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Reconstructing Islamic Theology Beyond Classical Exegesis: Muhammad Shahrur's Hermeneutical Reconfiguration of Islam and Iman

Moh. Nor Ichwan[*]

Department of Quranic Studies, Faculty of Ushuluddin and Humanity, Universitas Islam Negeri Walisongo, Semarang, Indonesia

* Corresponding author: nor_ichwan@walisongo.ac.id

Abstract: This article examines Muhammad Shahrur's contemporary Qur'anic hermeneutics as an attempt to reconstruct Islamic theology beyond the framework of classical interpretation. The analysis unit of this research focuses on the reinterpretation of the concepts of Islam and faith, and on the foundation of Islamic normativity, in Shahrur's main work, especially *al-Islam wa al-Iman: Mandhumah al-Qiyam*. This study aims to analyze how Shahrur's hermeneutic method challenges traditional theological assumptions and offers an alternative understanding of religious obligations and their relationship with human nature. This research uses a qualitative approach grounded in a literature review, with content and comparative analyses of Qur'anic texts and classical interpretations. The study's findings show that the conceptual separation between Islam and faith, and the reconstruction of the pillars of Islam proposed by Shahrur, constitute significant hermeneutical innovations that redefine Islamic normativity in a more inclusive and contextual manner. This article contributes to the development of contemporary Islamic thought by offering a critical framework for reinterpreting theological concepts in the face of the epistemological and social challenges of the modern world.

Keywords: Muhammad Shahrur; Contemporary Qur'anic Hermeneutics; Islam and Faith; Islamic Theology; Islamic Normativity

1. Introduction

Social, political, and intellectual developments in the contemporary Muslim world point to the growing tension between classical religious understanding and the ever-changing modern reality. Globalization, advances in science and technology, religious pluralism, and human rights demands present serious challenges to textual, legalistic, and ahistorical models of Islamic interpretation. In many contexts, classical interpretations are considered incapable of answering new problems such as the relationship between religion and the state, religious inclusivity, and humanitarian ethics across religious identities. This condition has led to the emergence of various contemporary Qur'anic hermeneutic approaches that seek to bridge the text of revelation with the modern social context (Saeed, 2006). In the midst of these dynamics, Muhammad Shahrur's thought occupies an important position because it offers a reading of the Qur'an based on rationality, linguistics, and empiricism, and explicitly challenges the established foundations of normative Islamic theology. Shahrur's ideas,

especially regarding the separation of Islam from faith and the reconstruction of its pillars, have become a relevant discourse in the context of the crisis of religious authority and the search for a more inclusive and contextual model of religiosity in the modern era.

Academic studies of contemporary Islamic hermeneutics have evolved significantly over the past few decades. A number of scholars, such as Fazlur Rahman (1982), Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd (2006), Mohammed Arkoun (2003), and Abdullah Saeed (2006), have developed contextual and historical approaches to understanding the Qur'an. In particular, Muhammad Shahrur's thought has been studied by several researchers who have highlighted the methodological, linguistic, and theological aspects of the controversy in his work (Hallaq, 1997; Saeed, 2014). However, most research tends to focus either on general criticism of Shahrur's approach or on his linguistic methodology. Studies that systematically address the reconstruction of Shahrur's Islamic theology—especially the conceptual separation between Islam and faith and its implications for the redefinition of the pillars of Islam—are still relatively limited. In addition, there has been little research that situates Shahrur's ideas within the framework of Islamic normativity and human nature as an alternative theological basis. This research gap opens the way for a more in-depth and analytical study of the theological dimension of Shahrur's thought.

Departing from these social facts and literary emptiness, this article aims to fill the research gap by critically analyzing the hermeneutics of Muhammad Shahrur's Qur'an in the context of the reconstruction of contemporary Islamic theology. The main focus of this research is the reinterpretation of the concepts of Islam, faith, and the pillars of Islam as developed by Shahrur in *al-Islam wa al-Iman: Mandhumah al-Qiyam*. This research not only seeks to describe Shahrur's ideas but also examines the theological and normative implications of his hermeneutic approach to the understanding of Islam as a religion of fitrah. Using a qualitative literature study approach and comparative content analysis, this article compares Shahrur's thought with classical interpretations and modern Islamic hermeneutic discourses. The end goal is to show that Shahrur's hermeneutics can be read as a serious attempt to reformulate the fundamentals of Islamic theology to be more responsive to the epistemological and social challenges of the modern world, without completely detaching itself from the Qur'an as the primary normative source.

This article argues that Muhammad Shahrur's hermeneutics represents a project of systematic and radical reconstruction of Islamic theology, particularly through the conceptual separation of Islam and faith and the redefinition of the values-based pillars of Islam (qiyam), rather than mere ritual. The main hypothesis of this study is that Shahrur's thought is not only deconstructive of the classical interpretive tradition but also offers a more inclusive, rational, and harmonious Islamic normative framework. By placing faith in Allah, the Last Day, and righteous deeds at the core of Islam, Shahrur shifted Islamic theology's orientation from ritual legalism to universal humanitarian ethics. This approach, although controversial, opens up new spaces for dialogue in contemporary Islamic studies regarding the relationship between revelation, reason, and social reality. Thus, this article confirms that Shahrur's thought deserves to be considered as one of the important contributions to the development of Qur'anic hermeneutics and Islamic theology in the modern era.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Hermeneutics and Interpretation of the Contemporary Qur'an

Hermeneutics in contemporary Qur'an studies is defined as an interpretive approach that places the text of revelation in a dialogical relationship with the historical, social, and epistemological context of its readers (Saeed, 2006; Saeed, 2014). Unlike classical interpretations that tend to emphasize literal, grammatical, and narrated meaning, hermeneutics views the meaning of the Qur'an as not completely closed to the context of early revelation but open to re-understanding as times change (Rahman, 1982). In this framework, hermeneutics is not intended to relativize revelation, but to explain how sacred texts remain relevant when confronted with modern social problems such as religious pluralism, freedom of belief, and social justice (Saeed, 2014). Hermeneutics also emphasizes the historical distance between the text and the reader, so that the interpretive process always involves the interpreter's horizon of understanding (Arkoun, 2003). Thus, contemporary Qur'anic hermeneutics serves as an epistemological paradigm that reformulates the relationship between texts, meanings, and social realities, shifting interpretation from mere normative legalism to an ethical and contextual orientation.

