

Rethinking Islamic Education in the Digital Age: Toward a Philosophical Framework for Cyber-Based Distance Learning

Meninjau Ulang Pendidikan Islam di Era Digital: Upaya Merumuskan Kerangka Filsafati Pembelajaran Jarak Jauh Berbasis Siber

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Abstract: The shift of education into a digital and distance-based format is not merely a technological transformation, but a profound change in the very nature of learning itself. However, within this epistemic transition, Islamic education has yet to establish a robust philosophical foundation that aligns its core values with the demands and potentials of the digital space. This study aims to construct a philosophical framework for cyber-based Islamic distance education. Employing a hermeneutic-philosophical approach, it integrates textual analysis of Islamic sources with contemporary thought on technology and education. As a library-based study, the data primarily consists of textual analysis and observation of several e-learning platforms used by Islamic cyber universities. Verification is conducted through source and method triangulation. The findings of this research offer a reconceptualization of the learner as a Cyber-student—a seeker of knowledge who acts with a clear purpose, epistemic inclination, and dialogical participation. Within this framework, Islamic distance education can be understood as a space for the cultivation of ethics, purification of the self, and the attainment of wisdom. The study yields design principles that integrate spiritual ethics with approaches inspired by a tawhidic vision, challenging algorithmic reductionism and affirming the potential of the digital space as a sacred epistemological domain.

Keywords: *Philosophy of Islamic education; Distance learning; Cyber-based learning; Tawhīd-based education*

Abstrak: *Transisi model pendidikan ke dalam format digital dan berbasis jarak jauh bukan sekadar transformasi teknologi, melainkan merupakan perubahan mendalam atas hakikat pembelajaran itu sendiri. Namun, dalam perubahan epistemik ini, pendidikan Islam belum memiliki fondasi filosofis yang kokoh untuk menyelaraskan nilai-nilai dasarnya agar sesuai dengan tuntutan serta potensi yang hadir dalam ruang digital. Studi ini bertujuan untuk membangun kerangka filsafati bagi pendidikan Islam jarak jauh berbasis siber. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan filosofis-hermeneutik, studi ini mengintegrasikan analisis tekstual terhadap sumber-sumber Islam dengan pemikiran kontemporer mengenai teknologi dan pendidikan. Sebagai studi berbasis kepustakaan, data utama terdiri atas analisis teks serta pengamatan terhadap beberapa platform e-learning yang digunakan oleh perguruan tinggi Islam berbasis siber. Verifikasi data dilakukan melalui triangulasi sumber dan metode. Temuan dari penelitian ini menawarkan sebuah rekonseptualisasi terhadap posisi pembelajar sebagai Cyber-Student—yakni seorang pencari ilmu yang bertindak dengan arah tujuan yang jelas, memiliki kecenderungan epistemik, serta terlibat secara dialogis. Dalam kerangka ini, pendidikan Islam melalui pembelajaran jarak jauh dapat dipahami sebagai ruang bagi pembinaan etika, penyucian diri, dan pencapaian hikmah. Riset ini menghasilkan prinsip-prinsip desain pemikiran yang bersifat integratif, menggabungkan etika spiritual dengan pendekatan yang diinspirasi oleh visi tauhid, menantang reduksionisme algoritmik, serta menegaskan potensi ruang digital sebagai ranah epistemologis yang sakral.*

Kata-kata kunci: *Filsafat pendidikan Islam; Pembelajaran jarak jauh; Pembelajaran berbasis siber; Pendidikan berbasis tauhid*

Introduction

In recent decades, global education systems have undergone significant transformations driven by the advancement of digital technologies. The emergence of cyber-based distance learning has fundamentally altered the landscape of higher education, shifting traditional notions of space, time, and interaction in the learning process. Within this evolving paradigm, education is no longer confined to physical classrooms or synchronous meetings; rather, it increasingly occurs in digital environments that enable flexibility, accessibility, and learner autonomy (Haleem et al., 2022). This transformation raises profound questions not only about pedagogy but also about the underlying philosophical assumptions of education in the digital age.

For Islamic education, this shift is both a challenge and an opportunity. As a tradition rooted in rich epistemological, ethical, and metaphysical foundations, Islamic education must respond to new modes of knowledge transmission without losing its identity and depth. In particular, the idea of *independent learning*, i.e., emphasizing student (learner) autonomy, self-assessment, freedom, and self-motivation, has emerged as a core value in modern educational discourse (Nguyen & Habók, 2021). While this resonates with some classical Islamic ideals of seeking knowledge (*ṭalab al-ʿilm*) and intellectual self-discipline (Al-Razi et al., 2024). It also demands philosophical reinterpretation in the context of cyber-mediated learning environments.

The urgency of this rethinking is further heightened by a pressing social reality, i.e. many individuals today are increasingly constrained by the demands of modern work life. The growing complexity of professional responsibilities, coupled with heightened expectations of loyalty and availability in the workplace, has significantly reduced the time and energy that working adults can devote to a traditional way of life (Kim et al., 2025). As a result, the demand for accessible, flexible, and high-quality religious education that accommodates these realities is more pressing than ever (Tamim, 2020). The reliance on online learning platforms such as Zoom, Slack, and Coursera, which require internet connectivity, marks a significant shift toward cyber-based education. When learning is carried out in a manner that transcends both space and time, it calls for a deeper engagement with meaning, human interaction, and ethical values at the core of the educational process (Iswadi et al., 2024).

