



The Emergence and Characteristics of Tafsir bi al-ra'yi in the Modern Age: An Epistemological Analysis of the Rationality of Qur'anic Interpretation

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to examine epistemologically the source of tafsir bi al-ra'yi as an approach to interpreting the Qur'an that places reason and scientific ijtihad as the main instruments in understanding the text of revelation. This study seeks to explain the definition, developmental history, classification, and relevance of this source in the modern context, as well as examine the epistemological limits of rationality so as not to deviate from the principles of sharia. The research was conducted using library research methods and descriptive-qualitative approaches, using classical and modern literature sources. The analysis is carried out through the stages of reduction, interpretation, and conclusion drawing to find patterns of legitimacy of rationality in the tradition of Islamic interpretation. The results of the study show that tafsir bi al-ra'yi has a strong scientific foundation as long as it is carried out with strict scientific requirements, such as mastery of the Arabic language, understanding asbāb al-nuzūl, and attachment to the principles of uṣūl al-tafsir. Historically, this source has developed since the time of the Companions to experience revitalization in the modern era in response to scientific advances, social dynamics, and the need to contextualize Islamic teachings. The conclusion of the study confirms that tafsir bi al-ra'yi is not a form of unlimited rational freedom, but rather an expression of religious rationality that bridges the text of revelation with human reality, so that the Qur'an remains relevant as a source of value and guidance across space and time.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Quran is the primary source of Islamic teachings, serving as a guide for all dimensions of human life. As a revelation revealed in Arabic, rich in meaning, its understanding requires a precise methodological approach to avoid misinterpretation of the divine message (Shihab, 2007). With the changing times and the complexity of social reality, interpretation of the Quran is required to be more dynamic and contextual, not simply a reproduction of textual meaning. One important approach in the Islamic exegesis tradition is tafsir bi al-ra'yi, an interpretation that emphasizes the role of reason and the ijtihad of the interpreter in revealing the meaning of verses (al-Qattan, 2001). This approach has given rise to an epistemological debate between those who reject it because they consider it to open up the possibility of subjectivity, and those who support it because they see it as a form of actualization of human rational function in understanding revelation (Al-Suyuthi, 2008). The first group argues that interpretation must rely

entirely on *naql* (narration), while the second group emphasizes that reason is an integral instrument for understanding the meaning of the text according to the guidance of sharia and its historical context (Taymiyyah, 1999).

This debate gave birth to two major streams of interpretation methodology: *tafsir bi al-ma'tsūr* (based on narration) and *tafsir bi al-ra'yi* (based on rationality). The two cannot be completely separated, because *tafsir bi al-ra'yi* remains bound by scientific principles such as mastery of Arabic, understanding the *asbab al-nuzūl*, and the principles of sharia (Al-Dzahabi, 1976). Thus, the main issue is not the use of reason itself, but rather its epistemological limits—namely, the extent to which rationality can operate without exceeding the authority of the revealed text.

Historically, the trend toward *tafsir bi al-ra'yi* has emerged since the time of the Companions and has continued to develop into the modern period. In the classical period, commentators such as al-Rāzī and al-Zamakhsharī combined rational reasoning with submission to the text (Al-Rāzī, 1981).

However, in the modern era, a new wave of more progressive, rational interpretation emerged, influenced by philosophy, social science, and modern hermeneutics. This phenomenon reflects an effort to make interpretation relevant to contemporary issues such as social justice, gender, plurality, and modernity. As a result, *tafsir bi al-ra'yi* is no longer simply an alternative source but has become an arena for epistemological debate between orthodoxy and rationalism.

Research conducted by Diany Mumtaz Hanifah, Yogi Muldani Hendrawan, and Eni Zulaiha in the *Journal of Islamic Heritage and Civilization* (2025) examines the source of *tafsir bi al-ra'yi* as a rational approach to understanding the Qur'an. The study asserts that this source is based on the use of reason and *ijtihad* of the interpreter who remains grounded in linguistic rules, the context of the revelation of the verse (*asbābun nuzūl*), and the principles of sharia. The authors emphasize that the use of reason in interpretation can only be justified if it meets scientific requirements, such as mastery of Arabic, conformity with the Qur'an and hadith, and does not conflict with sharia principles. Thus, reason-based interpretation remains placed within strict academic corridors and does not deviate from the meaning permitted by sharia (Hanifah et al., 2025).

