

Rethinking Human Intelligence Through Insān Al-Kāmil: Ibn Arabī's Metaphysical Epistemology and Its Relevance to Modern Consciousness

Zaifuddin Md Rasip¹, Abd Rahman Tajudin^{2*}, Earnie Elmie Hilmi³, Moh Subhan⁴

^{1,2}Faculty of Islamic Studies, Universiti Malaysia Sabah

³Centre for the Promotion of Knowledge and Language, Universiti Malaysia Sabah

⁴Fakultas Agama Islam, Universitas Islam Madura

*Corresponding Author

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100500606>

Received: 25 April 2026; Accepted: 30 April 2026; Published: 09 June 2026

ABSTRACT

This study examines the concept of Insān al-Kāmil in the thought of Ibn 'Arabī as an epistemological framework for understanding human intelligence, with particular reference to al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah. While modern theories of intelligence, such as Intelligence Quotient (IQ), Emotional Quotient (EQ), and Spiritual Quotient (SQ), have progressively expanded the scope of human cognition, they remain functionally specialised and lack a unified metaphysical foundation that integrates cognition, emotion, spirituality, and moral discernment. Employing qualitative conceptual content analysis, this study analyses key constructs including 'aql, qalb, rūḥ, fikr, dhikr, taqwā, and al-furqān, and examines their interrelations within a tawḥīdic epistemological framework. The findings reveal that intelligence, in Ibn 'Arabī's perspective, is not merely a cognitive capacity but a holistic form of consciousness that integrates intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and ethical dimensions. Furthermore, this study demonstrates that the epistemic model of Insān al-Kāmil positions intelligence as an existential process oriented toward ma'rifah, rather than a merely instrumental capacity. A dialogical engagement with contemporary neuroscience suggests convergence at the level of integrative cognition, while maintaining clear epistemological and teleological distinctions between biological explanation and metaphysical meaning. In response to the practical limitations of purely theoretical models, the study further proposes preliminary educational implications through the integration of fikr, dhikr, ethical reflection, and the role of the teacher as murabbi. The study concludes that Insān al-Kāmil offers a comprehensive tawḥīdic paradigm for reconstructing human intelligence and addressing the contemporary crisis of meaning.

Keywords: Human intelligence, Ibn 'Arabī, Insān al-Kāmil, marifah, tawḥīd

INTRODUCTION

The discourse on human intelligence in modern scholarship is predominantly framed within the paradigm of cognitive psychology, which emphasizes rational capacity as measured through Intelligence Quotient (IQ). Subsequent developments, including Gardner's (1993) theory of Multiple Intelligences, Goleman's (1995) concept of emotional intelligence, and Zohar and Marshall's (2001) notion of spiritual intelligence, reflect an expanding recognition of the multidimensional nature of human cognition. Nevertheless, these approaches remain largely situated within a Western epistemological framework that tends to detach intellect from metaphysical foundations, thereby conceptualizing intelligence as a psychological construct independent of the ultimate purpose of human existence. While these frameworks have undergone significant theoretical and empirical refinement, they remain functionally differentiated and do not fully offer an integrative metaphysical foundation that unifies cognition, emotion, and spiritual consciousness within a coherent system of meaning.

In contrast, the Islamic worldview conceives the human being as a holistic entity created for the dual purpose of servitude (‘ubūdiyyah) and vicegerency (khalāfah). The Qur’an presents the human as endowed with ‘aql, qalb, rūh, and body, enabling both the recognition of Allah SWT and the ethical stewardship of the world. Within this framework, intelligence is not fragmented but embedded within a tawhīdic structure that integrates intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and physical dimensions into a unified system of meaning. This integration finds its highest expression in the concept of Insān al-Kāmil, the Perfect Human who reflects the Divine Names and Attributes in their most complete form.

Among the scholars who systematically elaborated this concept is Muḥyiddīn Ibn ‘Arabī, particularly through his seminal works *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah* and *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*. In his metaphysical framework, Insān al-Kāmil is described as *al-kaun al-jāmi‘*, the comprehensive reality that unites the Divine and the created realms and serves as the locus of *tajallī*, where outward and inward dimensions converge (Ibn ‘Arabī, 2006). Contemporary scholars such as Rozi (2022), Hidayat (2025), and Hajam and Saumantri (2023) have highlighted its ontological and spiritual significance, while Kurnia Sari Wiwaha (2024) underscores its relevance in addressing the challenges of modern human consciousness.

Despite these contributions, existing studies have predominantly focused on the ontological, spiritual, and pedagogical dimensions of Insān al-Kāmil, leaving the structure of intellectual intelligence within this framework insufficiently explored. In particular, the roles of ‘aql, fikr, dhikr, taqwā, al-furqān, and Jawāmi‘ al-Kalim have not been systematically examined as components of an integrated epistemological structure. Although studies by Lety Febriana et al. (2022), Agustriani and Fauziyah (2022), and Lala (2023) address aspects of human development and spiritual intelligence, they do not fully articulate the epistemic architecture underlying intellectual intelligence in Ibn ‘Arabī’s thought. This indicates a critical gap in current scholarship, particularly in conceptualising intelligence not merely as a functional capacity but as a structured epistemological process within a tawhīdic metaphysical system.

At the same time, contemporary neuroscience suggests that human intelligence emerges from complex interactions among cognitive, emotional, and conscious processes (Akhyar et al., 2025; Musdalifah, 2020; Mardiah et al., 2022). These findings resonate conceptually with Ibn ‘Arabī’s integrative perspective, which does not separate ‘aql from qalb and rūh. However, such convergence remains largely at the functional level, as neuroscience primarily explains the mechanisms of cognition without addressing its metaphysical grounding or ultimate purpose. Against this backdrop, this article examines the concept of intellectual intelligence within the framework of Insān al-Kāmil based on *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*, while engaging in critical dialogue with modern theories of intelligence and neuroscience. It argues that Ibn ‘Arabī’s thought offers a tawhīdic epistemological model that transcends the fragmented paradigm of modern discourse and provides a more comprehensive foundation for understanding human consciousness in the contemporary context. In doing so, the study also opens a pathway toward translating this theoretical framework into meaningful implications for contemporary education and human development.