In the academic literature, contemporary Qur'anic hermeneutics can be categorized into several main approaches. First, a historical-contextual approach that emphasizes the moral objectives of the Qur'an through the analysis of the context of revelation and its application in the modern context, as developed by Fazlur Rahman through the *double movement method* (Rahman, 1982). Second, a linguistic-semantic approach that focuses on the analysis of the structure of the Qur'anic language, the relationship between terms' meanings, and the text's internal semantic system, which is the main characteristic of Muhammad Shahrur's thought (Saeed, 2006). Third, a critical hermeneutic approach that views interpretation as a product of historical construction and power relations, as developed by Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd and Mohammed Arkoun (Abu Zayd, 2006; Arkoun, 2003). This categorization shows that the hermeneutics of the Qur'an are not monolithic, but methodologically plural. Although they differ in approach, the three share a critique of textualist interpretations and a view of the Qur'an as a living, contextual normative source (Saeed, 2014). This classification is important for mapping Shahrur's academic position more precisely within the contemporary interpretive landscape.

The application of contemporary Qur'anic hermeneutics is evident in various empirical and thematic studies that address modern social issues. Safa, Ichwan, and Salisu (2025), for example, show that the hermeneutic approach in the interpretation of Al-Manar and the thought of Fazlur Rahman allows for the reinterpretation of religious freedom verses by emphasizing the principles of freedom of conscience and universal ethics, rather than mere obedience to formal law (Prisilia et al., 2025). Another study by Muhammad Rum (2025) confirms that hermeneutics serves as an epistemological bridge between classical interpretation and the demands of modern society, particularly in responding to religious pluralism and social change. These findings show that hermeneutics is not just a theoretical approach but also has practical implications for shaping a more inclusive and adaptive normative understanding of Islam. Therefore, contemporary Qur'anic hermeneutics plays an important role in expanding the relevance of interpretation amid global social

and intellectual dynamics, while providing a methodological foundation for Shahrur's thought in reconstructing the concepts of Islam and faith.

2.2. Hermeneutic Thought of Contemporary Figures and Scientific Challenges

The hermeneutic thought of contemporary Islamic figures developed in response to the limitations of traditional interpretive methodologies, which were considered inadequate to address modern social, political, and epistemological challenges. Figures such as Fazlur Rahman, Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, and Mohammed Arkoun generally agree that the reading of the Qur'an should go beyond a literal, legalistic approach by situating the text of revelation within a broader historical, social, and linguistic context (Saeed, 2014). Fazlur Rahman defines Qur'anic hermeneutics as an attempt to capture the universal moral principles underlying the text through historical and ethical analysis, rather than simply reproducing the text's past meaning (Rahman, 1982). Meanwhile, Abu Zayd views the Qur'an as a "cultural text" that interacts with social and political realities, so that interpretation is always historical and open to change (Abu Zayd, 2006). Arkoun, on the other hand, emphasizes that the Qur'an must be understood as a discursive phenomenon that lives in history, rather than merely as a normative legal document (Arkoun, 2003). In general, the hermeneutic thinking of these figures departs from the assumption that the meaning of the Qur'an is not singular and final, but is continuously produced through the interaction among the text, context, and reader.

In the academic literature, the hermeneutic approach of contemporary Islamic figures can be categorized into several mainstreams. First, the historical-ethical approach developed by Fazlur Rahman, known through the *double movement method*. This approach emphasizes the importance of understanding the social context of revelation to extract universal moral principles applicable in modern contexts (Rahman, 1982). Second, the linguistic-contextual approach developed by Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, which places language as a historical medium of meaning-forming, so that the text of the Qur'an is understood as a product of the interaction between revelation and early Arab social reality (AbdurRozaq et al., 2025). Third, the critical multidisciplinary approach developed by Mohammed Arkoun, which combines structural, anthropological, and semiotic analysis to unravel the ideological layers of the Islamic interpretive tradition (Putra & Salsabilla, 2024). This categorization shows that contemporary Islamic hermeneutics is plural and non-monolithic, although all of these approaches share a critique of the absolutism of meaning and the authority of classical interpretation (Saeed, 2014). This mapping is important for understanding the intellectual landscape in which Muhammad Shahrur's thought operates and contributes.

Despite making significant contributions to the theological reflection of modern Islam, the hermeneutic approaches of contemporary figures face serious scientific challenges, especially from traditional academics and scholars. The main criticism concerns the authenticity of revelation and the stability of meaning, where hermeneutics is seen as potentially relativizing sacred texts by giving undue weight to human context and the interpreter's subjectivity (Putra & Salsabilla, 2024). These concerns rest on the assumption that the dominance of historical context can obscure the normative meaning of the Qur'an, a meaning firmly accepted in Islamic tradition. In addition, hermeneutic approaches are often accused of opening the door to epistemological relativism that threatens the unity of Islamic theological doctrine (AbdurRozaq et al., 2025). However, a number of scholars argue that such criticism often overlooks the fact that hermeneutics does not aim to negate revelation but rather provides a more reflective and responsible methodological framework for reading sacred

texts (Saeed, 2014). Thus, the challenge to hermeneutics actually emphasizes its relevance as an arena for critical dialogue between tradition and modernity, as well as as an epistemological foundation for the reconstruction of contemporary Islamic theology.