Meanwhile, research conducted by Siska Maryana, Heni Rumiatur, and Pirman Syah in the *Al-Muhith Journal* (2025) focused on the development of *tafsir bi al-ra'yi* from the classical era to the modern era. The results of the study indicate that in the classical era, rational interpretation was more cautious and oriented towards linguistic rules and Islamic law, while in the modern era, this source developed contextually to respond to contemporary social, political, and scientific issues. This research also differentiates between *tafsir bi al-ra'yi al-mahmūdah* which is commendable because it is based on knowledge, and *tafsir bi al-ra'yi al-madhmūmah* which is reprehensible because it only relies on reason. This study shows that the source of *tafsir bi al-ra'yi* functions as an *ijtihad* effort to maintain the relevance of the Qur'an to the development of the times without abandoning the principles of classical *tafsir* (Maryana et al., 2025).

The research conducted by Muhammad Arif and Dwi Sukmanila Sayska in *ISME: Journal of Islamic Studies and Multidisciplinary Research* (2025) reviewed the position and law of *tafsir bi al-ra'yi* from the perspective of Islamic law. The differences in scholars' views on its permissibility are considered editorial because they basically agree to reject interpretations made without a scientific basis. This study confirms that *tafsir bi al-ra'yi* is acceptable if carried out by an interpreter who has competence in sharia disciplines such as 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān, hadith, *ushul fiqh*, and Arabic. Thus, this source is understood as a form of scientific *ijtihad* that is legitimate and responsible in maintaining the purity of the meaning of the Qur'an and accommodating the dynamics of religious understanding (Arif & Sayska, 2025).

Furthermore, research conducted by Abdullah Lewo in *Mashadiruna: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Tafsir* (2023) examines the dynamics of Qur'anic interpretation in the contemporary era, emphasizing the assumption that the Qur'an is *Islah li kulli zamān wa makān* (relevant for all time). This study explains that human limitations in understanding Divine Word have led to the emergence of various interpretations according to the context of the times. In this case, contemporary interpretations emerged as a response to modern interpretative needs, emphasizing a contextual approach compared to the literal meaning that was dominant in the classical period. This study emphasizes that contemporary interpretations not only function to explain the text but also actualize the message of the Qur'an so that it remains alive and applicable in addressing the problems of the people today (Lewo, 2024).

Meanwhile, research by Maolidya Asri Siwi Fangesty, Nurwadjah Ahmad, and R. Edi Komarudin in *Mashadiruna: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Tafsir* (2024) reviews the characteristics and models of modern-contemporary interpretation by highlighting the emergence of an interpretation paradigm that seeks to restore the function of the Qur'an as a guide for human life (*al-ihtidā' bil-Qur'ān*). This research shows that modern-contemporary interpretation has developed since the end of the 19th century AD, pioneered by reformist figures such as Muhammad Abduh and Rasyid Ridha, and has given birth to the patterns of *adabī ijtīmā'ī*, *'ilmī*, *ilhādī*, and feminism. Contemporary interpretation combines the sources of *bil ma'tsūr* and *bil ra'yī* with the *maw method*. *ḍfat*,

fathlilī, and contextual, characterized by the purity of the Isrā'īliyyāt stories, free from weak hadith, and based on a rational scientific approach. This study confirms that the modern-contemporary style of interpretation makes an important contribution to the renewal of exegetical scholarship, especially in presenting the relevance of the Qur'an to the social and intellectual problems of modern humanity (Fangesty et al., 2024)

Based on a review of several previous studies, this study discusses tafsir bi al-ra'yi from an epistemological perspective by exploring its meaning, history, classification, and methodological limitations within the framework of tafsir science. The novelty of this study lies in an in-depth analysis of the emergence and characteristics of tafsir bi al-ra'yi in the modern era, which is linked to the socio-intellectual dynamics of Muslims, the development of science, and efforts to contextualize the teachings of the Qur'an. This study not only explains the historical causes of the emergence of rational tafsir in the modern era, but also systematically identifies its various patterns and characteristics as a form of revitalization of religious rationality in the contemporary tafsir tradition.