Research Objectives

This study is guided by three primary objectives:

1. To analyse the concept of Insān al-Kāmil in the thought of Ibn ‘Arabī based on *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*, with particular emphasis on the human being as a cosmic vicegerent (khalīfah) and a manifestation of the Divine Names.
2. To examine the structure of intellectual intelligence within the framework of Insān al-Kāmil, specifically the roles of ‘aql, ma‘rifah, fikr, dhikr, taqwā, al-furqān, and Jawāmi‘ al-Kalim as foundational elements of the epistemology of human consciousness.
3. To propose a conceptual model of tawhīdic intelligence through an integrative dialogue between Ibn ‘Arabī’s metaphysical framework and modern theories of intelligence as well as contemporary findings in neuroscience.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative approach grounded in conceptual content analysis of the primary works of Ibn ‘Arabī, with particular emphasis on *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*. Given the metaphysical, symbolic, and hermeneutical nature of Ibn ‘Arabī’s thought, the analysis prioritises interpretive engagement over literal textual reading. The text is approached as a layered epistemic discourse in which meaning emerges through both explicit argumentation and symbolic articulation. Accordingly, the study employs a thematic strategy by identifying and analysing key concepts such as *Insān al-Kāmil*, ‘aql, qalb, rūḥ, ma‘rifah, fikr, dhikr, taqwā, al-furqān, and *Jawāmi‘ al-Kalim*, and examining their interrelationships within an integrated epistemological framework.

The analytical procedure consists of three interrelated stages: concept extraction through close reading, categorisation based on epistemological functions, and conceptual synthesis to construct a coherent model of tawḥīdic intelligence. This process enables the study to move beyond descriptive exposition toward theoretical reconstruction. To enhance contemporary relevance, the study further engages selected literature in neuroscience, psychology, and holistic education through a critical dialogical approach. Nevertheless, these perspectives serve only as comparative references, while the primary epistemological foundation remains rooted in Ibn ‘Arabī’s tawḥīdic metaphysics, ensuring both conceptual coherence and interdisciplinary significance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Contemporary studies on *Insān al-Kāmil* generally position the concept as the ontological apex within Ibn ‘Arabī’s metaphysical system, particularly in relation to *waḥdat al-wujūd*. Hidayat (2025) explains that *Insān al-Kāmil* functions as a cosmic centre that unifies God and the universe within a single field of consciousness, integrating both the Divine and created dimensions. Similarly, Rofi, Prasetya, and Setiawan (2020), as well as Budiyantri et al. (2020), conceptualise the perfect human as an ideal model in Islamic theology and education, emphasising the balance between moral, intellectual, and spiritual dimensions. However, these studies predominantly focus on the ontological nature of the human being and its reflection of Divine attributes, while the role of ‘aql as an epistemological instrument in shaping the structure of human intelligence remains insufficiently theorised within the framework of *Insān al-Kāmil*.

Beyond ontological concerns, a number of studies have explored the spiritual and consciousness-oriented dimensions of Ibn ‘Arabī’s thought. Lala (2023) examines the spiritual potential of the human being through the concept of *isti‘dād*, referring to the soul’s preparedness to receive Divine effusion, thereby linking spiritual development with the reception of *wahbī* knowledge. Mukhtar, Hamzah, and Mahmud (2023) further demonstrate that the process of becoming *Insān al-Kāmil* involves the formation of reflective consciousness through a Sufi hermeneutical approach that integrates both outward and inward meanings. Junaidi, Waeno, and Amal (2024) argue that Ibn ‘Arabī’s vision transcends the dichotomy between rationality and spirituality by offering an integrative intellectual framework. Nevertheless, these discussions do not sufficiently elaborate how ‘aql operates dynamically in conjunction with qalb and rūḥ as a unified epistemological architecture of human intelligence.

With the advancement of modern science, neuroscience has contributed significantly to the understanding of human intelligence as an integrative phenomenon. Studies by Nasruddin and Muiz (2020), Musdalifah (2020), Mardiah et al. (2022), Hadiyanto and Suyadi (2023), and Akhyar et al. (2025) consistently demonstrate that learning, emotion, and meaning-making occur through interconnected internal systems rather than isolated cognitive processes. These findings challenge cognitive reductionism and affirm that intelligence involves the coordination of rational, emotional, and conscious functions. Furthermore, these studies highlight that emotional stability and attentional focus directly influence intellectual performance. However, while neuroscience successfully explains the empirical mechanisms underlying intelligence, it does not provide a teleological or metaphysical account of its ultimate purpose, particularly in relation to Divine consciousness.

In the field of education, Lety Febriana et al. (2022) and Apriyani, Yuspiyani, and Wahyuddin (2025) conceptualise the human being as a pedagogical entity that must be developed holistically through the integration of intellectual, spiritual, and social dimensions. This perspective aligns with the notion of *Insān al-Kāmil* as the foundation for balanced human development capable of fulfilling both servanthood and vicegerency. These

studies also emphasise the importance of values, ethics, and consciousness in the educational process, advocating for a more comprehensive curriculum design. However, their discussions remain largely applicative and pedagogical in nature, and do not construct a theoretical model of intellectual intelligence grounded in a systematic analysis of Ibn 'Arabī's primary texts, particularly al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah as a foundational epistemological source.

From the perspective of Islamic psychology, Agustriani and Fauziyah (2022), as well as Safitri, Zakaria, and Kahfi (2023), emphasise the integration of emotional and spiritual intelligence as the basis for personal development and well-being. This approach broadens the understanding of intelligence by incorporating affective and spiritual dimensions as essential components of human personality and inner balance. However, the frameworks employed in these studies are still largely influenced by modern categories such as Emotional Quotient (EQ) and Spiritual Quotient (SQ), which remain phenomenological in nature and are not fully grounded in a tawḥīdic epistemology. Consequently, key concepts such as 'aql, fikr, dhikr, and al-furqān have yet to be systematically interpreted as components of an integrated epistemological structure within Ibn 'Arabī's metaphysical framework.