2.3. Hermeneutic Relevance to Islamic Theology and the Concept of Islam–Faith

Contemporary hermeneutics acquires significant theological significance when it is used to revisit the basic structure of Islamic theology, particularly in understanding the relationship between Islam and faith, two concepts often treated in overlap in the classical theological tradition. In the hermeneutic approach, theology is no longer understood solely as a static doctrinal system, but as a construction of meaning that continues to interact with the historical and social context of the ummah (Saeed, 2014). Muhammad Shahrur's thought falls within this horizon by grounding theology in the values of the Qur'an (mandhūmah al-qiyam), not merely ritual formulation or normative dogma. Although studies of Shahrur in the reputable journal Scopus are still relatively limited, research on contemporary Islamic hermeneutics shows that methodological reinterpretation of sacred texts can change how theological concepts are understood and classified (Saeed, 2006). Thus, hermeneutics serves as an epistemological tool that allows the reconstruction of Islamic theology from a normative-legal orientation to an ethical and value orientation, which is relevant to the reality of modern Muslims.

Furthermore, contemporary hermeneutic discourse asserts that theological normativity is not entirely determined by the formal structure of doctrine, but by historically and socially responsible interpretive processes (AbdurRozaq et al., 2025). Within this framework, the concept of faith is not reduced to a mere abstract theological affirmation, but rather is understood as an existential and ethical attitude formed through human interaction with the values of revelation. This approach aligns with Shahrur's thinking, which distinguishes between Islam as an outward social-historical practice and faith as an inner, personal, and dynamic belief. This conceptual separation can only be understood in its entirety through a hermeneutic reading that does not freeze the text's meaning but opens up space for articulating the universal values of the Qur'an in the context of modern life (Saeed, 2014). Thus, hermeneutics allows for a more flexible and inclusive understanding of faith while avoiding reducing it to mere formal adherence to religious symbols.

In a broader context, the relevance of hermeneutics to Islamic theology is also evident in its ability to bridge the text of revelation with contemporary social challenges such as religious pluralism, human rights, and social justice. A number of studies have shown that the hermeneutic approach opens up space for more dialogical and non-exclusive theological communication without stripping away the normative authority of the Qur'an (Saeed, 2006; Saeed, 2014). This became central to Shahrur's thought, which sought to reconstruct Islamic theology to be more responsive to the complexities of modern society and global realities. Therefore, hermeneutics serves not only as a method of interpretation, but also as an epistemic instrument in constructing a critical, contextual, and value-oriented contemporary Islamic theology. This hermeneutic literature provides a solid theoretical foundation for the study of Islam–faith in Shahrur's thought, while affirming his academic contribution to the discourse of modern Islamic theology.

3. Methods

3.1 Material Objects

The material object in this study is the hermeneutic thought of Muhammad Shahrur as stated in his main work *al-Islām wa al-Īmān: Manẓūmah al-Qiyam*, which is analyzed as the primary text. The study focuses on the concepts of Islam and faith, as well as the framework of values (*qiyam*), which is the theological foundation of his thought. Shahrur's thought is treated as a contemporary intellectual discourse that represents the reconstruction of Islamic theology through modern hermeneutic and linguistic approaches (Saeed, 2014). Thus, the material object of this research is textual-conceptual rather than empirical social practice.

3.2 Research Design

This study uses a qualitative design with a library *research* approach and conceptual analysis. This approach was chosen because the research aims to reconstruct and evaluate theological ideas rather than to measure empirical phenomena. Methodologically, this research is within the framework of critical hermeneutic studies, which views the text as a product of dialogue among revelation, language, and historical context (Saeed, 2006; Saeed, 2014). This design allows researchers to systematically and in-depth examine the relationships among the Qur'anic texts, Shahrur's interpretations, and contemporary Islamic theological discourses.

3.3 Data Source

The data sources for this study include both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include the major works of Muhammad Shahrur, especially *al-Islām wa al-Īmān: Manẓūmah al-Qiyam*, as well as other writings relevant to his hermeneutic and theological framework. Secondary sources include articles in reputable international journals that discuss Qur'anic hermeneutics, contemporary interpretation, and modern Islamic theology, such as the work of Saeed (2014), Abu Zayd (2006), and recent studies that address contextual hermeneutics (AbdurRozaq et al., 2025). Sources are selected to ensure academic validity.

3.4 Data Collection Techniques

The data collection technique involved a systematic literature review of relevant primary and secondary sources. This process involves a *close reading* of the Shahrur text to identify key concepts, terminology, and theological arguments related to the separation of Islam and faith. In addition, a search was conducted for Scopus-indexed journal articles on the hermeneutics of the Qur'an and contemporary Islamic theology to develop a theoretical framework and academic position for the research (Saeed, 2014). Data were collected thematically, aligned with the study's focus.

3.5 Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was carried out using a hermeneutical-analytical approach and conceptual discourse analysis. The first stage involves interpreting the text to understand the structure of Shahrur's arguments on Islam, faith, and value systems. The second stage involves categorizing and comparing Shahrur's ideas with contemporary Qur'anic hermeneutic theories developed by Fazlur

Rahman, Abu Zayd, and Arkoun (Saeed, 2006; Saeed, 2014). The final stage is a critical synthesis to assess the contribution and relevance of Shahrur's thought to the conceptual and methodological development of contemporary Islamic theology.

4. Result

4.1 A Closer Look at Muhammad Syahrur

Muhammad Syahrur was born on April 11, 1938, in the Shaliyah area, Damascus, Syria, in a socio-political context marked by colonial and postcolonial instability. His childhood took place during a period when Syria was still under French influence, a situation that shaped the intellectual and ideological atmosphere of the post-independence generation. Syahrur's early education was in secular public schools in Damascus, not in traditional religious institutions, which gave him early exposure to rational and scientific approaches. The family environment that emphasized Islamic ethics and practical morality, rather than ritualism alone, also shaped his critical framework for assessing the authority of religious traditions (Christmann, 2005). His secondary education was completed at Madrasah Abdurrahman al-Kawakibi in 1957, before he obtained a scholarship from the Syrian government to continue his studies in the Soviet Union in 1958. The choice of civil engineering disciplines at the Moscow Engineering Institute indicates Syahrur's early orientation toward the exact sciences and a positivist methodology. This experience became an important epistemological foundation that would later influence his rational-structural approach to understanding the Qur'an, especially in his attempt to bridge revelation with modern objective reality.