In the Islamic tradition, seeking knowledge is a religious duty that surpasses physical and temporal boundaries. Any method that broadens access to learning, as long as it preserves ethical integrity and intellectual depth, remains in full harmony with the spirit of Islamic values. Cyber-based education offers a flexible and inclusive avenue for individuals who face constraints due to work, family, or geography, allowing them to pursue education without compromising their personal or professional obligations (Zahraini et al., 2025, Wulan et al., 2021). In this respect, such a model is not only permissible but also reflects Islam's enduring capacity to accommodate evolving modes of learning in service of the sacred pursuit of knowledge.

In this context, UIN Siber Syekh Nurjati Cirebon (UINSSC) represents a groundbreaking institutional response. As Indonesia's first Cyber Islamic University in Indonesia to adopt a fully cyber-based model of higher education, it embodies a bold step toward reimagining Islamic education in the digital age. However, such a transformation cannot rely solely on technical infrastructure or platform development. What is equally, if

not more, important is the formulation of a robust philosophical framework that ensures the system aligns with Islamic principles while supporting the ideals of independent learning. Without a clear philosophical foundation, digital Islamic education risks being reduced to a fragmented collection of online activities lacking depth, coherence, or intellectual integrity.

Previous studies on Islamic education in digital contexts have tended to focus on pragmatic concerns i.e. curriculum adaptation, digital tools, student satisfaction, or online pedagogy. While valuable, these studies often overlook the deeper philosophical issues that underlie the shift toward cyber-education, particularly in relation to Islamic intellectual traditions (Diana et al., 2024). On the other hand, existing literature on the philosophy of Islamic education typically addresses issues within the context of conventional face-to-face learning. Very few studies attempt to synthesize Islamic educational philosophy with contemporary theories of independent education and cyber-based distance learning. This research seeks to address that gap by developing an integrative philosophical framework that brings these elements into critical dialogue.

In light of this background, the central research questions of this study are as follows: How can the philosophical framework of Islamic education be enhanced to support the principles of independent education in a cyber-based distance learning environment? What epistemological and axiological challenges arise when adapting Islamic education for digital platforms while preserving its integrity? Finally, how can philosophical analysis contribute to the design and development of cyber-based Islamic education at Cyber Islamic University and similar institutions? These inquiries guide a conceptual and reflective exploration at the intersection of Islamic thought, educational philosophy, and digital pedagogy.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, library-based research design that integrates a philosophical hermeneutic approach with conceptual analysis. The primary objective of the research is to construct a comprehensive philosophical framework for Islamic Education within the context of cyber-based distance learning. Instead of generating empirical generalizations, the study aims to provide theoretical clarification and foundational insights that are normatively anchored in Islamic epistemology and ethically aligned with the exigencies of the digital era.

By employing a hermeneutic approach, this study adopts a reflective mode of interpretation as its primary method. Particular attention is given to elements of significant coherence, conceptual consistency, and the normative dimensions embedded within historical traces. Given that this is an initial study, the use of multiple sources is inevitable, and the theories employed will be refined in a balanced manner throughout the process. The aim is to ensure that the ontological, epistemological, and axiological dimensions are addressed with precision. The role of each finding, as situated within these major branches of philosophy, will serve as an initial reference point for the overall contribution of this paper.

The primary focus of this research, particularly as it approaches the final stage of analysis, is to ensure that the essential nature of distance learning can be meaningfully articulated within the philosophical framework of Islamic education. The research posits that such educational models are not only technologically feasible but also theologically and

ethically congruent, particularly considering Islam's foundational principles regarding accessibility, lifelong learning, and contextual adaptability. These modalities are subjected to philosophical scrutiny as contemporary manifestations of the Islamic imperative to pursue knowledge through any means that uphold justice, equity, and spiritual intent.

While it is not very comprehensive, Islamic Cyber University like UINSSC or SiberMu, will serve as an institutional reference in this research. While the research eschews empirical methodologies, this embedded context enriches the conceptual analysis through grounded relevance and contemporary institutional dynamics. The integrity of this research is not predicated upon statistical generalizability but rather on its internal coherence, conceptual profundity, and normative clarity. Through the articulation of consistent philosophical arguments and the synthesis of classical Islamic thought with modern digital realities, this study contributes meaningfully to the broader discourse surrounding educational reform within the Muslim world.

Result and Discussion

The findings of this study reveal an initial and systemic need to engage with the three principal branches of philosophy: ontology, epistemology, and axiology. The assumptions that emerge from examining these dimensions are brought into dialogue with the conceptualization of formal modern Islamic education. In this sense, the outcomes of the study are rooted in the interplay between fundamental philosophical elements and the practical demands of distance learning models currently adopted by Islamic educational institutions.