Based on the foregoing review, it can be concluded that existing scholarship on Insān al-Kāmil is predominantly dominated by ontological, spiritual, educational, and psychological perspectives, with limited attention given to the epistemological structure of human intelligence. Conceptually, previous studies have not positioned intellectual intelligence as an integrated epistemological framework within Insān al-Kāmil. Analytically, the roles of 'aql, fikr, dhikr, taqwā, al-furqān, and Jawāmi' al-Kalim have not been examined as an interconnected system of consciousness. Methodologically, there remains a lack of in-depth textual analysis based on al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah as a primary source. Therefore, the central gap in current discourse lies in the absence of a systematic analysis of intellectual intelligence as an integrated epistemological framework within the concept of Insān al-Kāmil. This study seeks to address this gap by developing a tawḥīdic model of intelligence that integrates intellectual, spiritual, and conscious dimensions in a holistic manner.

The Epistemological Structure of Intellect within the Framework of Insān al-Kāmil

In Ibn 'Arabī's intellectual framework, what is commonly understood as intellectual intelligence cannot be reduced to an autonomous cognitive capacity. Rather, it is conceptualised as a manifestation of tawḥīdic consciousness that emerges from the integrative functioning of 'aql, qalb, and rūḥ. Within al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah, the intellect is portrayed not merely as a rational faculty, but as a Divine epistemological instrument that discloses the meaning of existence when illuminated by revelation, strengthened through dhikr, and purified through processes of spiritual refinement (tazkiyah) (Ibn 'Arabī, 2006). Consequently, the intellect does not operate as an independent source of truth, but as a receptive medium whose epistemic capacity is conditioned by the spiritual readiness of the knower.

A fundamental distinction articulated by Ibn 'Arabī lies between an intellect that operates autonomously and one that functions within the orbit of tawḥīd. The former, detached from qalb and rūḥ, produces discursive knowledge confined to logical structures and empirical observation, thereby limiting its capacity to apprehend deeper ontological realities. Such knowledge remains analytically valid yet epistemically incomplete (Nawtika & Yuslih, 2023). In contrast, an intellect integrated with dhikr and mushāhadah functions as a kāshif al-ma'nā, or a revealer of meaning, enabling reality to be perceived as tajallī, that is, the manifestation of Divine attributes (Ibn 'Arabī, 2006). Within this paradigm, intellectual intelligence is no longer measured by analytical efficiency or cognitive speed, but by the degree to which the intellect is aligned with Divine wisdom and guided by metaphysical awareness.

This epistemological orientation is further deepened through the distinction between 'aql juz'ī and 'aql kullī. 'Aql juz'ī refers to particularised rationality operating within the limits of sensory experience and formal logic, whereas 'aql kullī represents a universal dimension of consciousness that is directly connected to Divine reality and capable of receiving metaphysical truths. Ibn 'Arabī maintains that the majority of human beings remain confined within the domain of 'aql juz'ī, while Insān al-Kāmil actualises 'aql kullī through sustained processes of tazkiyah, mujāhadah, and disciplined spiritual practice (Ibn 'Arabī, 2006). As noted by Agustriani & Fauziyah

(2022), this dual structure reflects a supra-rational epistemology in which reason is preserved as a necessary instrument but transcended as the ultimate arbiter of truth.

In addition to these dimensions, the concept of khayāl occupies a central position in Ibn ‘Arabī’s epistemological architecture. Contrary to modern interpretations that regard imagination as a purely subjective or illusory faculty, khayāl is understood as an ontological intermediary that bridges the sensory world and the realm of meaning. It enables metaphysical realities to manifest in symbolic forms that can be apprehended by human consciousness (Rozi (2022)). Through this mediating function, khayāl expands the scope of intellectual intelligence beyond logical reasoning to include the capacity for symbolic interpretation, semiotic awareness, and the discernment of āyāt embedded within existence. This highlights that true intelligence, within this framework, involves the ability to perceive reality at multiple levels of meaning simultaneously.

The epistemological system is further enriched by the distinction between ‘ilm kasbī and ‘ilm wahbī, which introduces a dual mode of knowledge acquisition. ‘Ilm kasbī is obtained through deliberate intellectual effort, study, and empirical engagement, while ‘ilm wahbī is conferred as a Divine gift upon a soul that has attained a certain level of spiritual receptivity (Lala, 2023). This distinction signifies that knowledge is not solely constructed through human cognition, but also disclosed through Divine grace. As such, intellectual intelligence cannot be understood purely as an accumulative process; rather, it is also transformative, requiring openness to transcendent forms of knowing. The integration of these two epistemic modes suggests that intellectual completeness is only realised when rational inquiry is complemented by spiritual illumination.

Moreover, this dual epistemology implies that the epistemic quality of knowledge is inseparable from the ethical and spiritual condition of the knower. A fragmented or unrefined inner state may obstruct access to deeper layers of truth, regardless of cognitive sophistication. Conversely, a purified consciousness enhances the capacity to perceive meaning beyond its outward forms. This perspective reinforces Ibn ‘Arabī’s broader assertion that knowledge is fundamentally relational, involving an interaction between the human subject and Divine reality (Agustriani & Fauziyah, 2022). Accordingly, intellectual intelligence within the framework of Insān al-Kāmil must be understood not merely as a cognitive function, but as an ontological transformation in which knowing and being are intrinsically interconnected.

Taken as a whole, the epistemological structure of intellect within Insān al-Kāmil presents a layered and integrative model of consciousness. It brings together ‘aql, qalb, rūh, khayāl, and the dynamic interplay between ‘ilm kasbī and ‘ilm wahbī within a unified tawhīdic framework (Ibn ‘Arabī, 2006). This model challenges reductionist interpretations of intelligence that confine it to cognitive processes, and instead redefines it as an evolving, multidimensional process of consciousness oriented toward ma‘rifah. In doing so, it establishes a comprehensive epistemological foundation in which intellect is not an isolated faculty, but a central component in the unfolding of human awareness toward its ultimate metaphysical purpose.

The Transformative Mechanism of Tawhīdic Intellectual Intelligence

While the epistemological structure explains the foundational architecture of intelligence, the mechanism of transformation elucidates how such intelligence is cultivated, refined, and actualised within the human subject. Ibn ‘Arabī conceptualises intellectual intelligence as a dynamic and developmental process shaped through the integration of fikr, dhikr, and taqwā, each of which performs a distinct yet interdependent function within the broader system of consciousness (Ibn ‘Arabī, 2006). Rather than operating as isolated practices, these elements collectively facilitate a gradual transition from discursive knowledge to experiential awareness, thereby transforming cognition into a vehicle of existential understanding.