Syahrur's academic experience in the Soviet Union occurred within a complex ideological context marked by the dominance of Marxism and state atheism. His confrontation with the philosophy of dialectical materialism encourages profound reflection on the relationship between faith, reason, and social reality. After graduating in 1964, he returned to Syria and began a career as a lecturer at Damascus University. However, the Middle East's geopolitical dynamics, especially the 1967 Six-Day War, again influenced his intellectual trajectory. His further study opportunities at Imperial College London were hampered by the breakdown of Syrian–British diplomatic relations, so he continued his postgraduate studies at University College Dublin. There, Syahrur earned his M.Sc. (1969) and Ph.D. (1972) degrees in soil mechanics and foundation engineering. While in Ireland, he not only deepened his technical expertise but also read intensively the works of modern Western philosophy, such as Alfred North Whitehead and Bertrand Russell, who introduced him to the philosophy of process, critical rationalism, and logical consistency in scientific thinking. This synthesis between engineering, modern philosophy, and religious reflection became the hallmark of Syahrur's thought, distinguishing him from classical and conventional modernist Islamic thinkers (Whitehead, 1926; Christmann, 2005).

Upon his return to Syria, Syahrur devoted himself to academia at the University of Damascus's Faculty of Engineering for more than two decades, while remaining active as an engineering consultant on hundreds of major projects. Although widely known as a successful engineer, his interest in Islamic studies developed in parallel and independently of formal religious institutions. Without a background in classical sharia education, Syahrur was self-taught to study Arabic philosophy of language, structural linguistics, and semantics. His mastery of Arabic, Russian, and

English allowed him to access literature across intellectual traditions. The linguistic and mathematical approach he applied in reading the Qur'an culminated in the publication of the monumental work *Al-Kitab wa al-Qur'an: Qira'ah Mu'ashirah* in 1990. In this work, Syahrur introduces the theory of *hudūd* (the limits of God's law), which rejects a literal understanding and offers normative flexibility in light of social context. This approach aligns with the trend in modern critical hermeneutics, which emphasizes the relationship among text, ratio, and historical reality (Abu Zayd, 2006; Rahman, 1982). However, these methodological innovations have also become a source of widespread controversy.

The response to Syahrur's thought reflects the sharp polarization in contemporary Islamic discourse. Traditional scholars accused him of deviating from the methodology of classical interpretation and even stigmatized it as a threat to Islamic orthodoxy. On the contrary, progressive intellectuals see Syahrur as a reformist figure who dares to deconstruct the authority of the old interpretation, opening space for rationality and freedom of thought. Symbolic comparisons with Western reformers such as Martin Luther are often used to describe the discursive impact of his ideas, though this analogy has also drawn criticism (Eickelman, 1998). Despite these controversies, Syahrur's works have attracted the attention of Western academics and have become the subject of serious study in contemporary Islamic studies, particularly in relation to Qur'anic hermeneutics, Islamic law, and relations between religion and modernity. The sustainability of his influence shows that Syahrur's thought cannot be reduced to a momentary polemic, but is an integral part of the intellectual dynamics of modern Islam, which continues to strive to reformulate the meaning of revelation in the context of a rational, plural, and fast-changing contemporary world.

4.2 Syahrur and the Theory of Contemporary Reading (*Qira'ah Mu'ashirah*)

Muhammad Syahrur is known for his hermeneutical approach called Qira'ah Mu'ashirah (contemporary reading), which he uses to interpret the Qur'an. Through this theory, Syahrur seeks to separate the fixed sacred texts (tanzil) from dynamic interpretations that can change over time. According to him, the traditional approach used by scholars is no longer relevant in the modern world because it is too rigid and tied to the past. Syahrur believes the Qur'an is open to reinterpretation as human knowledge and experience develop. He emphasized the importance of reading the Qur'an in its contemporary context, not just in the historical context of its revelation. For Syahrur, the Qur'an should be seen as a universal guideline that can be applied to a variety of different social and cultural situations, and therefore, its interpretation should be flexible and contextual.

In his book *Al-Kitab wa al-Qur'an: Qira'ah Mu'ashirah*, Syahrur offers a new approach that aims to replace what he calls the "tyrannical reading" (*qira'ah al-mustabiddah*) that has dominated Islamic traditions. According to him, traditional interpretation has locked the thinking of Muslims in a narrow framework, where interpretation is done literally and does not consider the dynamics of social change. For example, Syahrur draws an analogy between the Copernican revolution and changes in the way the Qur'an is understood. Just as the heliocentric idea replaces the geocentric view, Syahrur believes that the interpretation of the Qur'an must also go through a revolution of thought in line with the development of science. He criticized how the scholars of the past tended to ignore the potential for rationality in sacred texts and instead focus on legalistic and dogmatic interpretations. For him, the Qur'an must be read with an objective, rational, scientific perspective.

Syahrur also emphasized that, in this contemporary reading, it is important to draw on various disciplines, including the natural sciences, mathematics, and philosophy, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the Qur'an. He believed that the interpretation of sacred texts should not be limited to the study of religion alone, but should also involve scientific and rational analysis. This approach is different from traditional methods of interpretation, which emphasize the spiritual and legal aspects of Islam. Syahrur believes the scientific method can help uncover the deeper meaning of the text, especially in addressing the new challenges Muslims face in the modern era. Thus, Qira'ah Mu'ashirah is not only a hermeneutic approach but also an attempt to update Islamic law and thought to make them more relevant to the development of science and technology.

However, Syahrur is aware that his approach will spark debate and controversy among Muslims. He asks that readers be open and not rush to reject his ideas before they really understand the arguments he offers. According to him, Muslims have been trapped in assumptions that are no longer relevant to the current conditions, so a more critical and rational rereading is needed. Syahrur also acknowledged that his theory is not the final interpretation of the Qur'an, but merely an attempt to pave the way for a broader discussion of how Muslims understand their sacred texts. Humbly, he calls his book a "contemporary reading" that remains open to further criticism and development. For him, the most important thing is how Muslims can continue to benefit from the Qur'an amid the challenges of the modern world.