At this preliminary stage, the research identifies two distinct models: one practical in form, and the other interpretive, running in parallel with its practical counterpart. From this dual emergence—distilled through the lens of the three philosophical domains—a unified set of principles begins to take shape. These principles then serve as a prescriptive basis, offering a way to regroup key ideas under the broader structure of those philosophical branches. The following diagram provides a visual reference to clarify the core structure of the study's results.

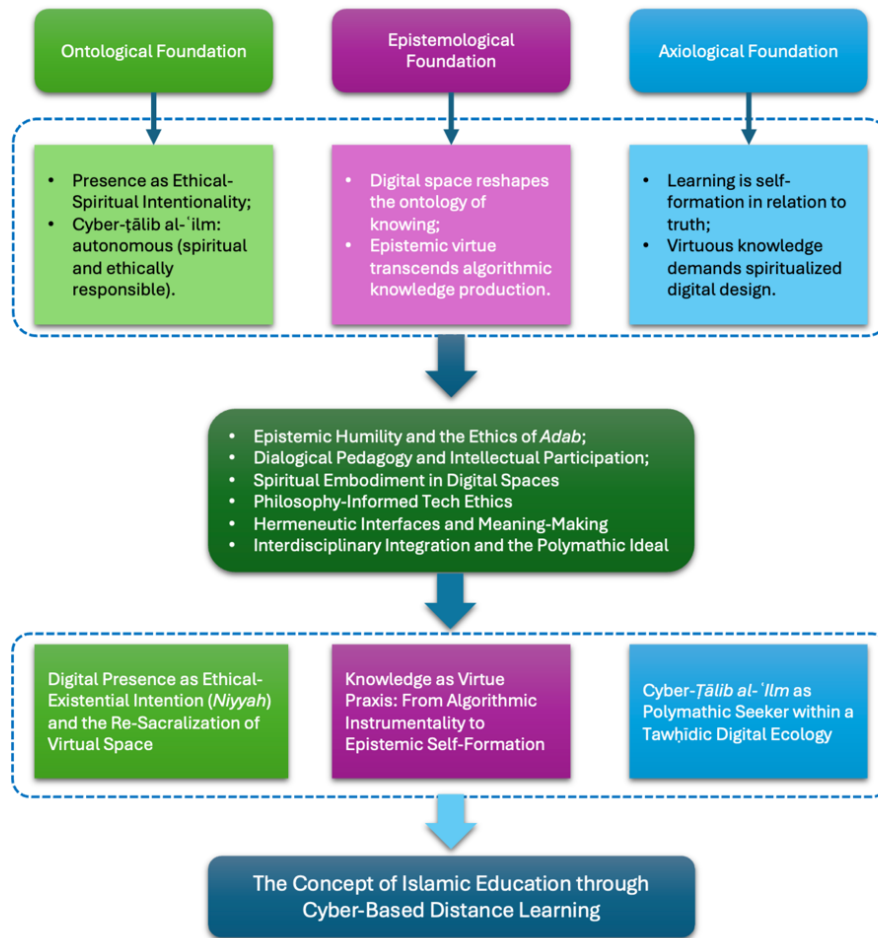


Image 1. Independent Islamic Education through Cyber-Based Distance Learning Framework

Ontological Foundations of Cyber-Based Islamic Education

Revisiting the ontological foundations of cyber-based Islamic education requires a thoughtful inquiry into the very being of Islamic learning in the context of today's increasingly digital environment. Traditional Islamic education is deeply grounded in sacred presence, embodied pedagogy, and the spiritual intimacy between *murabbī* (teacher) and *tālib* (student). Learning, in this sense, is not merely informational. It is an existential engagement with knowledge, ethics, and being itself. Concepts such as *adab*, *barakah*, and *ṣuḥbah* are not peripheral but central, weaving the educational experience into a spiritually conscious and communal fabric (Al-Razi et al., 2024). Yet as Islamic learning moves into virtual domains, a number of important questions surface: What remains of the sanctity of presence when bodies no longer share the same space? How might ontological depth be retained when knowledge is mediated through screens, platforms, and digital systems?

Cyberspace, therefore, ought not to be seen as a neutral or purely technical medium. It constitutes a newly forming ontological field as a distinct mode of being where meanings, intentions, and relationships take on new configurations (Wahid, 2024). For Muslim

learners, cyberspace is more than functional; it becomes a spiritually viable space to seek knowledge, precisely because it can still accommodate *niyyah* (intention), *qiblah fikr* (intellectual orientation), and inner striving (Powers, 2004). As a virtual *ḥalaqah*, it may lack physical synchronicity, yet it opens pathways to new forms of presence, discipline, and shared inquiry that reach beyond conventional boundaries (Heinrich et al., 2025). In this light, cyberspace should not be understood as a departure from tradition, but rather as a rearticulated ontological landscape as one capable of carrying forward the metaphysical vision of Islamic education into a digital horizon.

One of the most critical ontological transitions in cyber-based learning lies in the transformation of educational relationships. The traditional teacher-student interaction rooted in embodiment, gaze, and proximity is now mediated through avatars, text, and audiovisual delay. *Ḥuḍūr* (presence) is no longer solely defined by physical nearness but by conscious attentiveness, or we can say it as sincerity (*ikhhlāṣ*) act, and ethical engagement with learning materials. Similarly, the spatial unity of the classroom is replaced by digital simultaneity and distributed learning environments. While these changes may seem to erode traditional sanctities, they also open ontological possibilities for reimagining presence as participatory, intentional, and spiritually conscious even when mediated through screens.