This study uses a library research method, with all data sourced from academic literature discussing the concept and methodology of tafsir bi al-ra'yi, both in the form of books, scientific articles, and relevant journals. The approach used is descriptive qualitative, which aims to comprehensively describe and interpret the epistemological dynamics of tafsir bi al-ra'yi based on the results of the literature review. The data collection technique is carried out through documentation studies, namely the search, selection, and classification of authoritative sources that discuss the definition, history, classification, and relevance of tafsir bi al-ra'yi in the modern context. All data obtained is then analyzed systematically through the processes of reduction, interpretation, and synthesis to obtain a complete conceptual understanding.

2. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

2.1. Understanding Tafsir bi al-ra'yi and Other Related Terms

Etymologically, the term interpretation (تفسير) comes from the root words fassara–yufassiru–tafsīran, which means to explain or reveal hidden meaning. In al-Wasiṭ, the word fassara is interpreted as "explaining something clearly," while according to Ibn Fāris in Maqāyīs al-Lughah, the word means izhāru al-ma'nā (revealing the hidden meaning) (Fāris, 1999). Terminologically, scholars define tafsir as a science that explains the meaning of the word of Allah, the law, and the wisdom contained therein as explained by al-Zarkasyī in al-Burhān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān (Al-Zarkasyī, 1988). Thus, tafsir is a scientific activity to reveal the meaning of the Qur'an through linguistic, contextual, and rational tools, which in its development gave birth to two main styles: tafsir bi al-ma'tsūr (based on narration) and tafsir bi al-ra'yi (based on rationality).

Linguistically, the word al-ra'yi (الرأي) has the basic meaning of i'tiqād (belief), ijtihād (effort to think deeply), and qiyās (analogy)" (al-Thabari, 2001).

This term refers to the process of rational thinking and decision-making based on a deep understanding of the evidence. In the hadith tradition, group Aṣḥāb al-Qiyās is also known as Aṣḥāb al-Ra'yi because of their tendency to use reason in understanding problematic texts (Manzūr, 2003)

From a terminological perspective, ra'yi is defined as the freedom to use reason with sound and measured principles. Shaykh Manna' al-Qaththān refers to tafsir bi al-ra'yi as an interpretation in which, in explaining the meaning of a verse, the interpreter relies heavily on his own thoughts. However, this view does not necessarily negate the use of knowledge, because according to al-Dzahabī, a valid tafsir bi al-ra'yi is one supported by mastery of Arabic, asbab al-nuzūl, nasikh-mansūkh, and other disciplines necessary for understanding the Qur'an (Al-Dzahabi, 1976).

Thus, etymologically, ra'yi does not merely mean "personal opinion," but rather encompasses intellectual activity based on ijihad and rational argumentation. This term has strong epistemic roots in the Islamic tradition because it reflects human efforts to understand revelation through the tools of reason controlled by the rules of sharia. However, according to al-Dzahabī, valid rational interpretation must still be based on established knowledge, such as mastery of Arabic, asbab al-nuzūl, and sharia principles (Badruzzaman, 2025).