4.3 A New Construction of Understanding the Qur'an: A Linguistic-Empirical-Rational Approach

Muhammad Syahrur introduced a new construction in understanding the Qur'an that combines three main approaches: linguistic, empirical, and rational. According to him, traditional methods that focus solely on textual and legal approaches are no longer relevant to addressing the challenges of modern times. The linguistic approach he offers seeks to understand the language of the Qur'an in a more dynamic way, examining each word and term for its linguistic roots, historical meaning, and the social context in which the verse was revealed. Syahrur argues that the language of the Qur'an is rich and complex, requiring an in-depth analysis that draws on knowledge of Arabic semantics. Through this approach, he seeks to dismantle the assumptions that have become entrenched in traditional interpretations, which he says often overlook the Qur'an's linguistic richness.

In addition, Syahrur's empirical approach emphasizes the importance of connecting the teachings of the Qur'an with observable reality. In this case, Syahrur argues that Islam is not in conflict with science or empirical facts. He believed that the Qur'an contained teachings that supported the development of science, and therefore, its interpretation should be adapted to the latest scientific discoveries. Syahrur rejects the view that the Qur'an is relevant only to its historical context and argues that this sacred text should continue to be understood within the framework of evolving human knowledge. Thus, he seeks to integrate the teachings of the Qur'an with advances in science and technology, ensuring its relevance and applicability in the lives of modern Muslims.

Syahrur's rational approach is also an important part of this new construction. He argues that human intellect is a gift from God that must be used to the fullest in understanding the messages of the Qur'an. According to him, traditional interpretations often fail to realize the potential of rationality and are more trapped in rigid textual approaches. Syahrur invites Muslims to use ratios in

interpreting the Qur'an, taking into account logic and scientific arguments. For him, an interpretation based on common sense will yield an understanding more relevant to current social and cultural conditions. With this rational approach, Syahrur seeks to free Muslims from dogmas that limit critical thinking and innovation in understanding Islam's teachings.

In his effort to combine these three approaches, Syahrur also emphasized the importance of contextualization. He believed that each verse of the Qur'an should be understood in the context in which it was revealed. This contextualization, according to Syahrur, is very important to avoid misunderstanding and misuse of sacred texts. By understanding the context behind the revelations, Muslims can be wiser in applying the teachings of the Qur'an in their daily lives. Syahrur gave the example that some teachings considered absolute by traditional interpretations were, in fact, strongly influenced by the historical conditions at the time. Therefore, he suggests that Muslims should not only focus on the literal text but also understand the deeper, contextual meaning of each verse.

The new construction offered by Syahrur through this linguistic, empirical, and rational approach aims to build a more progressive and relevant understanding of Islam for the times. Although his approach has faced much criticism from conservative scholars, Syahrur remains of the view that a renewal of thought in Islamic studies is necessary so that Muslims do not get caught up in stagnant understanding. He hopes that Muslims can be more open to new ideas and less afraid to criticize interpretations that have persisted for centuries. With this more holistic approach, Syahrur believes Muslims can find new ways to revive the teachings of the Qur'an amid a changing world.

4.4 Modern Hermeneutics Muhammad Syahrur: The Case of the Reinterpretation of the Concept of Islam and Faith

Islam and Faith: Two Different Entities

Muhammad Syahrur introduced an innovative hermeneutist approach to understanding the concepts of Islam (al-islām) and faith (al-īmān), which differed significantly from the framework of traditional scholarly thought. Syahrur rejects the use of pre-conceptions or well-established assumptions (taklid) in interpreting sacred texts (al-Tanzīl al-Hakīm). In contrast to conventional interpretation methodologies that often depart from established theological conclusions, Syahrur proposes a direct and objective reading of the Qur'an, freeing interpretation from the shackles of deep-rooted tradition (turāth) (Shahrur, 2009). This is reflected in his analysis of the relationship between Islam and faith, where he does not necessarily equate the two terms—something common in classical literature, as in the books of sahih hadith (al-Bukhari & Muslim). His approach focuses on lexical and contextual meanings in the Qur'an itself, rather than on inherited conclusions. This methodology aligns with efforts in contemporary Islamic studies that emphasize the rereading of sacred texts through a critical-philological approach (Saeed, 2008), in which texts are treated as primary sources to be understood in their internal coherence before being confronted with external interpretations.

Syahrur builds his argument with a detailed analysis of Qur'anic verses that explicitly distinguish between "Muslim" and "mu'min". One of the main references is QS. Al-Aḥzāb (33):35, which according to him terminologically separates Muslim men and women (al-muslimūn/ al-muslimāt) from mu'min (al-mu'minūn/ al-mu'mināt) (Shahrur, 2009). Another reference is QS. Al-Taḥrīm

(66):5, which also mentions the two groups separately. From this reading, Syahrur concludes that Islam and faith are two different entities or stages, not synonyms. He argues that Islam is a universal foundation of submission to Allah and the acknowledgment of His existence and the Last Day, whereas faith is a deeper, more specific stage related to belief in a particular apostolate and the performance of revealed rituals (Shahrur, 2009). This view contrasts with the common understanding that equates the two, as reflected in many works of classical theology and jurisprudence. Syahrur's approach to distinguishing terms based on their context of use in the Qur'an is supported by contemporary semantic studies in the science of the Qur'an, which emphasize the importance of distributional analysis for understanding specific meanings (Abdul-Raof, 2000). Thus, his academic position reinforces the importance of linguistic methods in interpreting sacred texts.

Furthermore, Syahrur expands the definition of "Muslim" beyond the historical boundaries of those who follow the Prophet Muhammad. By referring to verses such as QS. Al-Jinn (72):14 and QS. Āli 'Imrān (3):67, he points out that pre-Islamic figures such as Abraham, Ya'qub, Yusuf, and Noah are also referred to as "Muslims" in the Qur'an, even though they did not live at the time of the Prophet Muhammad (Shahrur, 2009). In fact, in QS. Yūnus (10):90, Pharaoh is said to have confessed to being a Muslim in the last moments of his life. From this, Syahrur concludes that the essence of Islam is the recognition of the oneness of Allah and submission to Him, a universal disposition (fitrah) inherent in human beings, regardless of prophetic affiliation or a particular religious community (Shahrur, 2009). Therefore, Muslims in the Qur'anic sense include anyone who acknowledges the existence of God and the Last Day, while mu'min refers specifically to followers of the Prophet Muhammad who also perform certain rituals. This view shifts the paradigm from an exclusive-historical definition of Islam to an inclusive-universal. Syahrur's argument about the universality of Islam as a religion of nature aligns with discussions in comparative religious studies on the concept of "natural religiosity" or "implicit faith" that extends beyond the boundaries of formal religious institutions (Hick, 2004). Thus, Syahrur's offer not only reconstructs theological understanding but also opens a dialogue between Islamic thought and global philosophical-religious discourse on the nature of religion.