The ontological status of the text as the central to Islamic educational system has also undergone dramatic evolution. Classical texts (*kutub*) that once circulated within sacred circles and were guarded by scholarly authority are now hyperlinked, searchable, and ubiquitously accessible (Muthohirin, 2025). This dislocation from physical context challenges traditional ideas of *isnād* and interpretive hierarchy but also democratizes access to *‘ilm* (Fekrat et al., 2024), raising questions about *ḥaqīqat al-‘ilm* (the truth of knowledge) in digital multiplicity. In cyberspace, texts may appear disembodied, but they also demand new disciplines of engagement. This mean that cyber-based text reactivating the spirit of islamic learning. As mentioned, the original form of Islamic learning includes *tafaqquh*, *ḥikmah (nazara)*, and *tadabbur*, with a focus on aligning immediacy and intention (Imamuddin et al., 2020).

Within the evolving landscape of cyberspace, the learner assumes a renewed ontological role that of the *ṭālib al-‘ilm* or the seeker of knowledge. This role, unbound by geography, is shaped by intellectual agility, digital fluency, and a sense of spiritual responsibility. The *ṭālib* in this context engages not only with knowledge as content but also with its ethical dimensions: how it is accessed, verified, and applied (Sulaiman et al., 2021). Such a learner is self-guided yet anchored in spiritual intent, moving attentively between *tathabbut* (critical verification) and *ijtihād* (independent reasoning), even as streams of algorithmic information flow incessantly. Their learning is not authenticated by proximity in the traditional sense, but by *niyyah* (intentionality), disciplined effort, and a sustained commitment to inquiry within the bounds of Islamic values.

Viewed through this lens, cyber-based Islamic education is not an anomaly but a valid expression of independent learning rooted in tradition. The imperative to seek knowledge, framed in the Prophetic tradition as a universal and continuous obligation (*fard ‘ayn*), does not prescribe its mode. “Seeking knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim,” declares the well-known hadith (Ibnu Majah, 2008), and it does not specify time, place, or platform. In this regard, digital learning is not a deviation from Islamic pedagogy, but rather its natural

extension, projecting the same ethical aims into new spatial and technological configurations.

At the institutional level, such as within UINSSC and SiberMu as Cyber University, this ontological reorientation is not simply a technical adaptation; it marks a conscious recalibration of *knowledge-pursuing* in light of new human conditions. The digital medium does not compromise the integrity of Islamic education; it reconfigures it to meet the evolving needs of learners who seek flexibility without losing depth or continuity with tradition. Logging into a learning portal, participating in asynchronous discussions, or studying remotely can be re-read as acts of *ṭāʿah* (obedience), *riyāḍah nafsīyyah* (spiritual discipline), and *muṣāḥabah* (companionship in pursuit)—filtered through digital interfaces, yet firmly grounded in classical intention.

The ontological foundation of cyber-based Islamic learning affirms that education in the digital realm is not secondary or diminished. It is a legitimate and meaningful site for intellectual, spiritual, and moral formation. What changes is not the essence, but the vessel. Presence becomes a matter of attention rather than proximity; learning becomes participatory rather than passive; and the learner, even in digital space, remains an active moral agent. In this rearticulated form, cyber-education aligns naturally with the ethos of independent Islamic learning, offering Muslim students an adaptive, authentic path to fulfill their educational and spiritual calling amid the realities of the modern world.

Epistemological Transformation of Meaning and Knowing in the Digital Age

As cyber-education continues to evolve, the key question facing Islamic intellectual traditions is not simply whether they can survive in digital form, but whether they can undergo meaningful transformation without compromising their epistemic foundations. The Islamic triad of epistemology—*bayānī*, *burhānī*, and *ʿirfānī*—functions not only as a typology of knowing (Aisyah Elvina & Amril Mansur, 2025), but as a constellation of ontological assumptions, discursive authority, and modes of subjectivity. Translated into the digital realm, each modality is challenged to renegotiate its metaphysical grounding and epistemic structure. Continuity, in this context, should not be mistaken for mere replication of classical forms, but understood as a dialogical engagement with technological modernity as an ontological condition in its own right.

Within this shifting epistemic terrain, the notion of shared epistemic responsibility takes on renewed significance. Consciousness, understood both as lived interiority and reflective access, shapes how knowledge is received, processed, and lived. From here emerges the idea of epistemic consciousness, where thought, emotion, and symbol are not disjointed but interwoven within belief systems such as religion (Putra et al., 2024). In a digital world dominated by disembodied data and speed, cultivating this consciousness becomes essential to grounding interpretation in ethical deliberation and dialogical integrity. It provides a pathway for Islamic epistemologies to adapt meaningfully without eroding their identity.

