unverifiable and therefore excluded from the scientific realm. Religious language is understood as symbolic, not factual. As a result, a dichotomy emerges between empirical science and normative religion (Abdullah & Hosaini, 2025).

This difference demonstrates the conflict between Western anthropocentric-materialistic epistemology and Islamic theocentric-integrative epistemology. In the Islamic tradition, the source of knowledge comes not only from sensory observation, but also from *al-khabar al-sadiq* (true authoritative information, such as the Qur'an and hadith) and *al-mantiq* (rational reasoning capable of producing certainty). Thus, reason and authentic news have epistemic authority equal to the senses, and in certain circumstances, even higher (Adeniyi et al., 2022). However, some modern Muslim responses to the dominance of positivism tend to be reactive-apologetic, for example through scientific interpretation approaches that attempt to link the Qur'an with contemporary scientific findings. This approach often unwittingly positions modern science as the standard for validating the truth of revelation. Philosophically, this can be categorized as a category error, namely when two different domains of knowledge are treated with the same standard of evaluation. Consequently, the meaning of revelation is reduced to a materialistic framework (Berke, 2024).

In this context, the ideas of Sheikh Muhammad Sa'id Ramadan al-Buthi are relevant because they offer an integrative epistemological approach through a scientific method that encompasses the senses, reason, and authentic reports as complementary sources of knowledge. This approach asserts that the modern crisis of faith is more epistemological than ontological, so the solution lies in improving the framework of thought and the definition of knowledge. This study does not aim to defend al-Buthi's thoughts normatively, but rather to critically analyze the construction of his knowledge methodology within the concept of the Scientific Method. The Preamble to the *Kubra al-Yaqiniyyat al-Kawniyyah* is seen as an epistemological proposal that challenges the hegemony of positivism-materialism, while simultaneously integrating revelation, reason, and empirical observation within a coherent scientific structure.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Based on the literature search conducted by the researcher, there are several academic studies discussing Islamic epistemology and critiques of materialist philosophy. These studies can be categorized as follows:

First, an academic paper by Mohd Rumaizuddin Ghazali entitled "The Views of Muhammad Said Ramadan al-Buti's Faith in the Book *Kubra al-Yaqiniyyat al-Kawniyyat*" aims to describe Shaykh Muhammad Said Ramadhan al-Buti's approach to discussing faith, particularly proving the existence and oneness of Allah SWT. This study summarizes the substance of *Kubra al-Yaqiniyyat al-Kawniyyat*, which covers four main topics: divinity (the attributes of Allah that are obligatory, impossible, and *jaiz*), prophecy (conditions and miracles), the universe (humans, angels, and jinn), and other cosmological aspects. This study also highlights Al-Buti's use of rational scientific methodology (*manhaj al-mantiqi al-'aqli*) in responding to materialist ideologies such as Darwinism. However, the main focus of the discussion remains on explaining theological doctrine as the main foundation of Islamic faith (Ghazali, 2011).

Second, the master's thesis written by Samir Rubin Abdul Halim al-Ja'bari entitled "Al-Syaikh Muhammad Sa'id Ramadan al-Buti wa Ara'uhu al-'Itiqadiyyah: 'Ard wa Naqd fi Daw' 'Aqidah al-Salaf" examines the theological thought of Shaykh Muhammad Sa'id Ramadan al-Buti through exposition and criticism based on the perspective of Salaf creed. This study examines the construction of al-Buti's creed which includes three main aspects, namely *Ilahiyyat*, *Nubuwwat*, and *Sam'iyyat*. The research also highlights al-Buti's affiliation with the Ash'ariyah school and his tendency to use interpretations of God's attributes. In contrast to this study, the main focus of that thesis is the evaluation of the theological doctrines and the comparison of schools of thought, while this research emphasizes al-Buti's epistemology in his critique of Western positivism in *Kubra al-Yaqiniyyat al-Kawniyyah* (Christmann, 1998).

Third, an article entitled "An Analytical Study of al-Būti's Contribution to Maqṣad al-'Aqīdah: Reflections from Kubrā al-Yaqīniyyat al-Kawniyyah" was published in the journal *Afkār* in 2018. This study aims to investigate and provide an explanation of Shaykh Muhammad Sa'id Ramadhan al-Būti's thoughts on maqāṣid al-'aqidah, or the main objectives of the teachings of faith, discussed in the book *Kubra al-Yaqiniyyat al-Kawniyyah*. This study shows that al-Būti succeeded in reviving the dynamics of discussions on the science of kalam which were previously often considered rigid by classical scholars. Al-Būti said that faith does not only function as a theoretical dogma, but also has practical and rational objectives (maqāṣid). These objectives can face the challenges of the times and provide a clear path for humans in the present day (Almaliki et al., 2018).