Al-Mujrimun vs Al-Muslimun: Between Those Who Deny and Those Who Acknowledge the Existence of Allah and the Last Day

Syahrur further developed his conceptual framework by contrasting the term "al-muslimūn" (surrenderers) with its antonym, "al-mujrimūn" (sinners). Based on the reading of verses such as QS. Al-Qalam (68):35-36—which rhetorically questions the equal treatment of *al-muslimīn* and *al-mujrimīn*—Syahrur argues that the Qur'an places these two groups in diametrically opposed positions before Allah (Shahrur, 2009). Lexical analysis becomes an important foundation here. The root of the word *j-r-m* (ج ر م), which is the basis of the word *mujrim*, contains the basic meaning of "to cut" or "to break". Syahrur applies this meaning theologically: a *mujrim* is a person who has actively "decided" or severed his relationship (*inqiṭāʿ*) with Allah, by rejecting His existence, the Day of Resurrection, and the divine moral order (Shahrur, 2009). In other words, the status *of the mujrim* is not merely an ordinary moral transgressor, but more fundamentally as a metaphysical rebel who lives in spite of the recognition of divine reality. Syahrur's semantic approach aligns with the critical study of the ethical vocabulary of the Qur'an, which shows that key terms often carry a deep philosophical burden related to man's relationship with God (Izutsu, 2002). The concept of *mujrim*

as a "relationship breaker" is the basis for a sharp distinction between piety based on confession (*islām*) and total disobedience (*jurm*).

The main characteristic *of al-mujrimūn*, according to Syahrur's analysis of various verses, is their firm rejection of the existence of Allah and the Last Day. He quoted verses such as QS. Al-Qaṣaṣ (28):78 and QS. Yāsīn (36):59, which describes how *the mujrimūn* will be separated and directly face punishment on the Day of Resurrection (Shahrur, 2009). Syahrur emphasized that their punishment is direct and automatic, without going through the usual process of "hisab" (charitable calculation). The reason, for Syahrur, is divine logic: total denial of the Lawgiver (*al-Ḥākim*) makes any discussion of obedience or violation of His laws irrelevant (Shahrur, 2009). Their greatest sin is *kufr* in the form of existential denial (*inkār al-wujūd*), which automatically decides all forms of legal and moral responsibility before Him. Syahrur also refers to QS. Al-Muṭaffifīn (83):29-32, which depicts *the mujrimūn* mocking and belittling the believers, an illustration of the arrogant attitude and social hostility that stems from their theological disobedience. This interpretation reinforces the view that in the Qur'an, moral evil is often rooted in theological error (Rahman, 2009). Thus, *the mujrim* in the reading of Syahrur represents the extreme position of "active atheism," which is not only absent from faith but actively rejects divine reality, thereby nullifying the basic premise of all forms of charitable calculation.

A critical and controversial point in Syahrur's interpretation is his reading of QS. Al-Muddatstsir (74):39-46. In this verse, the inhabitants of Hell (*mujrimūn*) answer the question with the statement, "We used to be among the *mushallīn*". Mainstream interpretations generally understand *mushallīn* as "those who perform prayers (rituals)". However, Syahrur rejected this literal interpretation. Through careful philological analysis, he distinguishes two derivations from the root *ṣ-l-w*: *al-ṣalāh* (with *wāw*), which refers to the ritual of formal prayer, and *al-ṣilah* (with *hamzah* or attention to the meaning of relationship), which refers to spiritual "connection" or "relationship" with Allah (Shahrur, 2009). According to him, in the context of this verse, the correct meaning is second. Thus, *the mujrimūn's* confession is not that they do not pray ritually, but that they do not have *a ṣilah*—an existential relationship or bond—with Allah. Their denial of God's existence has decided that *ṣilah* since he was in the world. This conclusion is consistent with his main argument that the essence of the opponent *of al-islām* (surrender) is *al-jurm* (disconnection). This kind of interpretation emphasizes the spiritual-relational dimension of religion over the ritual-formal dimension, a theme also found in philosophical discussions of religion on "religious experience" versus "rite" (Schimmel, 2011). Thus, Syahrur not only distinguishes *Muslims* from *mujrim* but also offers a Hermeneutics that distinguishes between ritualistic obedience and essential spiritual connectedness, the latter being the true marker of the recognition of Allah and the Last Day.

Pillar of Islam Three: Believing in Allah, the Last Day, and Doing Good Deeds

In Syahrur's theological construction, al-islām preceded and became a prerequisite for al-īmān, forming a spiritual hierarchy in which one had to become *a Muslim* (a surrenderer) before one could attain the status of *mu'min* (a believer). According to him, Islam is universally defined as the foundation of the triad, which consists of (1) recognition of the existence and oneness of Allah, (2) belief in the Last Day, and (3) commitment to *do al-'amal al-ṣāliḥ* (virtuous deeds) (Shahrur, 2009). It is this foundation that he calls the religion of fitrah (*dīn al-fiṭrah*)—a natural disposition of man—which is inclusive and can be carried by anyone, regardless of certain prophetic affiliations. Thus, *al-*

muslimūn are all those who recognize these three basic principles, while *al-mu'minūn* is a specific sub-group of *Muslims* who go further by believing in the apostolate of the Prophet Muhammad and the specific revelations revealed to him (the Qur'an). This view effectively separates the universal-theistic dimension of religion (Islam) from its particular-ritualistic dimension (Iman). This hierarchical concept resonates with the discourse of religious philosophy, which distinguishes between "natural religion" (based on reason and fitrah) and "revealed religion" (based on revelation) (Ward, 2004), although Syahrur still places revelation at the pinnacle of perfection.