In a modern context, tafsir bi al-ra'yi is often interpreted as a source of interpretation that attempts to bridge the text of revelation with social reality using rational tools. Mukarromah emphasized that tafsir bi al-ra'yi is conducted through ijihad after understanding Arabic language rules, evidence, and the context in which the verses were revealed (Mukarromah, 2013). Meanwhile, Quraish Shihab views this source of interpretation as a valid form of ijihad as long as it is based on knowledge and a sound intention, because the only interpretation that is prohibited is one that follows desires without a scientific basis (Shihab, 2007)

In classical literature, terms that are closely related to tafsir bi al-ra'yi include tafsir bi al-ijtihād, namely interpretation based on the results of the rational thinking of the interpreter by following the rules of interpretation (Al-Dzahabi, 1976);

tafsir bi al-dirāyah, which emphasizes the rational analysis of the text" (Al-Suyuthi, 2008); and tafsir bi al-ma'qūl, which emphasizes logical arguments to explain the divine message (Al-Rāzī, 1981). All three have a methodological overlap with tafsir bi al-ra'yi because they both emphasize the role of reason and knowledge in revealing the meaning of the Qur'an. Therefore, scholars distinguish between al-ra'yi al-maḥmūd (praiseworthy rational opinion) and al-ra'yi al-madhūm (reprehensible opinion), where the validity of the interpretation is determined by the extent to which it adheres to linguistic principles, sharia evidence, and scientific methodology (Taymiyyah, 1999). As long as the interpretation remains within a valid epistemic framework, then tafsir bi al-ra'yi becomes an important instrument for the intellectual dynamics of Islam that maintains the balance between revelation and human rationality.

2.2. History and Development of Tafsir bi al-ra'yi

The development of tafsir bi al-ra'yi (interpretation of the Quran) in the Islamic scholarly tradition is a long process that began during the time of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and has continued to evolve into the modern era. During the Prophet's time, interpretation of the Quran was carried out orally, with the Prophet acting as a mubayyin (recipient), explaining the meaning of verses unclear to his companions. The style of interpretation at that time was dominated by tafsir bi al-ma'tsur (interpretation based on prophetic narratives and the authority of the hadith) (Hanifah et al., 2025). However, since the time of the companions, the seeds of rational interpretation began to grow when figures such as Ibn 'Abbās, 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, Ubay bin Ka'b, and Ibn Mas'ūd used their reason in understanding the context of the verse and the wisdom behind it.

Several classic examples demonstrate the early practice of ra'y-based interpretation, such as the difference in interpretation of QS. al-Ādiyāt [100]: 1–11 between Ibn 'Abbās who interpreted it as a war horse and Ibn Mas'ūd who interpreted it as a camel of the pilgrims (Al-Dzahabi, 1976). This difference confirms that contextual reasoning was used proportionally in understanding the Qur'an. Similarly, Ibn 'Abbās' interpretation of QS. al-Nayr (110): 1–3 as a sign of the death of the Prophet describing the form of ra'y al-maḥmūd, namely healthy reasoning and based on the text of revelation (Al-Zarkasyi, 1988).

After the death of the Prophet Muhammad, the tradition of tafsir bi al-ra'yi developed more systematically, especially during the time of the Companions and the Tabi'in. Companions with scholarly authority, such as Ibn 'Abbās and Ibn Mas'ūd, had students in various regions who then continued the tradition of tafsir. Among them were Mujāhid ibn Jabr and Sa'īd ibn Jubair in Mecca, who studied under Ibn 'Abbās; Muhammad ibn Ka'b and Zayd ibn Aslam in Medina, who studied under Ubay ibn Ka'b; and al-Hasan al-Baṣrī and 'Āmir al-Syābī in Iraq, who studied under Ibn Mas'ūd (Shihab, 2015). This period of the tabi'in is referred to as the first period of the development of tafsir, where interpretation began to be written down and acquired a clearer methodological form.

The development of interpretation then experienced significant progress during the Abbasid Dynasty, often referred to as the golden age of classical Islam. During this period, figures such as al-Farrā', al-Zamakhsharī, and al-Qur'an emerged. ṭubī, and Abū al-Su'ūd, who developed interpretations with rational, linguistic, legal, and rhetorical tendencies (A. Fahrur Rozi, 2019). This shows that tafsir bi al-ra'yi has become a scientific instrument that stands on par with the interpretation of narrations.