Fourth, an academic paper written by Muhammad Rashidi Wahab and Syed Hadzrullathfi Syed Omar (2011) entitled "Framework of Thoughts of Contemporary Aqidah Ulama Figures: Muhammad Sa'id Ramadan al-Buti" published in *Proceedings of Nadwah Ulama Nusantara (NUN) IV* aims to examine the works of Syaikh al-Buti to formulate the basis of his creed as a guide for Muslims in facing the challenges of modern creeds. The results of the study show that al-Buti's thinking is in line with the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah al-Asy'ariyah* manhaj which integrates 'aqli (rational) and naqli (textual) arguments. The main focus of this study is the theological construction in *Kubra al-Yaqiniyyat al-Kawniyyah*, which includes the *Ilmuyyat* with the approach of *Nature 20 al-Sanusi*, *Nubuwwat*, and *Sam'iyyat* as the basic framework of classical Islamic creed (*Sam'iyyat*) (Azmi & Wahab, 2013).

Fifth, an international journal article written by Mohd Hasrul Shuhari et al. (2020) entitled "The Importance of Using Augmented Reality in the Study of Kubra Al-Yaqiniyyat" published in the *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* aims to explore the urgency of utilizing Augmented Reality (AR) technology in helping students understand the material on creeds in the book *Kubra al-Yaqiniyyat* by Shaykh Muhammad Sa'id Ramadan al-Buti. This study highlights that although the book is an important reference in the tradition of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah*, the level of complexity of its language and concepts is quite high, making it difficult for learners. Therefore, technological innovations such as AR applications on smartphone devices are seen as being able to increase the interactivity and effectiveness of learning. The focus of this study is more on teaching methodology and educational technology than on epistemological analysis of the text (Abdullah et al., 2018).

Sixth, a journal article written by Abdul Mukit (2015) entitled "Aqidah Education; A Study of the Thoughts of Muhammad Sa'id Ramdlan Al-Buthi" published in the *TAWAZUN Journal* aims to examine the concept and implementation of aqidah education from the perspective of Shaykh Muhammad Sa'id Ramadan al-Buthi based on the book *Kubra al-Yaqiniyyat al-Kawniyyah*. This study found that al-Buthi offers a responsive, solution-oriented, and scientific model of aqidah education by integrating reason, empiricism, and revelation. Mukit groups these ideas into four pillars of a holistic curriculum, namely *Ilahiyyat*, *Nubuwwat*, *Kawniyyat*, and *Ghaibiyyat*. Although there is a discussion about the comparison of Islamic and Western scientific method, the main focus of this study is on the realm of Islamic education, especially the aspects of objectives, curriculum, methodology, and evaluation, not an epistemological analysis of the text as a critique of Western positivism (Mukit, 2015).

Seventh, a journal article written by Ahmad Fauzi (2016) entitled "*Al-Maslahah Al-Syar'iyah as a Source of Islamic Law (A Study of the Book Dawabith al-Mashlahah by Sheikh Said Ramadan Buti)*" published in the *Tribakti Journal* examines the concept of *maslahah* as an instrument for establishing Islamic law according to Sheikh Muhammad Sa'id Ramadan al-Buthi by referring to his work *Dhawabith al-Mashlahah*. This study compares the concept of benefit in Islamic law with sociological approaches and Western utilitarian philosophy, such as the thoughts of Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill, and Emile Durkheim. Fauzi explains five *dhawabith* or main limitations for a *maslahah* to be used as legal evidence, including the requirement that it be in line with the *maqashid sharia* and not contradict the *qath'i nas*. The focus of this study is on *ushul fiqh* and the methodology of Islamic law, not on the epistemology of *Kubra al-Yaqiniyyat al-Kawniyyah* (Fauzi, 2016).

Eighth, a journal article written by Abdul Basith (2019) entitled "The Concept of Contemporary Legal *Istinbath* According to Said Ramadan Al Buthi" published in the *An-Nidzam Journal* describes the methodology of legal determination (*istinbath*) formulated by Shaykh Muhammad Sa'id Ramadan al-Buthi and its application in addressing contemporary problems in Indonesia, such as Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) law, professional zakat, and cash waqf. This study positions al-Buthi as a moderate thinker who is between neo-scripturalism and neo-liberalism. He emphasizes the five *dhawabith* as a condition for *maslahat* to be used as a valid legal basis in sharia. Although this study highlights the adaptive aspects of al-Buthi's thought to the development of

the times, its main focus is on *ushul fiqh* and contemporary *fiqh*, not on the epistemological dimension or the reconstruction of the *Manhaj Ilmi* in *Kubra al-Yaqiniyyat al-Kawniyyah* (Basith, 2019).

Ninth, a journal article written by Muhammad Irsyad and Alwis (2023) entitled "The Contribution of Muhammad Said Ramadhan Al-Buthi in Qur'anic Studies" published in the *Journal of Qur'anic Studies and Tafsir* explores the intellectual contributions of Shaykh al-Buthi in the discipline of *Ulumul Qur'an* and *Tafsir*. The results of the study show that these contributions include written works in Qur'anic science, refutations of various doubts surrounding the Qur'an, and thematic interpretations. In addition, al-Buthi also has a scientific legacy in the form of thousands of recordings of *tafsir* recitations, most of which have not been published. Although this study highlights the breadth of al-Buthi's multidisciplinary competence, its main focus remains on the study of sacred texts and the methodology of Qur'anic interpretation. This study does not discuss the theological aspects or the epistemological construction of *Manhaj Ilmi* in *Kubra al-Yaqiniyyat al-Kawniyyah* as a basis for criticism of Western materialistic positivism (Irsyad & Alwis, 2023).