Take for instance, the *bayānī* mode, long anchored in the authoritative hierarchy of *naṣṣ* (text) and its interpretive scaffolding like *tafsīr*, *syarḥ*, and *ḥāsiyyah* (Utomo & Mu'anayah, 2020). In digital settings shaped by decentralized authorship and algorithmic filtering (Goldsby & Hanisch, 2023), this hierarchy is exposed to erosion. Yet, rather than lamenting this as a collapse, it may be seen as a moment of interpretive expansion: an

opening for the *umma mu'awwila*, a community of ethical interpreters to reassert its role in navigating sacred meaning. The deeper question, then, is not technological but ontological: how might we preserve *adab* and *taqwā* as conditions for interpretation in a medium saturated by distraction, superficiality, and the commodification of attention?

If *bayānī* grapples with the crisis of textual authority, *burhānī* faces the paradox of hyper-rationality. The cybernetic condition, with its reliance on data analytics, systems modeling, and algorithmic reasoning, appears at first glance to be the ideal habitat for *burhānī* epistemology. However, Islamic *burhān* is not reducible to formal logic or positivist empiricism (Pranajaya et al., 2023). It is embedded in a metaphysical cosmology wherein reason is not autonomous but *muqayyad*—disciplined by divine teleology and ethical intentionality. Therefore, the assimilation of *burhānī* into digital education must resist the instrumentalization of reason as mere computational utility. Instead, it must recover its role as a means toward *ma'rifah*, an uncovering of the moral structure of reality. Pedagogical technologies must be oriented toward dialogical reasoning (*munāqasha*), dialectical contestation (*jadal*), and ethical discernment (*tamayyuz*), not just information processing.

The *'irfānī* mode, perhaps the most elusive yet ontologically and epistemologically profound, presents both the most significant obstacle and the richest potential for reimagining Islamic pedagogy in digital space. Traditional *'irfānī* knowledge is non-discursive, experiential, and anchored in spiritual praxis (*riyāḍah nafsīyyah*) that resists codification (Nurhadi et al., 2025). Yet recent developments in immersive technology, such as virtual reality and embodied interaction, raise the speculative possibility of pedagogies that approximate the affective and symbolic dimensions of *'irfānī* experience. This is not to suggest a vulgar translation of spiritual states into digital stimuli, but rather a *phenomenological resonance*—a mediated aesthetic that invites inwardness, stillness, and self-presence. However, such a possibility is only realizable if accompanied by an ethics of design that prioritizes silence over speed, depth over data, and presence over performativity.

At the core of these modality-specific challenges lies a profound epistemological rupture, characterized by a dislocation of authority. In classical Islam, authority was inextricably linked to *sanad*, character, and embodied presence (Basri & Abdullah, 2024). In contrast, digital education often bestows authority based on visibility, popularity, and technical proficiency. This reversal necessitates a re-theorization of *'ilm*, viewing it not merely as content to be consumed but as a journey to be undertaken (*ṭarīqah al-ta'allum*) (Judijanto & Halim, 2024), which requires an epistemic humility that no algorithm can replicate. Therefore, the authority of the *'ālim* must be redefined not in opposition to the digital realm, but through a reaffirmation of epistemic virtues that transcend digital platforms and resonate within the soul.

Moreover, the hypertextual and non-linear structure of digital learning invites a return to *ijtihād*, not merely as a juridical tool, but as an epistemic ethos. The Islamic tradition has always affirmed plurality within unity (*ikhtilāf*) as a mercy, and digital platforms can serve as arenas for collective reasoning, transdisciplinary collaboration, and dialogical renewal (Maqbool Hassan, 2024). At certain times, it is necessary to reach a mutual agreement or establish a convention during this adjustment process. In this context, *shura* transcends political theory and becomes a pedagogical method, serving as a model

for co-inquiry where students and teachers engage in mutual exploration under the guidance of shared *adab*.

Similarly, *tahqīq* as a term often rendered narrowly as textual verification must be retrieved in its richer sense as the pursuit of ontological truth through sustained inquiry (Casewit, 2020). In a world saturated with unverified content, deepfake texts, and curated realities, *tahqīq* becomes an act of resistance: a philosophical commitment to discernment (*tamayyuz*), depth, and truthfulness. Digital tools can aid in this process—through access to manuscripts, comparative lexicons, and semantic analysis—but they cannot substitute for the existential *tahqīq* that requires the whole self—reason, heart, and spirit.

When situated within the evolving discourse of Indonesian education, the integration of *Kurikulum Merdeka* as the most current pedagogical framework with Islamic epistemology and independent learning initiatives reveals a resonance deeper than surface alignment (Astuti et al., 2024). Though often associated with modern pedagogical reforms, the concept of *merdeka belajar* finds profound philosophical continuity with classical Islamic notions such as *ijtihād* (independent reasoning), *tafakkur* (critical reflection), and *ta‘ammul* (contemplative engagement). From an Islamic vantage point, educational independence is not a celebration of epistemic isolation, but the cultivation of responsibility within autonomy—an autonomy tethered to divine accountability and ethical intention. The Islamic tradition, after all, does not envision the learner as a passive *muqallid*, but as a *mujtahid* in their own right; the one who engages knowledge with discernment, reverence, and intellectual responsibility.