During this classical period, tafsir bi al-ra'yi developed rapidly along with the advancement of various scientific disciplines. The scholarly backgrounds of the exegetes also influenced their interpretations. For example, al-Zamakhsharī emphasized linguistic aspects and balāghah in al-Kasasyāf, al-Qurṭubī focused on the laws of fiqh, while Abū al-Su'ūd emphasized the beauty and rhetorical structure of the language (Hanifah et al., 2025). This development demonstrates how ra'y, which initially functioned only as a complement to reasoning regarding narrations, later became a stand-alone epistemological tool in understanding the content of the Qur'an.

Despite this, the use of reason in interpretation has drawn criticism from some scholars due to concerns that it could lead to subjective interpretations that deviate from divine intent (Zaini, 2012). However, as Zaini explains, the prohibition against ra'y is not absolute; in the social and civilizational realms, the use of reason is actually a necessity to ensure the Qur'an remains relevant to the dynamics of the times.

Entering the 19th century, tafsir bi al-ra'yi experienced a major revitalization through the Islamic renewal movement. Figures such as Muhammad 'Abduh and Rashid Riḍā makes rationality and contextuality the foundation of modern interpretation, as seen in the work of Tafsīr al-Manār which combines scientific, moral, and social spirit. This approach seeks to cleanse the interpretation of the story of Isrā'īliyyāt and weak hadiths, and adapt the language of the Qur'an to the context of modern society (Azima & Syabuddin, 2024). Thus, from the time of the companions to the contemporary era, tafsir bi al-ra'yi reflects the dynamics of adaptive Islamic thought—rooted in tradition, but open to rationality and the challenges of the times.

2.3. Classification of Tafsir bi al-ra'yi and Important Factors to Avoid Deviation

Conceptually, tafsir bi al-ra'yi is an ijtihad-based interpretation of the Qur'an after a mufasssir has mastered the relevant scientific tools, especially Arabic, the historical context of revelation, and the rules of interpretation. According to Badruzzaman M. Yunus, this approach positions reason as an epistemic instrument in understanding the text of revelation, not as a stand-alone source of meaning (Badruzzaman, 2025). Within this framework, tafsir bi al-ra'yi requires linguistic skills, an understanding of classical Arabic poetry, and knowledge of the asbab al-nuzul and nasikh-mansukh so that the interpretation does not fall into semantic errors or legal contradictions. Thus, rationality in tafsir is not a form of absolute freedom, but rather scientific reasoning subject to the discipline of language and sharia.

Furthermore, Badruzzaman emphasized that tafsir bi al-ra'yi is only valid if reason is subordinated to revelation (Badruzzaman, 2025). In the epistemological construction of Islam, the Qur'an and Sunnah serve as authoritative sources, while reason serves as an explanatory tool that operates under their guidance. Therefore, the rationality of interpretation must be based on the principles of grammar, grammar, and rhetoric, as well as a contextual understanding of the socio-historical reality of the verse. Interpretation that breaks the connection between text and context is considered ahistorical and has the potential to distort meaning. The ideal rationality in interpretation, according to Badruzzaman, is "civilized rationality"—namely, reason that operates under the guidance of revelation and in harmony with the maqā (meaning of meaning). yesid al-syarī'ah.

In line with this view, al-Suyuthi emphasized three main requirements for interpreters who use the ijtihadi approach: (1) adhering to the authentic Qur'an and Sunnah; (2) having in-depth knowledge of Arabic; and (3) ensuring that interpretations remain in accordance with sharia provisions (Badruzzaman, 2025). These three principles serve as methodological safeguards to prevent interpretations from becoming trapped in subjectivity and deviation.

In the realm of methodology, Badruzzaman identifies six forms of epistemological deviations that must be avoided so that bi al-ra'yi interpretation does not fall into the category of al-ra'yi al-madzmūm: (1) forcing meaning beyond scientific capacity; (2) interpreting mutasyābihāt verses with certainty; (3) using lust and subjectivity; (4) giving meaning that is not contained in the text; (5) making schools of thought or ideology as a benchmark for truth; and (6) claiming certainty of meaning without valid evidence (Badruzzaman, 2025). These six things illustrate the epistemological boundaries that distinguish between scientific ijtihad and free speculation. Therefore, valid bi al-ra'yi interpretation must depart from disciplined reason, be bound by language, and submit to the authority of revelation, thus producing a rational, scientific, and civilized interpretation.