Tenth, a journal article written by Udin Supriadi and Mohammad Rindu Fajar Islamy (2023) entitled "Development of *Siroh An-Nabawiyyah* Learning Media in *Fiqh Siroh Ramadhan Al-Buthi* Through the Concept of NPT (Narrative, Pedagogical, and Theological)" published in *JHSS (Journal of Humanities and Social Studies)* focuses on the development of *Siroh An-Nabawiyyah* learning media based on the thoughts of Shaykh Muhammad Sa'id Ramadan al-Buthi in the book *Fiqh As-Siroh*. This study formulates the concept of NPT (Narrative, Pedagogical, and Theological) combined with historical visualization to strengthen the understanding of the Prophet's exemplary values and shape the moral character of the younger generation. This study is directed at overcoming the problem of juvenile delinquency through contextual learning innovations. Although using al-Buthi's thoughts as a basis for values, this study focuses on learning media innovation in Islamic Education, not on the epistemology of *Kubra al-Yaqiniyyat al-Kawniyyah* (Abdussalam et al., 2020).

Eleventh, a journal article written by Fadhilah Ariani and Nurul Hak (2024) entitled "Modern Islamic Historiography: A Study of *Fiqh al-Sirah* by Muhammad Sa'id Ramadhan Al-Buthi" published in *THAQAFIYYAT: Journal of Islamic Language, Civilization, and Information* examines the contribution of Shaykh al-Buthi to the development of modern Islamic historiography through the book *Fiqh al-Sirah* as a material object. This study found that al-Buthi used a thematic historiographic approach that integrates historical narrative (*sirah*) with the dimensions of *fiqh* and *aqidah* to extract values and lessons from the life of the Prophet Muhammad. This study confirms al-Buthi's ability to construct a systematic, interdisciplinary narrative. However, the main focus is on the methodology of writing history in Islamic historiography, not on the book *Kubra al-Yaqiniyyat al-Kawniyyah* or the epistemological analysis of the *Manhaj Ilmi* to critique Western materialistic positivism (Ariani & Hak, 2024).

Based on a comprehensive review of previous literature, studies on the works and thoughts of Shaykh Muhammad Sa'id Ramadan al-Buthi tend to be distributed across several scholarly clusters. *First*, theology (theology of *kalam*), which discusses the concepts of divinity, prophecy, and the *maqasid* of *aqidah* (the principles of faith). *Second*, Islamic education, which highlights innovations in learning and instructional media. *Third*, *ushul fiqh*, which focuses on legal *istinbath* and the concept of *maslahah* (beneficial principle). *Fourth*, Qur'anic studies and interpretation, and *fifth*, Islamic historiography. The dominance of these studies indicates an orientation toward the "products of al-Buthi's thought" in various applied disciplines. However, there is a significant research gap in the epistemological aspect, particularly the analysis of the *Manhaj Ilmi* (the Scientific Method) in the preamble to *Kubra al-Yaqiniyyat al-Kawniyyah*. This area has not been widely explored as a foundation for criticizing Western materialistic positivism. Therefore, this study offers novelty by positioning al-Buthi's epistemology as a methodological framework in building Islamic scientific rationality.

METHOD

This research essentially falls into the category of qualitative research. This approach was chosen because the object of study is not numerical or statistical data, but rather ideas, theoretical concepts, and philosophical meanings that require in-depth interpretation. According to Bogdan and Taylor, qualitative research is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from subjects and observable behavior, thus in this context focusing on text and discourse. More specifically, this research is a library research study. This method goes beyond simply reading and recording sources, but also includes the process of collecting, reviewing, and critically analyzing various literature without involving fieldwork (Naamy, 2019).

The choice of this approach is based on the nature of the problem being studied, namely an epistemological critique of positivism from the perspective of the thought of Shaykh M. Said Ramadhan al-Buthi. Therefore, the main sources of this research are textual and conceptual, with primary literature such as the *Mukaddimah Kubra al-Yaqiniyyat al-Kawniyyah* and works on Western positivism analyzed in depth and dialogically (Rahman, 2020). This research uses three complementary approaches to dissect material and formal objects in a comprehensive, structured, and objective manner: the philosophical-epistemological, historical-sociological, and dialectical approaches. The philosophical-epistemological approach is used to examine the nature of knowledge, its sources, and the criteria of truth, while simultaneously critiquing positivism's reduction to empirical reality and constructing Al-Buthi's integrative epistemology that encompasses the senses, reason, and revelation. The historical-sociological approach places thought within a historical and social context, both within the genealogy of Western positivism and Al-Buthi's intellectual background. Meanwhile, a dialectical approach is used to reconcile and critically test the thesis and antithesis of both schools of thought in order to find rational consistency and avoid subjective bias in the analysis (Sultan et al., 2026). This study uses qualitative data that is conceptual-philosophical in nature, not numerical data as in quantitative research. The data analyzed are propositions, arguments, epistemic categories, and ideas in written texts that contain deep meaning, thus requiring an interpretation process to uncover the logical structure and basic assumptions in an epistemological system. In the context of criticizing positivism through the perspective of al-Buthi, the data focused on truth claims, sources of knowledge, and methods of proof from both traditions of thought. The primary data source is *Kubra al-Yaqiniyyat al-Kawniyyah*, especially the *Muqaddimah* as an epistemological foundation, while secondary sources include literature on positivism, philosophy of science, and theology. The data collection technique uses documentary studies through critical reading as the main instrument. Data analysis was carried out qualitatively-philosophically with a deductive approach to test the validity of the premises systematically and rationally.