Fikr serves as the analytical and reflective faculty that enables human beings to interpret, evaluate, and conceptualise reality. However, when functioning independently, it remains confined within the limits of logic and empirical observation, rendering it insufficient for grasping deeper metaphysical truths (Nawtika & Yuslih, 2023). In contrast, dhikr operates as a spiritual mechanism that refines inner awareness by sustaining continuous remembrance of the Divine, thereby reorienting the cognitive process toward transcendental meaning (Lala, 2023). When these two dimensions are integrated, a higher form of reflective consciousness emerges, one that not only understands reality conceptually but also experiences its significance inwardly.

Within this integrative process, taqwā functions as a regulatory principle that ensures alignment between intellectual activity and ethical orientation. It safeguards the epistemic process from deviation, such as arrogance, manipulation, or misinterpretation of meaning, by grounding cognition within the framework of servitude (‘ubūdiyyah) (Rozi, 2022). Through the sustained interaction of fikr, dhikr, and taqwā, the individual develops al-furqān, defined as the epistemic and moral capacity to discern truth from falsehood (Ibn ‘Arabī, 2006). This faculty represents not merely ethical sensitivity, but the culmination of intellectual maturity shaped by both rational discipline and spiritual purification.

The highest manifestation of this transformative mechanism can be observed in the prophetic models of Adam AS and Muhammad SAW. The teaching of al-Asmā’ to Adam symbolises the bestowal of comprehensive epistemic capacity, positioning the human being as al-nuskhat al-jāmi‘ah, or the microcosmic reflection of the cosmos (Ibn ‘Arabī, 2006). At a more advanced level, the Prophet Muhammad SAW embodies the perfection of intellectual intelligence through the gift of Jawāmi‘ al-Kalim, which reflects the ability to encapsulate vast and multilayered meanings within concise expressions. Rahman and Sadidi (2025) demonstrate that this prophetic linguistic structure signifies the unity between outward articulation and inward meaning, thus representing the highest synthesis of intellectual and spiritual consciousness.

In this context, intellectual intelligence transcends the mere processing of information and becomes the capacity to bear and actualise meaning (amānah al-ma‘nā) within lived experience. This perspective underscores Ibn ‘Arabī’s distinction between Insān al-Kāmil and Insān al-Ḥayawān, where the latter denotes a mode of existence governed primarily by instinctual drives and material concerns. The distinction, therefore, is not based solely on cognitive ability, but on the depth of epistemic awareness and the orientation of meaning that defines the human condition (Ibn ‘Arabī, 2006).

Ultimately, this transformative mechanism demonstrates that intellectual intelligence within the framework of Insān al-Kāmil is a continuous and evolving process of consciousness formation. It integrates spiritual discipline, intellectual reflection, and ethical orientation into a coherent tawḥīdic system that reshapes both perception and existence (Rozi, 2022). The ultimate aim is not merely the production of intellectually competent individuals, but the cultivation of human beings who attain ma‘rifah, a profound and transformative awareness of God, the cosmos, and the self, thereby fulfilling the deepest purpose of human existence.

Critique of the Fragmentation in Modern Theories of Intelligence

The development of modern theories of intelligence reflects a clear trajectory from reductionist formulations toward a broader recognition of the multidimensional nature of human cognition. The early conceptualisation of Intelligence Quotient (IQ), which emerged in the early twentieth century, primarily emphasised logical reasoning, analytical ability, and problem-solving skills as the core indicators of intelligence (Maulidia et al., 2025). While this model provided a foundational framework for modern educational systems, it remains inherently limited, as it reduces intelligence to a quantifiable cognitive domain that neglects the broader dimensions of human consciousness.

In response to these limitations, Gardner (1993) introduced the theory of Multiple Intelligences, which expanded the understanding of intelligence to include diverse domains such as linguistic, logical-mathematical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal capacities. Although this approach represents a significant conceptual advancement, it nonetheless preserves a structural fragmentation by treating these domains as relatively discrete categories. Consequently, intelligence within this framework continues to be interpreted as a set of differentiated psychological functions rather than as a unified manifestation of existential consciousness grounded in a deeper ontological reality.

Subsequent developments saw the emergence of Emotional Quotient (EQ), popularised by Goleman (1995), which emphasises self-awareness, emotional regulation, and empathy as critical determinants of individual success. While this perspective acknowledges the importance of affective dimensions in shaping human behaviour, it remains embedded within an empirical psychological framework that does not connect emotional intelligence to metaphysical purpose or transcendent orientation. Emotions, in this sense, are primarily treated

as tools for self-management and social adaptation, rather than as integral components of a consciousness oriented toward higher meaning.

The introduction of Spiritual Quotient (SQ) by Zohar and Marshall (2001) attempts to address this conceptual gap by incorporating dimensions of meaning, value, and purpose into the discourse on intelligence. However, spirituality within this framework is largely phenomenological and lacks grounding in revelation as a source of epistemological authority. As a result, it allows for highly subjective interpretations of meaning without providing a coherent tawhīdic structure that can unify these dimensions within a consistent metaphysical framework. Thus, despite its apparent proximity to religious conceptions of spirituality, SQ operates within an epistemological horizon that remains distinct from Islamic metaphysical thought.

Taken together, the frameworks of IQ, EQ, and SQ represent a progressive effort to conceptualise intelligence in a more holistic manner. Nevertheless, they remain confined within a paradigm of fragmentation, wherein each dimension of intelligence is analysed in isolation without an underlying ontological integration. In this context, intelligence continues to be treated as a psychological construct detached from fundamental questions concerning the nature of existence and the ultimate purpose of human creation.

In contrast, the framework of *Insān al-Kāmil* within the thought of Ibn ‘Arabī offers a fundamentally different paradigm that is both integrative and tawhīdic. Within this perspective, intellect, emotion, and spirituality are not conceived as separate domains, but as interrelated dimensions within a unified structure of consciousness (Ibn ‘Arabī, 2006). Nawtika and Yuslih (2023) argue that intelligence in this framework represents a manifestation of the ontological relationship between the human being and the Divine, rather than merely a set of psychological functions. Similarly, Mukhtar et al. (2023) demonstrate that consciousness in the Sufi tradition is intrinsically linked to spiritual transformation, thereby redefining intelligence as a process of self-realisation rather than mere accumulation of knowledge.