The debate on tafsir bi al-ra'yi from classical to contemporary times has produced two broad views: some scholars view it as a legitimate form of ijtihad, while others believe it has the potential to distort the meaning of revelation. From this emerged two main categories: tafsir bi al-ra'yi al-maḥmūd (praiseworthy) and tafsir bi al-ra'yi al-maḥmūd (blasphemous). This classification serves as an epistemological framework to distinguish between interpretations based on scientific discipline and speculative interpretations without a valid scientific basis.

Tafsir bi al-ra'yi al-maḥmūd is an interpretation carried out through scientific ijtihad by paying attention to Arabic language rules, the context in which the verse was revealed (asbab al-nuzul), the principles of nasikh-mansukh, and its conformity with the Qur'an and Sunnah. An interpreter must master methodological tools such as the science of munāṣabah, qirā'āt, and 'ulūm al-Qur'ān so that his reasoning does not go beyond the established methodological boundaries. Within this framework, the use of ra'y is not intended as a substitute for the text, but rather as a rational instrument to reveal the dimensions of the verse's meaning in greater depth (Badruzzaman, 2025).

The main characteristic of this commendable interpretation is the mufasssir's commitment to correct methodology and caution in exercising ijtihad. Interpretation is considered valid if it does not contradict the principles of sharia or tafsir bi al-ma'tsur, and is oriented towards maqāyesid al-syarī'ah (the goals of sharia) and social relevance. Thus, the use of reason is not a form of defiance against revelation, but rather a means of understanding God's will in a dynamic linguistic and historical context. As an illustration, classical commentators such as the Qur'anṭubī, al-Bayḍalī, and Jalāluddīn al-Maḥallī in Tafsīr al-Jalālayn demonstrate a commendable form of tafsir ra'y through their steadfast adherence to linguistic rules, verse context, and verified scientific principles. Contemporary commentators expand the meaning of terms such as al-qalam (QS. al-'Alaq [96]: 4; QS. al-Qalam [68]: 2) from "pen" to "all writing instruments" such as typewriters or computers. This semantic expansion demonstrates the dynamics of tafsir bi al-ra'yi which remains grounded in linguistic roots, yet adapts to the development of the times.

In contrast, tafsir bi al-ra'yi al-maḥmūd is an interpretation conducted without a scientific basis, driven by lust or ideological interests (Badruzzaman, 2025). In this form, reason operates speculatively and is often used to legitimize subjective views. Scholars consider this form of tafsir to be al-tafsīr al-bāṭil, because it deviates from

the meaning intended by Allah SWT. This kind of epistemological error has been warned about in QS. al-Isrā' [17]: 36 and the words of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, "Whoever speaks about the Qur'an with his own opinion, let him take his place in hell."

An example of a reprehensible interpretation is seen in the literal interpretation of the verse *man kāna fī ḥāzihi al-dunyā a'mā fa-huwa fī al-ākhirah a'mā* (QS. al-Isrā' [17]: 72), which is misunderstood as physical blindness, even though the context concerns the blindness of the heart towards the truth (Kusnadi & Nisa, 2022). Scholars such as al-Zarkasyī, Ibn Taymiyyah, and al-Suyūṭī explains that this form of interpretation often stems from four things: weak stories about the Prophet, fanaticism towards schools of thought, misuse of Arabic, and attempts to adapt the Qur'an to a narrow worldview (Maryana et al., 2025).

However, the majority of contemporary scholars of tafsir argue that the prohibition of tafsir bi al-ra'yi is not absolute. The prohibition applies only to forms of ra'y al-maẓmūm that violate the principles of knowledge, not to the methodologically valid use of reason. Scholars such as Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and Muḥammad 'Abduh emphasized that reason and revelation are not in conflict; they complement each other in revealing divine wisdom. Understanding the Qur'an by engaging rationality is part of the Qur'an's command, as stated in QS. Mu'minun.ḥammad [47]: 24, "Then do they not reflect upon the Qur'an, or are there locks upon their hearts?" This verse is the normative basis for the legitimacy of the interpretation of bi al-ra'yi al-maḥmūd, which places reason as a tool for contemplation and reflection on the verses of Allah.