Axiological Implications: Ethics, Purpose, and Educational Independence

The ontological and epistemological reflections previously discussed prepare the ground for a deeper engagement with the axiological dimension of Islamic education in digital times. While contemporary rhetoric often frames independent learning as a means of breaking from institutional or structural limits, such a view risks reducing education to a procedural or utilitarian pursuit. Yet, within the Islamic philosophical tradition, learning cannot be fully understood apart from its ontological and ethical roots. Education is not merely a transaction of information, but a metaphysical encounter that shapes the self in relation to truth, being, and others.

From this vantage point, any meaningful effort to assess the ethical and purposive foundations of Islamic education in the digital era must begin with a clear premise: that learning is a moral and spiritual act. Within the Islamic intellectual heritage, the *maqāṣid al-tarbiyah al-islāmiyyah* are not merely administrative objectives, but existential orientations framing human purpose as both *‘abd* (devoted servant) and *khalīfah* (responsible steward). Concepts like *ikhhlās* (sincerity), *‘adl* (justice), and *maṣlaḥah* (communal benefit) are not static ideals, but living principles that breathe ethical depth into the act of learning (Rahayu, 2017). These values ensure that the educational journey is not only about knowledge acquisition but about cultivating the moral and metaphysical responsibilities that accompany it—toward the self, the community, and ultimately, toward God.

Ikhhlās, or sincerity, should be reinterpreted not only as a moral virtue but also as a phenomenological condition of intentionality (*niyyah*), which grounds human actions in the vertical dimension of transcendence. Martin Heidegger’s concept of authenticity (*Eigentlichkeit*) presents a meaningful parallel, as it underscores the importance of

reclaiming human agency from the anonymous flow of *das Man* (the ‘they’ of impersonal modernity). This is akin to how *ikhhlāṣ* anchors learning within a divine purpose, countering the dominance of algorithmic performativity (Agu, 2023)(Sutrisno, 2025). In cyber-based education, the loss of immediacy and embodied presence leads to an ontological deficit, where learners risk becoming mere functionaries rather than seekers of knowledge. The Islamic imperative of *ikhhlāṣ* addresses this by urging a return to *niyyah* as a site of epistemic intentionality, envisioning learning not as a mere spectacle or act of consumption, but as a form of worship (*ta’abbud*).

‘*Adl*, or justice, in the digital realm, poses significant questions about the distribution of epistemic power. If knowledge transcends mere content and embodies a mode of being, then justice must address the structure of access, participation, and interpretive legitimacy. In this context, insights from contemporary critical theory, especially those of thinkers like Nancy Fraser and Miranda Fricker, can be effectively compared with the Islamic concept of ‘*adl*. Fraser’s notion of “parity of participation” and Fricker’s idea of “epistemic injustice” align harmoniously with the Islamic perspective of ‘*adl*, which emphasizes the equitable distribution of not only material resources but also interpretive and discursive agency (Hargreaves et al., 2021)(Babu et al., 2025). Without these considerations, cyber-based distance learning risks becoming a means of digital epistemic colonization, where technology claims neutrality while entrenching specific hegemonies. Therefore, the Islamic principle of ‘*adl* must be realized through intentional design: platforms should not only provide content but also democratize the process of meaning-making.

Maṣlaḥah, or public benefit, is frequently misunderstood as mere utilitarian convenience. However, in classical Islamic philosophy, particularly in the works of al-Ghazālī and later al-Shāṭibī, *maṣlaḥah* is grounded in a holistic vision of human flourishing (*falāḥ*) that encompasses both material and spiritual aspects (Mafiah & Hidayati, 2023)(Zuhdi & Abdun Nasir, 2024). In a cyber learning environment, the personalization of educational paths can be seen as a manifestation of *maṣlaḥah*, allowing students the autonomy to choose what they learn, when, and how. Nonetheless, this personalization warrants critical scrutiny: does it foster a fragmentation of knowledge and self, or does it facilitate ethical self-realization and coherent intellectual development? In the vein of Aristotle’s eudaimonia, for example, and Ibn Miskawayh’s *tahzīb al-akhhlāq*, Islamic pedagogy should evaluate educational tools not solely on their efficiency but also on their potential to cultivate virtue, social consciousness, and a commitment to truth (Ayob et al., 2020).

Moreover, the rise of spiritual well-being and moral accountability as essential components in cyber education requires ontological grounding. It is not enough to add “ethics” as an appendage to technological systems. Rather, the very *being* of learning must be spiritualized. This recalls the Islamic concept of *ta’dīb* as formulated by Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas: education is not merely the transmission of knowledge but the instillation of adab, or the right action in relation to self, society, and God (Ahmed, 2018). In the digital context, where anonymity, abstraction, and disembodiment dominate, the challenge is to re-insert moral gravity and ontological presence into interaction. Education must be reconfigured as *presence to truth*, not mere access to information.

We can say that the principle of Islamic Education with Cyber-Based Distance Learning, expressed in modern Indonesian terms as *merdeka belajar* finds deep roots in

Islamic intellectual history. In the writings of al-Fārābī, independency is not the abandonment of tradition but the ascent toward rational and spiritual perfection (Suleiman Mohammed Hussein Boayo, 2022). Technology, in this framework, becomes a double-edged medium. It can free the learner from spatio-temporal confines, but also entrap the learner in endless distraction and simulacra (to borrow from Baudrillard). The goal, then, is not just free learning, but *freedom through learning* as a condition where the soul transcends ignorance (*jahl murakkab*), not only cognitively but existentially. Cyber-education should serve as a metaphysical scaffold toward this emancipation, enabling learners to encounter not only diverse knowledge but the internal order of being that gives learning its ultimate purpose.