In general, analytical methods are divided into three main, interconnected approaches: descriptive-analytical, comparative, and dialectical-critical. The descriptive-analytical method is used to objectively map the basic doctrines of positivism and the epistemological structure of Al-Buthi, particularly regarding the three sources of knowledge: the senses, reason, and revelation. Afterward, the comparative method is used to reconcile the two systems of thought to identify their similarities, differences, and fundamental points of conflict (Marzuki, 2022). The most important stage is the dialectical-critical method, namely a logical examination of the consistency and epistemological validity of each thought. This method is not only polemical but also analytical by dismantling the argumentative structure from within, including through definitional criticism, taxonomic criticism, and propositional analysis. Next, premise falsification, immanent criticism, and logical opposition are carried out to test the strength of positivism's argumentation and construct an alternative epistemological framework based on Al-Buthi in a rational, systematic, and scientific manner (Mahfud & Patsun, 2019).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Historical Context and Intellectual Biography of Shaykh M. Said Ramadhan Al-Buthi

Sheikh Muhammad Sa'id Ramadhan al-Buthi was born in 1929 CE (1347 AH) in the village of Jilka, on the border between Syria, Iraq, and Turkey. This area, known as the *Jazirah Ibn Umar*, is a region with a strong tradition of Islamic scholarship rooted in Kurdish culture. Al-Buthi grew up in a religious family where Islam was not merely a social identity but a comprehensive way of life. His father, Sheikh Mulla Ramadhan al-Buthi, was a scholar from a humble background as a farmer who later developed into a spiritual figure in the *Naqshbandiyah* and *Qadiriyyah* orders. He was also known for his strict adherence to the purity of the teachings of the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*. From his childhood, Al-Buthi's intellectual development was inseparable from the turbulent political situation, particularly the impact of the extreme secularization under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in Turkey. Policies that removed Islamic symbols from public spaces, such as the ban on the Arabic call to prayer and Quranic education, created significant pressure on Muslims. This situation prompted the Al-Buthi family to migrate to Syria to preserve their religion. This journey left a deep impression on the young Al-Buthi, forming his early awareness of the ideological struggle between Islam and secularism (Hayani et al., 2026).

After settling in Damascus, Al-Buthi experienced a difficult childhood due to the loss of family members, including his mother. However, this situation actually strengthened his focus on the education provided by his father. Under his father's direct guidance, he studied the basics of faith, interpretation, and Arabic grammar,

such as grammar and sharaf. He demonstrated extraordinary intelligence by memorizing classical texts such as Ibn Malik's *Alfiyyah* at a very young age. This education laid a strong intellectual foundation, combining logical acumen with spiritual depth. Over time, Al-Buthi mastered Arabic language and literature in depth. His interest in both classical and modern literary works fostered a keen and aesthetic ability to analyze language. He not only read but also deeply critiqued the structure and meaning of texts. This ability later resulted in his first published work at a young age, establishing him as a talented writer. His proficiency in Arabic even enabled him to translate Kurdish literature into Arabic with high quality (Stadler, 2015).

His academic journey continued at Al-Azhar University in Egypt, where he received formal education in Sharia and Islamic law. Here, he matured in his understanding of modern Western thought, particularly materialism and positivism. After completing his doctoral studies, he returned to Syria and became a lecturer at the University of Damascus, teaching the fields of faith (*aqidah*) and jurisprudence (*fiqh*). In this position, he actively addressed the challenges of secular thought emerging among students. The pinnacle of Al-Buthi's thought is reflected in his works, which attempt to rebuild a rational and systematic Islamic epistemology. He rejected the reduction of truth solely to empirical aspects and emphasized the importance of integrating reason, revelation, and sensory experience. Through his monumental works, he sought to demonstrate that Islam has a strong rational foundation and is capable of addressing the challenges of modern ideologies such as Marxism and positivism. Thus, his thought serves as a bridge between the classical Islamic scientific tradition and modern intellectual demands (Comte, 2012).