Dialogue with Neuroscience: Toward an Integrative Consciousness

Although modern theories of intelligence remain largely confined within fragmented frameworks, developments in contemporary neuroscience indicate a growing shift toward understanding intelligence as an inherently integrative system. Akhyar et al. (2025) demonstrate that intellectual functioning is not restricted to the prefrontal cortex alone but involves complex coordination across multiple neural systems, including the limbic system, temporal lobes, basal ganglia, and cerebellum. This interconnected structure suggests that rational cognition, emotional processing, and meaning-making do not operate in isolation but are embedded within an integrated neural network that sustains human consciousness.

This integrative perspective is further reinforced by studies on learning and cognition. Musdalifah (2020) emphasises that learning processes depend on the dynamic interaction between short-term and long-term memory systems, which are significantly influenced by emotional stability and attentional regulation. Similarly, Mardiah et al. (2022) show that positive emotional states enhance comprehension and conceptual understanding, thereby strengthening cognitive performance. Hadiyanto and Suyadi (2023) extend this argument by demonstrating that effective learning occurs when cognitive, emotional, and value-based dimensions are synchronised. Collectively, these findings challenge reductionist models of intelligence and affirm that human cognition must be understood as a multidimensional and integrative process.

Within this context, a significant conceptual resonance emerges between contemporary neuroscience and the thought of Ibn ‘Arabī. Both perspectives reject a strict dualism between intellect and emotion and acknowledge that intelligence arises from the interaction of multiple internal dimensions of the human being. However, this convergence remains limited to the functional level. A fundamental divergence persists at the epistemological and teleological levels. Neuroscience seeks to explain how consciousness operates through biological and mechanistic processes, whereas Ibn ‘Arabī addresses the purpose of consciousness within a tawhīdic framework. In other words, neuroscience is descriptive and empirical, while Ibn ‘Arabī’s metaphysical system is normative and teleological, orienting intelligence toward *ma‘rifah* and Divine awareness (Ibn ‘Arabī, 2006).

The concept of neuroplasticity further opens a productive space for dialogue between these two paradigms. Kadri and Rasip (2025) demonstrate that repetitive practices such as dhikr can induce measurable changes in neural structures, contributing to enhanced emotional regulation and self-awareness. From a neuroscientific perspective, such repetition strengthens specific neural pathways through sustained activation. In the Sufi tradition, however, this process corresponds to tazkiyat al-nafs, the purification of the soul through continuous spiritual discipline. While both frameworks recognise that transformation of consciousness requires repetition, discipline, and internal orientation, they diverge in their epistemological grounding: neuroscience interprets these changes in biological terms, whereas Ibn 'Arabī situates them within a metaphysical journey toward Divine proximity.

Moreover, contemporary neuroscience increasingly acknowledges the roles of attention, self-awareness, and emotional regulation as central components in the development of intelligence. These elements bear strong conceptual parallels to practices such as dhikr and murāqabah in the Sufi tradition, which aim to cultivate heightened awareness of the Divine presence. Yet, in Ibn 'Arabī's framework, such practices are not merely psychological techniques for cognitive enhancement but constitute an epistemic pathway toward ma'rifah. This distinction marks a critical divergence between the two paradigms: while modern approaches focus on functional optimisation, the Sufi metaphysical perspective is fundamentally concerned with meaning, purpose, and ontological orientation.

In sum, the dialogue between modern theories of intelligence, contemporary neuroscience, and the thought of Ibn 'Arabī reveals a gradual movement within modern discourse toward recognising the integrative nature of human intelligence. However, this movement remains incomplete, as it lacks a comprehensive metaphysical foundation capable of unifying the diverse dimensions of human consciousness. In this regard, the concept of Insān al-Kāmil offers a crucial extension by situating intelligence within the orbit of tawḥīd and ma'rifah, thereby expanding the epistemological horizon beyond the limitations of modern paradigms and reorienting the understanding of intelligence toward its ultimate existential purpose.

Implications for Contemporary Education and Leadership

The framework of Insān al-Kāmil in the thought of Ibn 'Arabī carries profound implications for the reform of contemporary Islamic education, particularly in relation to the development of a balanced and integrated human being. Modern educational systems tend to evaluate success primarily through academic achievement, technical competence, and graduate employability, while the cultivation of ethical character, spiritual awareness, and existential orientation is often marginalized (Apriyani et al., 2025). Such an approach produces individuals who may excel cognitively yet lack emotional stability and clarity of purpose. Within Ibn 'Arabī's framework, education cannot be reduced to the transmission of information or the acquisition of skills; rather, it must be understood as a process of transforming human consciousness in its entirety. This perspective aligns with the broader Islamic view that human development is inherently holistic, encompassing intellectual, spiritual, and moral dimensions (Budiyaniti et al., 2020).

Within this paradigm, the role of the teacher undergoes a significant epistemological shift. The teacher is no longer conceived merely as a transmitter of knowledge, but as a murabbi who guides the simultaneous formation of 'aql, qalb, and rūḥ (Hadiyanto & Suyadi, 2023). Effective learning, therefore, is not achieved solely through rational inquiry (fikr), but through the integration of fikr and dhikr, which gives rise to ḥikmah as a deeper mode of understanding. This integrative approach finds resonance in contemporary neuroscience, which demonstrates that meaningful learning emerges when cognitive processes are aligned with emotional stability and value orientation (Mardiah et al., 2022). However, Ibn 'Arabī extends beyond this framework by asserting that the ultimate goal of education is the attainment of ma'rifah, an epistemic awareness that connects the human being to Divine reality (Ibn 'Arabī, 2006).