To reinforce this conceptual separation, Syahrur conducts an in-depth reading of Qur'anic verses that simultaneously mention faith in Allah and His Messenger. It refers to QS. Al-Nisā' (4):136, QS. Al-Ḥadīd (57):28, and QS. Muḥammad (47):2. According to his analysis, the grammatical and contextual structure of the verses does not show a single continuity, but rather two distinct and sequential objects of belief (Shahrur, 2009). For example, in QS. Al-Ḥadīd (57):28 ("... believe in Allah and His Messenger..."), Syahrur sees this not as a package, but as a gradual call: first, building faith in Allah (which is part of *islām*), then followed by faith in the Messenger as an advanced stage (*īmān*). This argument aims to show that a person can logically and chronologically become *a Muslim* (believe in Allah, the Last Day, and do good) without automatically becoming *a mu'min* (acknowledging the apostleship of Muhammad). Therefore, he distinguishes between *īmān* that is fitri (the basic confession of divinity) and *īmān* that is ta'abbudi (acceptance of prophetic authority and specific revelation). This kind of semantic-syntactic approach is similar to the discourse analysis method used in contemporary Qur'an studies to uncover the layers of meaning underlying the text's structure (Abdul-Raof, 2006).

Syahrur's innovative interpretation is also seen in understanding the verses that mention "the increase of faith" (as in QS. Al-Fatḥ [48]:4 and QS. Al-Tawbah [9]:124-125). In contrast to the mainstream view of faith as a single entity whose quantity can rise and fall, Syahrur introduced the "two containers" model (*zarfayn*). According to him, there are two separate reservoirs of faith: the first is the basic faith in Allah, the Last Day, and righteous deeds (which are part of *Islam*). This container is fitrah and stable. The second container is faith in Muhammad's apostleship and the details of his revelation (which is part of *the īmān*). This container can be "increased" or "decreased" through learning, teaching, and understanding of revelation (Shahrur, 2009). Thus, for Syahrur, the increase in faith in the Qur'an refers specifically to the strengthening and deepening of faith and commitment to the particular sharia brought by the Prophet Muhammad, not to the basic belief in divinity. This reading is consistent with his view that *īmān* is historical and instructional, requiring the guidance of revelation, while *islām* is universal and intuitive. This "two-vessel" model is a unique theoretical contribution of Syahrur to answer the classical theological dilemma of the nature of faith, and at the same time reaffirms the scheme of his spiritual development: from universal recognition (*islām*) to particular commitment (*īmān*).

4.5 The Pillars of Islam and Faith: From Deconstruction to Reconstruction

Pillars of Islam: In Harmony with Human Nature

In the tradition of classical Islamic thought, as enshrined in the works of Ushul al-Din and al-Adabiyah al-Islamiyah, the concept of the Pillar of Islam has become an established and normative construction. The scholars, with reference to the hadiths as narrated by Imam Muslim, establish five

main pillars as markers of formal Islamic identity: (1) shahadatain (the testimony that there is no God but Allah and Muhammad is His Messenger), (2) prayer, (3) zakat, (4) Ramadan fasting, and (5) Hajj for those who can afford it. These pillars are ritual and operational, and closely related to the acceptance of the Prophet Muhammad's apostolate, which is an absolute condition for its validity in the view of the main schools of jurisprudence (Al-Qaradawi, 2000). Interestingly, in this formulation, universal ethical dimensions such as pious deeds, ihsan, and noble morals are not explicitly included as "harmonious", although they are generally recognized as an important part of religion. This indicates that in the traditional paradigm, the legal-formal aspects and acceptance of Muhammad's prophetic authority occupy a central position in defining one's "Islam", an approach that was later challenged by contemporary thinkers such as Muhammad Syahrur (Shahrur, 2009).

The traditional construction of the Pillars of Islam, which requires recognition of Muhammad's apostleship, poses a serious theological problem when confronted with the Qur'anic narrative of prophets and their followers who lived before Muhammad's prophethood. Figures such as Abraham, Moses, Isa, and their followers could not have believed in the apostleship of Muhammad, did not fast Ramadan, and did not perform Hajj to Makkah as formulated in Islamic law. However, the Qur'an consistently refers to them as "muslimūn" (Qur'an. Āli 'Imrān [3]:67, Qur'an. Yūnus [10]:84) and acknowledge their salvation and reward (QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:62). If the creed of the apostleship of Muhammad is an absolute requirement to be a Muslim, then the status of the prophets and their predecessors becomes problematic. This problem is reminiscent of the exclusivist claim that the Qur'an denounces in QS. Al-Baqarah (2):111-112, where Jews and Christians claim that only they enter heaven. The Qur'an rejects this claim and affirms that whoever believes in Allah and performs righteous deeds will be rewarded, without mentioning the condition of recognizing the prophethood of Muhammad (Aslan, 2005). Therefore, an Islamic definition that is overly tied to the historical acceptance of a particular prophet has the potential to conflict with the universal message of the Qur'an.

A crucial finding from a critical reading of the Qur'anic text is that the main ritual obligations—such as prayer, zakat, fasting, and hajj—are often addressed specifically to the "believers" (*alladhīna āmanū*), and not generally to "the surrenderers" (*al-muslimūn*). Verses such as QS. Al-Nisā' (4):103 ("Indeed, prayer is an obligation that is timed for the believers") and QS. Al-Baqarah (2):110 ("And establish prayer and pay zakat...") was commanded to the group *of mu'minūn*. According to Syahrur's (2009) analysis, this shows that these rituals are not pillars of *universal al-islām* (which is defined as the recognition of Allah, the Last Day, and righteous deeds), but rather are pillars of *the particular al-īmān*, i.e., the advanced stage for those who accept the apostleship of Muhammad and the system of sharia that it brings. Thus, reducing the Pillars of Islam to only five rituals, without including pious deeds and universal ethics as the main pillars, is a narrowing of meaning that requires a fundamental re-examination. This approach opens up space for a distinction between a specific-historical ritual observance (*īmān*) and a universal ethical-theological commitment (*islām*), a distinction that is thought to reconcile religion with modern critical reason and the challenge of pluralism (Abu Zayd, 2004).