Description-Analysis of the Construction of Islamic Epistemology (Manhaj Ilmi) of Shaykh Al-Buthi

In the discourse of Islamic epistemology as formulated by Sheikh Sa'id Ramadhan al-Buthi through the preamble to *Kubra al-Yaqiniyyat al-Kawniyyah*, the main foundation of knowledge begins with the establishment of a very strict and philosophical definition. Knowledge is not understood merely as the accumulation of information or cognitive activity, but as *idrak al-haqiqah 'ala ma hiya 'alayhi fi al-waqi'*, namely an accurate capture of reality as it exists in the external world. This definition emphasizes the demand for direct correspondence between reason and objective reality. Therefore, the process of achieving truth cannot be separated from the necessity of a valid method (*manhaj*) that is in line with the ontological character of truth itself. Thus, the validity of knowledge depends on the suitability of the methodological instruments used in the process of justification (Al-Būṭī, 2020). Within this framework, Al-Buthi emphasized that scientific methodology must be cleansed of speculative elements such as baseless intuition (*al-ḥads*) and cognitive illusion (*al-wahm*). Certain knowledge (*yaqīnī*) cannot be born from premises that are conjectural (*zannī*), so the validity of the conclusion must be in line with the level of certainty of its premises. Speculation-based generalizations are seen as logical flaws that undermine the integrity of scientific truth. Furthermore, scientific methodology is not only technical but also reflects epistemic ethics that demand consistency of research subjects. In Al-Buthi's view, scientific method is a synthesis of three sources of knowledge: revelation, reason, and empirical observation, which complement each other in one integrative system (Comte, 2012).

In this context, Al-Buthi rejects the modern dichotomy between religion and scientific objectivity. He asserts that religion is not a barrier to objectivity, but rather a normative framework that guides rationality to remain on the path of correct verification. Scientific research in Islam is not value-neutral, but is bound by both theological and rational orientations to truth. The Qur'an serves as an epistemic foundation that prohibits baseless speculation (*la taqfu ma laysa laka bihi 'ilm*), thus emphasizing the importance of verification in every knowledge claim. Scientific activity is understood as an intellectual worship that combines spiritual and rational dimensions. Al-Buthi distinguishes between transmissive knowledge (*khbar manqul*) and rational claims (*'aqli*), each with distinct verification instruments through *sanad* (chain of transmission) and the suitability of arguments to the object of study (Hayani et al., 2026).

For transmissive knowledge, Islamic epistemology developed a rigorous textual criticism mechanism through disciplines such as *musthalah* *hadith*, *jarh wa ta'dil*, and *tarājim al-rijāl* to ensure the validity of historical information through layered verification. This system gave rise to an epistemic hierarchy, ranging from *mutawatir*, which provides absolute certainty, to *ahad*, which produces a strong degree of probability. In the rational-empirical realm, Al-Buthi accepted observation and experimentation as essential instruments for understanding material reality, but emphasized their limitations when applied universally to all dimensions of reality. Category errors occur when empirical methods are used to assess metaphysical reality. In this area, he offered an approach based on authentic revelation and deductive rationality through induction and causal analogy, so that unseen entities can still be understood epistemologically through valid logical structures

(Comte, 2009). Thus, empirical limitations do not necessarily mean epistemic limitations. Ultimately, the scientific methodology in Islamic epistemology, as formulated by Al-Buthi, demonstrates an integrated, rigorous, and rational system of knowledge. It rejects epistemic relativism and avoids empirical reductionism. Knowledge in Islam demands not only factual truth but also methodological appropriateness and purity of orientation. Thus, Islamic epistemology stands as a system of knowledge that is not only intellectually valid but also philosophically and spiritually complete.

Comparative Epistemology of Al-Buthi and Western Positivism

In the modern Western epistemological tradition, positivism—both in its early formulation by Auguste Comte and its development by the Vienna Circle—is based on the assumption of empirical monism. This principle states that observable and verifiable sensory experience is the only valid source of scientific knowledge. In *Cours de Philosophie Positive*, Comte described human intellectual development through three stages: theological, metaphysical, and positive, with the positive stage being the pinnacle of maturity because humans focus solely on empirical facts and the relationships between facts. This idea was reinforced by Logical Positivism through the principle of verification, which judges a statement to be meaningful if it can be tested empirically or is logical-mathematical. As a result, metaphysics, philosophical speculation, and revelation were excluded (al-Hamid & Al-Din, 1942). Muhammad Sa'id Ramadhan al-Buthi, in *Kubrā al-Yaqīniyyāt al-Kawniyyah*, developed a hierarchical and integrative epistemology. He did not limit the source of knowledge to sensory experience alone, but rather combined three main instruments: sound senses, correct reason, and revelation or authentic news. The senses serve as the initial gateway to capturing material reality, but are limited and thus require intellectual processing. Reason is seen as active with the principles of causality and non-contradiction that enable the birth of universal knowledge. Meanwhile, revelation is the highest source of truth that perfects the limitations of both in epistemological harmony (Taftazani, 1990). Thus, these three sources of knowledge work synergistically within a unified, hierarchical cognitive system.