2.4. Causal Factors of Tafsir bi al-ra'yi Many Emerge in the Modern Century

The widespread resurgence of tafsir bi al-ra'yi in the modern era is a response to the weakening influence of the Qur'an in shaping the consciousness, thoughts, and behavior of Muslims, as was the case in earlier generations. During the time of the Companions and the Tabi'in, the Qur'an served as a source of spiritual and social revolution that lifted humanity from its decline to the responsibility of the caliphate and the creativity of civilization. Through direct interaction with revelation, early generations were able to uphold divine principles in real life, thus forming a civilized society oriented towards the values of monotheism. However, over the course of history, the relationship between the text of revelation and social reality experienced an epistemological imbalance. The influence of the Qur'an on the lives of the people no longer displayed the vitality it had during the time of the Prophet, thus a pressing need arose for *tajdīd* (renewal) in the way revelation was understood.

This awareness gave rise to an intellectual movement that saw the renewal of interpretation as a historical necessity. Modern Muslim thinkers such as Jamāluddīn al-Afghānī, Muḥammad al-Khattab, and othersḥammad 'Abduh, dan Rasyīd Ridḥe believes that the crisis in the Muslim community stems not only from the external pressures of colonialism, but primarily from the stagnation of thought that has caused the text of revelation to become detached from human rationality in understanding its meaning. Therefore, a renewal of interpretation is necessary to revitalize the function of the Qur'an as a book of guidance that dynamically guides humanity in accordance with the demands of the times.

This movement to renew interpretation is based on the understanding that *tajdid* is a creative process to renew something that has become obsolete and rediscover its hidden values. In the context of interpretation, *tajdid* is defined as an effort to keep the Qur'an relevant to social, political, and intellectual changes in humankind (Manzūr, 2003). Thus, tafsir bi al-ra'yi appears as an expression of rational consciousness that is responsible for reconnecting revelation with the reality of life.

The emergence of modern tafsir bi al-ra'yi was also influenced by the view that classical tafsir sources were no longer adequate to address the complexities of new realities. Tafsir that overemphasized narration and philological analysis were deemed to have failed to explore the more substantial moral and social dimensions of the Qur'an. Therefore, reformers called for a balance between the authority of the text (*nash*) and the role of reason (*'aql*) in understanding the meaning of revelation (Al-Qurṭubī, 2003).

Some thinkers, such as the rational-progressive group, emphasize that the text of the Qur'an has openness of meaning and can be analyzed using modern linguistic and socio-cultural approaches (Arkoun, 2001). Meanwhile, the moderate group tries to maintain the continuity of the interpretation tradition by still providing space for the actualization of rationality and creativity of interpretation according to the development of the times (Sa'ūd, n.d.).

In essence, the emergence of tafsir bi al-ra'yi in the modern era is the result of a historical and epistemological awareness that understanding revelation is not static. A renewal of tafsir is necessary to ensure that the Qur'an remains alive and contextual for humanity. By positioning reason as an instrument for revealing meaning without

denying the authority of revelation, modern tafsir bi al-ra'yi serves to restore the balance between tradition and rationality, and between text and reality (Abu Zayd, 1992).

Within this framework, tafsir bi al-ra'yi is not a form of interpreter subjectivism, but rather a form of scientific ijtihad that seeks to present the Qur'an as a source of guidance relevant to the modern era. It rejects intellectual stagnation and expands the horizons of tafsir to encompass broader humanitarian issues, including social justice, public ethics, and the development of civilization. Thus, the revival of tafsir bi al-ra'yi in the modern age represents a systematic effort by Muslims to reaffirm the role of the Qur'an as a living, universal guideline that guides the dynamics of change in human history (Syarif, 1976).