To address the practical limitations of a purely conceptual model, this study proposes a preliminary pedagogical framework that operationalises the integration of fikr and dhikr within contemporary educational settings. At the instructional level, fikr may be cultivated through structured critical reflection, analytical discussion, and problem-based learning that encourages students to engage deeply with knowledge. In parallel, dhikr may be integrated through moments of guided reflection, ethical contemplation, and spiritual awareness practices that

orient the learner toward meaning and Divine consciousness. At the level of classroom practice, this integration can be translated into three interrelated components. First, cognitive engagement, where students are encouraged to analyse and interpret knowledge critically. Second, reflective internalisation, where learners are guided to connect knowledge with personal meaning and ethical awareness. Third, spiritual orientation, where knowledge is framed within a broader purpose that transcends utilitarian outcomes. Through this tripartite process, learning shifts from mere information acquisition to the formation of conscious and ethically grounded individuals.

These implications necessitate a reconfiguration of curriculum design toward a more integrative and non-fragmented structure. Knowledge should not be taught as isolated disciplines, but as an interconnected network of meanings that relate the human being to God, the cosmos, and the self. Within this framework, intellectual intelligence cannot be separated from ethical formation; rather, it serves as the foundation for the development of moral responsibility and social accountability (Rasip, Ramlee, & Ramli, 2025). This position is consistent with studies that emphasise the need for Islamic education to integrate intellectual, spiritual, and moral dimensions simultaneously in order to produce well-balanced individuals (Lety Febriana et al., 2022). Consequently, education becomes not merely a means of producing skilled individuals, but a transformative process that shapes individuals capable of meaningful existence and responsible action.

In this framework, the teacher as *murabbi* plays a central role not only in delivering knowledge but also in modelling the integration of intellect, character, and spirituality. This includes guiding students in aligning intention (*niyyah*), cultivating disciplined thinking (*fikr*), and nurturing continuous awareness (*dhikr*) as part of the learning process. Such an approach provides a practical pathway for translating the epistemological model of *Insān al-Kāmil* into contemporary educational practice without reducing its metaphysical depth. In the domain of leadership, the framework of *Insān al-Kāmil* offers an alternative paradigm that transcends instrumental and managerial models of leadership. Contemporary leadership theories often emphasise efficiency, strategic thinking, communication skills, and emotional intelligence as key determinants of organisational success. While these elements are undeniably important, they remain insufficient without a deeper spiritual foundation that anchors ethical orientation. In Ibn ‘Arabī’s thought, leadership is understood as a cosmic trust (*amānah kawniyyah*) that requires the harmonisation of ‘*aql* and *qalb* within the orbit of *tawhīd* (Ibn ‘Arabī, 2006). A true leader is therefore not only capable of making rational decisions but is also guided by a profound awareness of the Divine that shapes judgement and action.

The concept of *Qutb* in Ibn ‘Arabī’s metaphysical system further illustrates that the highest form of leadership is rooted in spiritual depth and intellectual expansiveness. Leadership, in this sense, is not merely about managing systems or achieving outcomes, but about guiding meaning and interpreting reality as *tajallī* of the Divine. Such a leader embodies *ḥikmah* in action, integrating knowledge with spiritual transformation. This perspective is supported by Mukhtar et al. (2023), who argue that human formation within the Sufi tradition involves a continuous integration between knowledge and inner transformation. As such, the *Insān al-Kāmil* framework offers a compelling alternative to modern leadership models that are predominantly outcome-oriented, by reorienting leadership toward meaning, ethical responsibility, and transcendental awareness.

Insān al-Kāmil as a Response to the Modern Crisis of Meaning

In contemporary society, human beings are increasingly confronted with a profound crisis of meaning, largely driven by the dominance of materialistic and rationalistic paradigms that separate intellect from its spiritual foundation. Technological advancement and scientific progress, while transformative, have not necessarily translated into existential well-being. Instead, they have often contributed to inner emptiness, identity anxiety, and spiritual alienation (Agus, 2025). This condition reveals a fundamental limitation: intelligence that is detached from a meaningful existential orientation fails to address the deepest needs of the human being as a conscious and reflective entity.

Lala (2023) argues that trauma and the fragmentation of meaning in modern life are closely linked to the disconnection of the human being from the transcendent dimension. Within the dominant modern paradigm, intelligence is frequently associated with productivity, competitiveness, and economic efficiency, thereby marginalising questions of purpose and existential orientation. As a result, human life becomes confined within

a utilitarian framework in which value is measured primarily in terms of function and utility, rather than in relation to deeper ontological significance.

In this context, the thought of Ibn ‘Arabī offers a comprehensive framework of restoration through the concept of *Insān al-Kāmil*. The human being is no longer understood merely as a biological or psychological entity, but as *al-kawn al-jāmi‘*, the locus in which the totality of cosmic meaning is gathered and integrated across both outward (*ẓāhir*) and inward (*bāṭin*) dimensions. Junaidi et al. (2024) highlight that Ibn ‘Arabī’s vision transcends the dichotomy between rationality and spirituality, while Hajam and Saumantri (2023) demonstrate that his conception of the human being opens a deeper understanding of human dignity grounded in the relationship between *الإنسان* and the Divine.

Within this framework, intelligence is no longer defined in terms of speed, efficiency, or analytical capacity alone, but as an existential consciousness that enables the human being to recognise his or her position within the structure of existence. Intellectual intelligence becomes an epistemic pathway toward *ma‘rifah*, through which the human being returns to the primordial orientation of *tawḥīd* (Ulum & Hasan 2025). Consequently, the crisis of meaning cannot be reduced to a psychological problem; rather, it must be understood as an epistemological and metaphysical crisis that requires a reconstruction of human consciousness at its deepest level.

The framework of *Insān al-Kāmil* thus offers an integrative alternative that reconciles rationality and spirituality within a unified epistemological system. It calls for a paradigm shift from fragmentation to integration, in which intelligence is understood as the unity of knowledge, value, and Divine awareness. In a modern world marked by existential emptiness, this framework is not merely relevant but necessary, as it reorients human existence toward meaning, purpose, and ontological coherence. Ultimately, *Insān al-Kāmil* emerges not only as a spiritual ideal but as a critical epistemological paradigm capable of addressing the crisis of meaning and restoring the integrity of human consciousness in the contemporary age.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the concept of *Insān al-Kāmil* in the thought of Ibn ‘Arabī offers a comprehensive and integrative epistemological framework of human intelligence that transcends the limitations of modern intelligence theories, which tend to be inherently fragmentary. Based on an analysis of *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*, intelligence is not understood merely as a cognitive function but as a holistic form of consciousness emerging from the integration of *‘aql*, *qalb*, *rūḥ*, and the embodied dimension within a *tawḥīdīc* structure. Within this framework, the intellect is refined through the dynamic interplay of *fikr*, *dhikr*, and *taqwā*, culminating in the emergence of *al-furqān* as an indicator of both intellectual and spiritual maturity. Consequently, human intelligence, in Ibn ‘Arabī’s perspective, functions as an epistemic pathway toward *ma‘rifah*, rather than as a mere instrument for information acquisition.