The fundamental difference between positivism and al-Buthi lies in how they view the structure of sources of knowledge. Positivism employs an exclusive model that recognizes only empirical experience as the basis of knowledge, resulting in a system that is rigorous but limited to the material realm. In contrast, al-Buthi develops an integrative model that recognizes the diversity of sources of knowledge within a complementary hierarchical structure. While positivism strictly separates science and metaphysics, al-Buthi views the two as epistemic continuity. The senses capture facts, reason processes them rationally, and revelation provides a transcendental dimension that refines understanding. Thus, the primary difference between the two lies in their epistemological orientation: limiting empirical monism versus hierarchical pluralism that integrates all dimensions of knowledge (Hammond, 2022).

Critical Dialectics of Positivism Epistemology

Theoretically, in formal logic, critical evaluation is not directed at a single concept, but rather at propositional structures that have truth values. Within this framework, definitions can still be analyzed because they contain implicit claims that require rational justification. Therefore, definitions must meet logical criteria to be epistemically valid. First, the definition must be based on essential elements (*dzātiyyāt*), not accidental attributes. Second, it must be comprehensive (*jāmi'*) by encompassing all members of the object. Third, it must be exclusive (*māni'*) so as not to include extraneous elements. Fourth, it must be free from contradictions or logical circularity. Fifth, it must have a higher conceptual clarity than its object. From a positivist perspective, science is understood as a system of knowledge based on empirical observation to discover natural laws, with truth determined by factual correspondence and logical consistency in the form of the highest probability, not absolute certainty (Sabri, 1981).

Critically, this definition reveals several epistemological weaknesses. From an inclusive perspective, positivism tends to narrow the meaning of science to the mechanistic aspects of phenomena, thus ignoring the role of deductive rationality and the principle of causality, which are also part of the scientific process. Thus, there are deficiencies in its epistemic scope. Furthermore, the principle of empirical verification in positivism faces logical problems when tested reflexively. The claim that "meaning is only valid if it can be verified empirically" itself cannot be proven empirically, thus potentially being self-refuting. This indicates an internal contradiction in its epistemological foundation. Taxonomically, positivism divides knowledge into analytical and synthetic empirical, but this division is considered incapable of encompassing all dimensions of human knowledge, particularly the rational a priori and metaphysical aspects. Consequently, its classification structure

is considered incompletely exhaustive and contains reductionism. Propositional analysis shows that positivism's postulate as a single criterion of truth is unable to maintain consistency when applied to itself. Its reliance on non-empirical principles of logic, mathematics, and causality actually shows that empirical science itself requires a rational foundation that goes beyond sensory observation (Al-Ghazali, 1973).

Critical Reflection on Al-Buthi's Epistemology and Its Effectiveness as an Antithesis to Positivism

Qiyas mantiqi (logical syllogism) in the Mutakallimin tradition is understood as a systematically structured deductive reasoning structure, where the truth of the premises inevitably leads to a conclusion called al-natijah. In contrast to the inductive-empirical pattern that relies on particular observations and produces probabilistic knowledge (ihtimali), qiyas mantiqi works through a deductive mechanism that aims to achieve epistemic certainty (al-yaqin) that is free from contradiction. Within this framework, the validity of an argument is determined not only by the content of the premises, but also by the form (surah) and material (maddah). Surah relates to the logical structure that follows syllogistic rules, while maddah refers to the substantial truth value of the proposition used. An argument can only be called burhan if its premises are sourced from axiomatic knowledge (yaqiniyyat), such as awwaliyyat, hissiyyat, and mutawatirat (Ridwan & Mahmud, 2025). Structurally, qiyas mantiqi is composed of two main premises, namely al-muqaddimah al-sughra (minor premise) and al-muqaddimah al-kubra (major premise) which produce a conclusion (al-natijah). This structure involves three logical terms, namely hadd asghar as the subject of the conclusion, hadd akbar as the predicate, and hadd ausath as the middle term that connects the two premises without appearing in the conclusion. Based on its form, qiyas is divided into qiyas iqtirani (categorical) and qiyas istithna'i (hypothetical). In the Mutakallimin tradition, qiyas mantiqi functions as a theological verification instrument that keeps kalam arguments rational and consistent. Al-Ghazali places logic as a mizan for reason to achieve burhani certainty (Hijazi, 1998).

The operationalization of qiyas mantiqi in theology is also evident in the proof of God's existence as the Necessary Being, through the rejection of the concepts of dawr (causal circularity) and tasalsul (infinite regress). Thus, formal logic becomes the primary instrument in formulating defensive and offensive arguments against materialist and empirical philosophical views. However, in modern developments, some thinkers such as M. Sa'id Ramadhan al-Buthi tend not to display syllogistic structures explicitly. He prefers a narrative and intuitive approach that remains rooted in basic rational postulates. However, implicitly, the qiyas mantiqi framework remains present as a hidden foundation in his argumentation (Al-Razi, 1992). This shows that in the kalam tradition, qiyas mantiqi functions not only as a formal method, but also as an epistemological structure that can adapt to a more communicative, discursive approach without losing its rational force.