Philosophical Design Principles for Cyber-Based Islamic Education

The philosophical reflections traced in the previous sections, on the ontological nature of the human being, the epistemic forms of Islamic knowledge, and the axiological depth of *maqāṣid al-tarbiyah* collectively point toward an urgent need, i.e., the development of cyber-based Islamic education must be rooted in a coherent and rigorous philosophical foundation. Without such anchoring, there is a genuine risk that education, particularly in its digital manifestations, becomes fragmented, overly mechanistic, or detached from the deeper ethical and metaphysical orientations that Islamic tradition holds central.

In an age increasingly mediated by digital infrastructures and algorithmic systems, the design of Islamic educational frameworks, especially those operating within cyber-based or cloud-mediated spaces, must go beyond technical adaptation. It must reflect a deeper philosophical necessity: aligning the educational experience with the Islamic understanding of human ontology, the structure of knowledge, and the moral aspirations encoded in the faith tradition.

From an ontological standpoint, the human being (*al-insān*) is not understood in Islam as a passive recipient of data, nor as a cognitive machine responding to inputs. Rather, the Qur'anic view of the human as both *'abd* (devoted servant) and *khalīfah* (responsible steward) presents a view of the self as morally accountable, spiritually aware, and teleologically oriented—created with purpose (*maqṣad*) and endowed with *'aql* (reason). This vision, however, often stands in contrast to how digital learning environments depict the learner: disembodied, distracted, and data-driven. A sound philosophical design, therefore, must reintroduce the elements of *ḥuḍūr* (presence), *tafakkur* (deep reflection), and *tazkiyah* (self-purification) into the heart of the educational encounter, ensuring that learning remains a spiritually meaningful and existentially transformative process.

Epistemologically, the Islamic tradition recognizes three interwoven paths of knowing: *bayānī* (text-based and linguistic), *burhānī* (rational-deductive), and *'irfānī* (intuitive-experiential) (Utomo & Mu'anayah, 2020). These are not simply academic categories; they are living modalities that inform how one relates to truth (*ḥaqq*), engages with complexity, and discerns meaning. In many digital pedagogical contexts, however, there is a tendency to privilege the *burhānī* mode, emphasizing logic, metrics, and technical rationality while marginalizing the more nuanced and deeply human dimensions of *bayānī* interpretation and *'irfānī* insight. A robust educational design should aim to cultivate epistemic balance by integrating dialogical hermeneutics, contemplative pedagogies, and ethical reasoning rooted in lived faith. Moments of stillness, digital retreats, or reflective

recitations could serve as counterpoints to algorithmic acceleration, restoring rhythm and depth to the act of knowing.

From the axiological dimension, Islamic education has always been oriented toward human flourishing, not merely in a utilitarian sense, but toward the formation of the *insān kāmil*, the ethically whole and spiritually mature individual (Khaidir & Suud, 2020). Values such as *ikhhlās* (sincerity), *‘adl* (justice), and *maṣlaḥah* (communal benefit) are not added at the end of an educational design as moral decoration; they must be embedded from the outset. *Ikhhlās* points to a learning process that invites sincerity of intention and inner transformation. *‘Adl* calls for fairness, which is not only in access and participation, but in how knowledge is distributed and data is handled. *Maṣlaḥah* ensures that educational models serve the wider good, fostering social consciousness and ethical interdependence. This perspective resonates with Paulo Freire’s vision of education as an emancipatory practice (Rodríguez & Fortunato, 2025), not a mechanism of indoctrination. And in many ways, this vision finds deep harmony with the ethical sensibilities that Islamic educational philosophy has always upheld.

Building upon the ontological, epistemological, and axiological foundations previously outlined, it becomes increasingly evident that a coherent philosophical orientation is essential in shaping the trajectory of cyber-based Islamic education. This necessity is not merely a response to the challenges and affordances of digital technology, but stems from a more profound imperative: to reconfigure the learning process as an ethically anchored, spiritually mindful, and holistically integrated journey. In this light, philosophy does not function as an abstract backdrop but as an active safeguard against the instrumentalization of education—offering a conceptual framework that preserves fidelity to tradition while remaining attentive to the contours of contemporary digital realities. From this synthesis, several key philosophical principles emerge as normative reference points for cultivating independent and integrated models of cyber-education.

1. Epistemic Humility and the Ethics of *Adab*

In an era where the vast availability of information often fosters the illusion of mastery, the cultivation of epistemic humility becomes increasingly urgent. Grounded in the Islamic ethic of *adab*, this principle calls for a respectful and reflective posture toward knowledge, one that acknowledges its provisional character, contextual layers, and divine origin. Epistemic humility encourages learners not to approach knowledge as a possession to be claimed, but as a trust (*amānah*) to be honored. In doing so, it nurtures discernment, reverence for sources and teachers, and resistance to the hyper-individualistic tendencies amplified by algorithmic systems of knowledge curation. This ethic reframes the act of learning as one of stewardship rather than accumulation, returning the learner to a space of reverence, relationality, and responsibility.