The findings further reveal that the figures of Prophet Ādam AS and Prophet Muḥammad SAW represent the highest manifestations of epistemic intelligence within the framework of *Insān al-Kāmil*. Ādam AS symbolises the epistemological capacity of the human being through the teaching of *al-Asmā’*, which signifies the ability to comprehend the realities of existence in a comprehensive manner. At its highest level, this epistemic perfection is realised in the person of Prophet Muḥammad SAW through the endowment of *Jawāmi‘ al-Kalim*, reflecting the capacity to encapsulate vast meanings within concise expression. In this sense, intelligence is not merely associated with the possession of knowledge, but with the capacity to bear the trust of meaning and to enact the function of *khilāfah* with awareness and responsibility.

The dialogue with modern theories of intelligence and contemporary neuroscience indicates that, although current discourse increasingly recognises the integrative nature of intelligence, it still fails to provide a sufficient ontological grounding and ultimate purpose. Frameworks such as Intelligence Quotient (IQ), Emotional Quotient (EQ), and Spiritual Quotient (SQ) describe particular dimensions of intelligence without integrating them within a coherent metaphysical orientation. Neuroscience, on the other hand, succeeds in explaining the biological mechanisms underlying consciousness but does not address the teleological question of why intelligence exists.

In this regard, Ibn ‘Arabī’s thought fills this conceptual gap by situating intelligence within the orbit of ma‘rifah and Divine awareness, thereby offering a deeper epistemological and ontological foundation.

Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that this study remains primarily conceptual and interpretive in nature, grounded in textual analysis of Ibn ‘Arabī’s metaphysical writings. As such, it does not provide empirical validation or a standardised instrument for measuring tawhīdic intelligence within contemporary educational or psychological contexts. This limitation reflects the inherent complexity of translating metaphysical constructs into empirical frameworks, particularly when engaging with transcendent dimensions of human consciousness.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the development of a new paradigm in understanding human intelligence, namely intelligence as an integrated tawhīdic system of consciousness. The model of Insān al-Kāmil advanced in this study demonstrates that intellectual, emotional, and spiritual dimensions cannot be treated as separate entities but must be understood as interrelated components within a unified epistemological architecture oriented toward the purpose of human creation. This approach challenges the dominance of reductionist paradigms in modern psychology and opens new avenues for constructing a more inclusive, normative, and tradition-rooted theory of intelligence. At the same time, the study has taken an initial step toward bridging theory and practice by proposing a preliminary pedagogical framework, although further empirical research is required to operationalise and validate this model in real-world educational settings.

In conclusion, Insān al-Kāmil should not be viewed merely as a spiritual ideal, but as a comprehensive epistemological paradigm capable of shaping human beings who are balanced, meaningful, and ethically grounded in navigating the complexities of the modern world. In the context of the contemporary crisis of meaning, this framework offers an alternative vision of intelligence as existential consciousness that reconnects the human being with God, the cosmos, and the self. As such, the concept of Insān al-Kāmil holds significant potential for reconstructing the discourse on human intelligence, shifting it from a performance-oriented paradigm toward one grounded in meaning, purpose, and Divine awareness. Future research is therefore encouraged to explore empirical, pedagogical, and interdisciplinary applications of this framework in order to further substantiate its relevance and applicability within contemporary academic and educational contexts.

REFERENCES

1. Adenan, A., & Nasution, T. (2020). Wahdat al-Wujud dan implikasinya terhadap Insan Kamil (Wahdat al-Wujud and its implications for Insan Kamil). *Al-Hikmah: Jurnal Theosofi dan Peradaban Islam*, 2(1), 107–123.
2. Agus, S. B. (2025). Kesadaran nilai dalam masyarakat modern (Value consciousness in modern society). *Indonesian Research Journal on Education*, 5(3), 725–731.
3. Agustriani, D., & Fauziyah, L. A. (2022). Pengembangan kecerdasan emosi dan spiritual menuju Insan Kamil perspektif Ary Ginanjar Agustian (Development of emotional and spiritual intelligence toward Insan Kamil from Ary Ginanjar Agustian’s perspective). *Happiness Journal of Psychology and Islamic Science*, 6(2), 121–136.
4. Akhyar, Z., Dahlan, D., Lahmi, A., Hakim, R. S., & Julhadi. (2025). Mekanisme kerja otak dan sistem syaraf (Mechanisms of brain and nervous system function). *Journal of Innovative and Creativity (JOECY)*, 5(2), 11143.
5. Apriyani, N., Yuspihani, Y., & Wahyuddin, W. (2025). Hakikat manusia sebagai makhluk pedagogik: Tinjauan filosofis dan implikasinya dalam pendidikan (Human nature as a pedagogical being: A philosophical review and its implications for education). *Learning: Jurnal Inovasi Penelitian Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran*, 5(1), 347–356.
6. Budiyaniti, N., Aziz, A. A., Suhartini, A., Ahmad, N., & Prayoga, A. (2020). Konsep manusia ideal: Tinjauan teologis dan pendidikan Islam (The concept of the ideal human: A theological and Islamic educational perspective). *Al-Tarbawi Al-Haditsah: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 5(2).
7. Devi Umi Solehah. (2021). Konsep pemikiran tasawuf falsafi (ittihad, hulul dan wahdatul wujud) (Concept of philosophical Sufism: Ittihad, hulul and wahdat al-wujud). *Islam & Contemporary Issues*, 1(2), 1–8.