The Implications of Islamic Epistemology from Al-Buti's Perspective on Contemporary Theological Discourse

The wave of modern atheism (New Atheism) is fundamentally based on an epistemological reduction derived from the paradigms of positivism and scientism, namely a view that limits the meaning of "science" only to that which can be observed empirically. Within this framework, non-material realities such as metaphysics are considered to have no valid cognitive value, thus reducing knowledge to mere sensory observations of physical phenomena. As a result, reason is positioned merely as a calculative instrument for empirical data, rather than as a tool for understanding broader reality. However, this limitation actually gives rise to epistemological inconsistencies. The claim that only empirical matters are scientifically true cannot be proven by empirical methods themselves, so it turns into a philosophical assumption, not a scientific conclusion. Furthermore, empirical science itself is incapable of achieving absolute certainty (al-yaqin) due to its inherently probabilistic nature and limited by space and time. Even basic concepts such as causality cannot be directly perceived by the senses but must be inferred by reason. From this perspective, Sheikh M. Sa'id Ramadhan Al-Buthi proposes a resolution that belief in the supernatural is not a form of irrationality, but rather a rational conclusion that achieves a degree of scientific certainty. This belief is built through the law of causality and observations of natural regularities that point to the existence of Necessary Being. Thus, religion is not outside of science, but is the final conclusion of the rational process itself. Consequently, faith education in Islamic higher education needs to be reconstructed through the Manhaj Ilmi approach, so that it does not stop at dogma, but is based on rational-demonstrative argumentation that can objectively and systematically face the challenges of modern scientism.

This research shows the existence of a very systematic epistemological construction in the thoughts of Sheikh M. Said Ramadhan Al-Buti through the concept of Manhaj Ilmi. This framework not only functions as a

theological tool, but also as a comprehensive epistemological model that seeks to respond to and criticize the dominance of materialistic positivism in the tradition of modern philosophy of science. In this context, the discussion of the research results will focus on four main dimensions: (1) the structure of Al-Buti's Islamic epistemology, (2) criticism of positivism and modern scientism, (3) the methodological validity of Al-Buti's arguments, and (4) the implications for contemporary education and science. The results of the research show that Islamic epistemology according to Al-Buti is built on the ontological foundation of *haqaiq al-asyya tsabitah*, namely the belief that reality is objective and not subject to extreme epistemic relativism. This view directly rejects the reduction of reality carried out by some schools of modern empiricism that limit truth only to what can be sensed. Al-Buti's epistemological structure demonstrates the integration of three primary instruments of knowledge: the senses (*al-hawas*), reason (*al-'aql*), and revelation (*al-khabar al-shadiq*). These three do not exist dichotomously, but rather exist in a hierarchical-complementary relationship known as *takamul al-ma'rifi*. The senses serve as the initial gateway to empirical observation, reason as the processor and drawer of logical conclusions, while revelation serves as the revealer of metaphysical realities that cannot be reached by the previous two instruments. This structure demonstrates that Al-Buti's epistemology is not anti-scientific, but rather places science in a proportional position. Science retains authority in the realm of physical phenomena, but is not absolute in explaining all of reality. Thus, this epistemology is integrative, not reductive (Al-Būṭi, 1997).

The analysis shows that one of the main contributions of this research is the debunking of the absolutist claims of positivism's epistemology. Positivism, particularly in the form of Logical Positivism, holds that only statements that can be verified empirically are considered meaningful and scientific. Consequently, metaphysical and theological reality are considered meaningless. However, this research reveals an internal contradiction in this position. The claim that "only the empirical is meaningful" is not itself an empirical statement, but rather a philosophical proposition that cannot be verified sensorially. Thus, positivism falls into a form of performative contradiction, namely denying itself through the standards it sets. Furthermore, the limitation of science only to the empirical realm also indicates a category mistake, namely an error in categorizing reality. Not all entities of reality can be measured physically, but the inability of empirical instruments does not mean ontological absence. In this case, this research confirms that scientism has reduced reality disproportionately, thereby ignoring the rational-abstract and metaphysical dimensions that are integral parts of human intellectual experience. Scientism also fails to explain its own epistemological foundations, as fundamental principles of science such as causality, the uniformity of nature, and inductive logic cannot be proven purely empirically. This suggests that science is fundamentally dependent on philosophical assumptions that transcend the empirical data itself (Zarkasyi, 2009).

From a methodological perspective, this study demonstrates that Al-Buti employed an argumentative approach that did not rely solely on formal Aristotelian syllogisms, but also optimized the *dalalat al-iltizam* (logical implication) and the analogy of causality (*qiyas fihi*). This approach demonstrated methodological flexibility that adapts to the modern context, particularly in addressing the challenges of contemporary scientism and skepticism. Although this approach did not always meet the formal standards of strict deductive logic in the Aristotelian tradition, it still substantially rested on axiomatic premises such as the law of causality and the impossibility of infinite regression (*tasalsul*). Thus, Al-Buti's argumentation retained significant rational force. From an Islamic epistemological perspective, this combination of empirical observation and rational inference actually strengthens the position of theological argumentation. This is because Islam does not limit the source of knowledge to a single instrument, but rather harmoniously integrates various epistemic instruments. However, it should be noted that this methodological validity remains contingent on the acceptance of the initial metaphysical premises, particularly regarding the existence of causality as an ontological principle. Therefore, although this argument is internally strong, it remains within the framework of a particular paradigm that differs from the paradigm of pure empiricism (Scott, 2016).