2. Dialogical Pedagogy and Intellectual Participation

Rather than replicating one-way, transmissionist models of instruction, cyber-based Islamic education should center a dialogical pedagogy, which draws from the classical Islamic principle of consultative engagement. While resonating with contemporary educational insights grounded in participatory learning. This approach calls for the creation of digital environments that foster inquiry, reflection, and collaborative meaning-making. Learning in this paradigm is no longer a solitary or passive endeavor but becomes a shared pursuit, where the act of understanding unfolds through dialogue,

mutual presence, and intellectual companionship. Such a model affirms the learner's agency while grounding it within a broader theological and communal ethic that mirroring the prophetic mode of engagement, where knowledge was cultivated through conversation, encounter, and collective discernment (Mundzir, 2022).

3. Spiritual Embodiment in Digital Spaces

One of the subtle yet significant risks of cyber-based learning lies in the potential disjunction between intellectual engagement and spiritual presence (Prestridge et al., 2024). When learning is reduced to screen-based cognition, the soul's participatory presence is often neglected. Against this trend, the principle of spiritual embodiment invites a reintegration of the self (body, soul, and intellect) into the heart of the educational experience. This may take the form of contemplative prompts woven into digital modules, sacred pauses for *zikr* (remembrance), or the reintroduction of ritualized learning moments that root the virtual within the sacred. Rather than treating disembodiment as an unavoidable condition of digital learning, this principle calls for the intentional restoration of presence, devotion, and inner stillness within the learner's journey.

4. Philosophy-Informed Tech Ethics

Unlike mainstream ed-tech models that prioritize metrics, automation, and scalability, an Islamic cyber-education paradigm must be grounded in a technological ethics shaped by theology and philosophy. Here, digital platforms, algorithms, and data infrastructures are not neutral by default; they are imbued with values, assumptions, and cultural direction. If education is to remain faithful to its moral telos, then such technologies must be critically examined and designed around the vision of the human being as *mukallaf* or a morally accountable agent before God. This approach requires educational designers, policy-makers, and technologists to interrogate the ethical content of the tools they build and use, ensuring alignment with the formative, purposeful, and transcendent aims of Islamic pedagogy.

5. Hermeneutic Interfaces and Meaning-Making

In an ecosystem often dominated by fragmented attention and shallow interaction, the call for hermeneutic interfaces becomes all the more urgent. Drawing inspiration from both Gadamer's dialogical hermeneutics and the Islamic tradition of *ta'wīl* (interpretive unfolding), this principle argues for digital designs that enable multi-layered reflection and situated understanding (Romele et al., 2020). Learning environments should not merely deliver content but open interpretive pathways, as spaces where students are invited into thoughtful engagement, symbolic reasoning, and contextual meaning-making. Passive reception must give way to dialogical presence, where technology becomes a medium for intellectual and spiritual depth.

6. Interdisciplinary Integration and the Polymathic Ideal

Cyber-based Islamic education cannot afford to remain compartmentalized within narrowly defined disciplines. Echoing the integrative legacy of classical Muslim polymaths, the curriculum must invite a synthesis that embraces Islamic sciences, digital ethics, environmental sensibilities, media literacy, and the philosophy of technology as mutually enriching domains. This epistemic integration reflects the Qur'anic ideal of *'ilm* and *hikmah* (knowledge and wisdom) in harmony and equips learners not only with

conceptual clarity but with the ethical adaptability needed to inhabit an increasingly complex and morally contested world.

Conclusion

In light of the philosophical explorations presented throughout this study—rooted in ontological, epistemological, and axiological reflection—it becomes clear that cyber-based Islamic education must be grounded in a vision that is both spiritually centered and philosophically coherent. Digital learning environments, when left to purely functional or algorithmic logic, risk diminishing the deeper purpose of education as a transformative, ethical journey. Yet, when shaped by intentionality (*niyyah*), presence (*ḥuḍūr*), and ethical engagement, cyberspace can become a meaningful locus for *tazkiyah* and *muḥāsabah*. In such a reframed paradigm, digital education is no longer a sterile conduit of information transfer but a site for divine proximity, where learning becomes a sacred act, enriched by *barakah* and directed toward inward growth.

This vision calls for a renewed conception of the learner as a *Cyber-Ṭālib al-ʿIlm*—one who inhabits digital space not as a fragmented user but as a spiritually-aware seeker, guided by the principle of *tawḥīd*. Within this framework, knowledge is pursued not merely as information but as *ḥikmah*—wisdom that shapes character, deepens moral consciousness, and aligns intellect with revelation. A truly Islamic model of cyber-education must therefore foster environments that encourage contemplative depth, dialogical learning, and the cultivation of *adab*. The ethical imperative extends beyond pedagogy into the design of technology itself, which should serve the soul's ascent rather than distract from it. In this way, cyber-based Islamic education does not merely adapt to the digital age. It reclaims it, reshaping it into a spiritually resonant landscape that honors the unity of reason, ethics, and transcendence.

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