8. Gardner, H. (1993). *Multiple Intelligences: The Theory in Practice*. United States of America: The Basic Book Publisher.
9. Goleman. D. (1995). *Emotional Intelligence: Why it Can Matter More Than IQ*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing.
10. Hadiyanto, A. W. R., & Suyadi, S. (2023). Pembelajaran berbasis diferensiasi otak siswa laki-laki dan perempuan pada kelas khusus perspektif neurosains (Brain-based differentiated learning for male and female students in special classes: A neuroscience perspective). *Edukatif: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan*, 5(5), 1995–2004.
11. Hajam, & Saumantri, T. (2023). Concept of God, humanity and Insan Kamil: Hall al-rumūz wa mafātīh al-kunūz manuscript of Ibn ‘Arabi. *Al-A‘raf: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam dan Filsafat*, 20(1), 145–175.
12. Hidayat, Y. F. (2025). The concept of Wahdat al-Wujud in Ibn ‘Arabi’s thought and its relevance in Sufism. *Journal of Noesantara Islamic Studies*, 1(6), 325–334.
13. Junaidi, A., Waeno, M., & Amal, M. K. (2024). Transcending boundaries of rationality and spirituality: Ibn ‘Arabi’s holistic vision in Islamic legal interpretation. *Teosofi*, 14(2), 1–24.
14. Ibn ‘Arabī. (2006). *Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah* (7 vols.). Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah.
15. Kadri, R., & Rasip, Z. M. (2025). Peranan pengulangan zikir sebagai alat terapi spiritual bagi pemulihan ketagihan (The role of repetitive dhikr as a spiritual therapy tool in addiction recovery). *International Journal of Education, Psychology and Counseling*, 10(58), 313–323.
16. Kurnia Sari Wiwaha. (2024). Urgensi mencapai Insan Kamil di zaman modern (Studi pemikiran Ibn Arabi) (The urgency of achieving Insan Kamil in the modern era: A study of Ibn Arabi’s thought). *Jurnal Penelitian Agama UIN Prof. K.H. Saifuddin Zuhri Purwokerto*, 25(1), 35–52.
17. Lala, I. (2023). Trauma and the emergence of spiritual potential in Ibn ‘Arabi’s metaphysic. *Religions*, 14(3), 407–427.
18. Lety Febriana, Tobroni, Farid, A. A. M., & Tiara Nava Sari. (2022). Implikasi konsep Insan Kamil Ibnu Arabi terhadap pendidikan Islam berkemajuan (Implications of Ibn Arabi’s Insan Kamil concept for progressive Islamic education). *International Conference on Traditional and Religious Studies (C-TIARS)*, 1(1), 134–144.
19. Mardiah, M., Sabda, S., & Cahyadi, A. (2022). Analisis relevansi neurosains dengan pembelajaran dan kesehatan spiritual (Analysis of neuroscience relevance to learning and spiritual health). *Journal on Education*, 4(4), 1489–1498.
20. Mukhtar, M., Hamzah, H., & Mahmud, B. (2023). Sufistic hermeneutics: The construction of Ibn Arabi’s esoteric interpretation on the process of becoming Insan Kamil. *Hermeneutik*, 17(1), 1–15.
21. Maulidia, M., Mahmud, S., Pranajaya, S. A., Agustina, R., & Mahfud, A. (2025). Variety of Human Intelligence: Implications for Education and Self-Development. *Global Education Journal*, 3(2), 117–127.
22. Musdalifah, R. (2020). Pemrosesan dan penyimpanan informasi pada otak anak dalam belajar: Short term and long-term memory (Information processing and storage in children's brains: Short-term and long-term memory). *Al-Ishlah: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 17(2), 217–230.
23. Nawtika, T. A., & Yuslih, M. (2023). Membaca konsep Insan Kamil Ibn ‘Arabi melalui psikologi transpersonalisme (Revisiting Ibn ‘Arabi’s Insan Kamil through transpersonal psychology). *Mazalat: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam*, 5(1), 72–91.
24. Nasruddin, M., & Muiz, A. (2020). Tinjauan kritis neurosains terhadap konsep qalb menurut al-Ghazali (A critical neuroscience review of the concept of qalb according to al-Ghazali). *Syifa al-Qulub*, 4(2), 70–80.
25. Rahman, F. & Sadidi, M. A. (2025). Al-jawānib al-balāghiyah fī al-khuṭab al-nabawīyyah, ‘alā ṣāḥibihā afḍal al-ṣalāh wa-atamm al-salām. *Islamic Studies Research Journal Abḥāth*, 10(38), 1-18.
26. Rasip, Z. M., Ramlee, Y., & Ramli, I. (2025). Ciri-ciri murni agama Islam yang suci: Asas pembangunan madani membentuk masyarakat harmoni (The noble characteristics of Islam: Foundations of madani development in shaping a harmonious society). *Fakulti Pengajian Islam UMS*.
27. Rofi, S., Prasetya, B., & Setiawan, B. A. (2020). Terminologi manusia dan Insan Kamil dalam perspektif al-Qur’an dan Ibn Arabi (Human terminology and Insan Kamil from Qur’anic and Ibn Arabi perspectives). *MUADDIB: Studi Kependidikan dan Keislaman*, 1(2), 215–230.
28. Rozi, S. (2022). The spiritual philosophy of Ibn al-‘Arabi: Between the exoteric and esoteric dimension. *Jurnal Fuaduna*, 6(1), 45–54.

-
29. Safitri, D., Zakaria, Z., & Kahfi, A. (2023). Pendidikan kecerdasan spiritual perspektif al-Ghazali dan relevansinya dengan emotional spiritual quotient (ESQ) (Spiritual intelligence education from al-Ghazali's perspective and its relevance to ESQ). *Tarbawi*, 6(1), 1–15.
 30. Tajudin, A. R., Rasip, Z. M., & Hilmi, E. E. (2025). The difference between Insan Kamil and God in Ibn Arabi's view. *International Journal of Modern Education*, 7(25), 828–846.
 31. Ulum, F. B., & Hasan, M. S. (2025). Jalan pulang ke fitrah: Pesan Sirrul Asrar bagi generasi yang lelah mencari diri (The return to fitrah: The message of Sirrul Asrar for a generation searching for identity). *Hikamia: Jurnal Pemikiran Tasawuf dan Peradaban Islam*, 5(2), 33–57.
 32. Zohar, D., & Marshall, I. (2001). *Spiritual intelligence: The ultimate intelligence*. Bloomsbury Publishing.