One of the most significant findings in this study is the implications of Al-Buti's epistemology for the reconstruction of faith education in Islamic higher education. The analysis shows that the conventional model of faith teaching, which tends to be dogmatic and based on memorization, is no longer adequate to address the complexity of modern thought. In this context, Al-Buti's epistemology offers an alternative paradigm that positions faith as a scientific discipline based on rational argumentation and epistemic verification. Faith is no longer understood as mere doctrine to be passively accepted, but as a scientific conclusion that can be tested through the instruments of reason, senses, and revelation in an integrative manner. This implication is crucial for Islamic Religious Higher Education (PTKI) institutions, as it demands a curriculum transformation from a

transmissive model to a critical-dialectical model. Students are not only taught "what to believe," but also "why those beliefs are rational and epistemologically accountable." Thus, Al-Buti's epistemology encourages the formation of more critical, reflective, and argumentative academic reasoning. It also serves as an intellectual protection mechanism against the penetration of reductionistic ideas of modern scientism and atheism (S. Fudah, 2012).

The discussion of the research findings also shows that Al-Buti's epistemology makes an important contribution to the integration of science. Science is not positioned as a stand-alone and absolute entity, but as part of a broader, hierarchical structure of knowledge. Within this framework, science only answers the question "how," while reason and revelation answer the question "why." This division demonstrates a clear functional demarcation, preventing epistemological overlap. This integration also frees science from the absolutist claims inherent in the positivist paradigm. Science remains respected as a valid instrument for explaining natural phenomena, but is not considered the sole source of truth. This integration also restores the spiritual dimension to scientific discourse. Nature is seen not only as a material object, but also as a sign (verse) that points to a metaphysical awareness of God's existence. Thus, science and religion are not in conflict, but rather in a complementary relationship (S. 'Abd al-L. Fudah, 2004).

The results of this study indicate that Islamic epistemology, from Al-Buti's perspective, is a systematic, rational, and responsive philosophical construct to the challenges of modernity. The critique of positivism is not only apologetic, but also argumentative and methodological. Furthermore, this epistemology successfully offers an integrative model that bridges science, reason, and revelation within a coherent scientific framework. Its implications are not only theoretical but also practical, particularly in the reform of faith education in Islamic universities. Thus, it can be asserted that Al-Buti's epistemology functions not only as a theological discourse but also as an alternative scientific paradigm that has the potential to enrich contemporary philosophical discourse. This integration ultimately leads to one fundamental conclusion: that scientific inquiry, if carried out consistently and rationally, will not conflict with religion, but will instead lead to the recognition of metaphysical truth and the existence of God as the ultimate reality of knowledge (Al-Būṭi, 1997).

CONCLUSION

Based on the description and dialectical-critical analysis that has been developed previously, this study shows that Islamic epistemology from the perspective of Shaykh M. Sa'id Ramadhan Al-Buthi can be understood as a form of philosophical antithesis to the dominance of Western materialistic positivism. Through an integrative approach, Al-Buthi combines elements of empirical observation, rational reasoning, and the authority of revelation as sources of knowledge validation. This approach not only criticizes the reductionist tendencies in modern science that limit reality to the material dimension alone, but also restores the position of Islamic theology as a discipline that has a scientific, rational basis, and is oriented towards epistemic certainty (al-yaqin).

Constructively, Al-Buthi's *Manhaj Ilmi* is based on the ontological assumption that reality is objective and permanent (haqaiq al-asya tsabitah). His epistemological system is hierarchical-integrative, combining three main instruments of knowledge, namely the healthy senses (al-hawas al-salimah), rational reason (al-'aql), and revelation (al-khabar al-shadiq). These three elements work synergistically within the framework of *takāmul al-ma'rifah* to produce comprehensive and balanced knowledge. Within his verification framework, Al-Buthi asserts that every epistemic claim must be supported by appropriate evidence, so that faith does not rest on *taqlid*, but on rational, accountable arguments.

In contrast, materialistic positivism is seen as experiencing epistemological reduction because it limits truth only to what can be verified empirically, thereby ignoring the role of deductive reason and opening up space for internal contradictions. This approach also contains a category error in understanding reality, because metaphysical matters cannot be denied simply because they are beyond the reach of the senses. In his methodological practice, Al-Buthi tends to avoid formal *qiyas mantiqi* and emphasizes *Dalālah al-Ilṭizām* and observation-based *Qiyas Fiqhi*. Although strictly producing *zann*, within the framework of al-Razi's thought, it can still achieve *yaqin burhani* through the support of the principles of causality and the impossibility of *tasalsul*. Thus, Al-Buthi's epistemology contributes to criticizing modern scientism and encouraging the reconstruction of rational and argumentative faith education.

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