From a historical and epistemological perspective, the modern tafsir bi al-ra'yi movement has given rise to various methodological tendencies that represent the diversity of intellectual orientations of the exegetes. First, tafsir hudā'ī, or guidance-based tafsir, seeks to revive the guidance dimension of the Qur'an in the lives of the people. Ḥammad 'Abduh, through Tafsir al-Manār, rejected the dry and formalistic classical style of interpretation, and returned interpretation to its function as a means of moral and spiritual development (Riḍā, 1990). Sayyid Quṭb continues this approach through Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān, which emphasizes aesthetic and spiritual experience in understanding the divine message.

Second, the interpretation of maqāsidī, which makes the purpose of the Sharia (*maqāsid al-syarī'ah*) as the main basis for interpretation. This approach was developed comprehensively by al-Ṭāhir bin 'Āshūr in al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr, which emphasizes that every verse must be read within the framework of the overall moral and humanitarian goals of Islam (Asyur, 2008). Third, ijtīmā'ī or social interpretation, which was pioneered by 'Abduh, Ibn Bādīs, and Maḥmūd Syaltūt, positions the Qur'an as an instrument of social reform and cultural reconstruction of the community. This approach is oriented toward liberating society from stagnation and injustice by making Qur'anic values the foundation of social renewal (Riḍā, 1990).

Fourth, Sunnī interpretation, which attempts to uncover the laws of divine causality (Sunan Allāh) in history and social life (Riḍā, 1990). This approach emphasizes that the progress and decline of a people depends on the extent to which they understand and implement the divine principles contained in the Qur'an. Fifth, the adabī-balāghī interpretation, which focuses on the literary, stylistic, and rhetorical aspects of the Qur'an (Al-A'raj, 2016). Figures such as Amin al-Khulī and 'Aisyah 'Abdurrahmān developed the *al-manhaj al-bayānī* approach which reveals the beauty of the language of the Qur'an and the spiritual power contained in its structure.

Sixth, the scientific-*aqlānī* interpretation, which interprets the Qur'an by taking into account modern scientific and rational principles. This approach is represented by Jawharī. Ṭanṭāwī and also appears in some of al-Manār's interpretations, which attempt to show that the Qur'an is in harmony with scientific discoveries without reducing its authority as revelation (Riḍā, 1990). Seventh, the 'almānī (secular) interpretation, which reads the Qur'an solely as a historical and linguistic text. Although it has analytical value in linguistic studies, this style is often criticized for ignoring the theological and spiritual dimensions of revelation, thus becoming trapped in an ideological bias that moves away from the maqā. yesid syarī'ah (Shaḥrūr, 1990).

From all the diversity of these styles, it can be concluded that modern tafsir bi al-ra'yi has distinctive epistemological characteristics: rational, contextual, and oriented towards maqāyesid. He does not interpret the Qur'an freely, but rather seeks to find a balance between text and context, between revelation and reality. Thus, the emergence of tafsir bi al-ra'yi in the modern age is a manifestation of the hermeneutical awareness of Muslims to revive the relevance of revelation in life, while simultaneously building a bridge between classical scholarly traditions and contemporary intellectual challenges.

3. CONCLUSION

Tafsir bi al-ra'yi is a source of Qur'anic interpretation that places reason as an instrument of scientific ijtihad in understanding the revealed text, without deviating from the authority of the text and the principles of uṣūl al-tafsīr. Historically, this style of interpretation grew alongside the development of Islamic thought from the time of the Companions to the modern era, demonstrating that rationality is an integral part of the dynamics of tafsir scholarship. The scholars' classification of *ra'yi maḥmūdah* and *ra'yi madhmūmah* serves as an important epistemological boundary to maintain objectivity and caution in interpretive reasoning. Thus, methodologically, *tafsir bi al-ra'yi* requires mastery of Arabic, the context in which the verses were revealed, and scientific hermeneutical tools to prevent rationality from turning into subjectivity. In the modern era, this source appears as a form of religious rationality that serves to bridge the revealed text and social reality, so that the Qur'an remains a contextual and relevant guide to life across time.

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