Rituals in the Pillars of Islam

In addition to the five pillars of ritual established in the concept of the Pillars of Islam, the Qur'an also contains many other important commandments that carry equal legal weight and theological

significance, such as jihad (fighting), qishash (law of revenge), and shura (deliberation). Verses such as QS. Al-Anfal (8):74 and QS. Al-Hujurat (49):15 emphasizes the importance of jihad and the sacrifice of property and soul in the way of Allah, while QS. Al-Baqarah (2):216 expressly states the obligation to fight even though it is disliked. On the other hand, QS. Al-Baqarah (2):178 establishes the principle of qishash as a guarantee of justice, and QS. Al-Shura (42):38 praises the believers who conduct their affairs with deliberation. However, these substantive commandments are not included in the "Pillars of Islam" canon, which is limited to five rituals. This neglect raises a critical question: why is it that only the ritual of mahdhah worship is chosen as the pillar of Islamic identity, while social, legal, and political principles that are also divine are ignored? Syahrur (2009) considers this reduction a major conceptual error because it does not reflect the comprehensive legal and ethical framework conveyed in the Qur'an. This kind of segregation creates an artificial hierarchy that privileges the dimension of private ritual over social and public obligations, even though both derive from the same authority of revelation (Saeed, 2006).

Syahrur strongly criticized the finality and rigidity of the concept of the five pillars of Islam, which has become dogma. The main argument departs from the premise that Islam is a religion of fitrah (din al-fitrah), one in harmony with instinct, reason, and basic human nature (Shahrur, 2009). If Islam is truly in line with fitrah, then all the obligations or "harmony" that are the foundation must be fitri—that is, something that arises naturally from human consciousness and does not contradict its basic instincts. This is where Syahrur asks a compelling question: are specific rituals such as praying five times with certain movements, paying zakat with a fixed percentage, fasting to suppress thirst and hunger from dawn to maghrib, and performing Hajj with a series of manasik in Makkah, really spontaneous expressions of human nature? According to him, the answer is no. For example, human instinct tends to maintain wealth, not give it (zakat), and the instinct to eat and drink when hungry and thirsty, not to hold it (fasting). These rituals demand discipline that goes beyond natural tendencies, so it is more appropriately described as a form of "spiritual training" or "particular obedience" required of a particular community (mu'minun), rather than as a universal expression of human nature (Shahrur, 2009). This view aligns with a philosophical analysis that distinguishes between "natural religions" that are universal and rational, and "positive religions" that include historically specific ritual elements (Hick, 2004).

Thus, Syahrur's criticism of the traditional conception of the Pillars of Islam is not only technical-fiqh, but touches on the philosophical foundation of religion. He invites us to re-examine the potential contradiction between certain ritual demands and human nature. If such rituals are considered part of the universal "harmony" of Islam (din al-fitrah), then there must be absolute coherence between the commandments and the basic human instincts. The incompatibility found actually strengthens his theory of the distinction between al-Islam (the universal religion of fitrah) and al-Iman (the system of ritual-particular observance). These specific rituals, according to him, are pillars of al-Iman, aimed at those who have accepted the apostleship of Muhammad and are committed to his sharia, not the pillars of al-Islam as basic recognition of divinity and universal moral commitment (Shahrur, 2009). Therefore, the assertion that the five rituals are the "Pillars of Islam" that are essential for every Muslim in a universal sense is a mistake that results in a narrowing of the meaning of Islam, a neglect of the social ethical dimension, and a potential contradiction with its claim to be a religion of fitrah. This discourse highlights the need for a reinterpretation that separates the universal theological-ethical foundations (faith in Allah, the Last Day, righteous deeds) and particular ritual-historical

expressions, an effort that is also found in the project of "Islamic renewal" that seeks to reconcile religion with modern values and the essence of humanity (Arkoun, 2002).

Deconstruction and Reconstruction of the Pillars of Islam

Syahrur carried out a deconstruction of the well-established concept of the Pillars of Islam, showing its incompatibility with the Qur'an and with the concept of Islam as *din al-fitrah*. He argues that establishing specific rituals such as prayer, zakat, fasting, and hajj as the "pillars" of universal Islam is reductive and theologically problematic. For example, the zakat order requiring the expenditure of wealth is considered contrary to the natural human instinct to love and maintain wealth, as hinted at in QS. Al-Fajr (89):20, "And you love material things with excessive love." Similarly, the obligation of fasting, which suppresses hunger and thirst, is contrary to the basic physiological impulse in man to meet his basic needs. For Syahrur, this contradiction shows that these rituals are not spontaneous expressions of human nature, but rather a form of obedience determined (ta'abbudī) and specific (Shahrur, 2009). Therefore, to hold it up as the core pillar of universal Islam—which should be in harmony with the instincts of all human beings—is a categorical error. This critique aligns with a philosophical analysis that questions the claim to the universality of historically and culturally specific ritual practices and emphasizes the need to distinguish between the essence of religion and its formal expression (Hick, 2004).

After deconstructing traditional buildings, Syahrur did not stop; he reconstructed them by proposing a new formulation of the basic pillars of Islam. Based on his comprehensive reading of the Qur'an, he offers three universal pillars that he believes to be the true essence of *al-Islām* (in its universal sense): (1) Faith in Allah (recognition of the existence and oneness of God), (2) Faith in the Last Day (belief in the hereafter and accountability), and (3) *Al-'Amal al-Ṣāliḥ* (Acts of Kindness) (Shahrur, 2009). In this structure, the first two pillars are at the theoretical-belief level (*'aqīdah*), which form the cognitive foundation. The third pillar, pious charity, is at the practical, operational level and is a tangible manifestation of this belief. This reconstruction strategically shifted the emphasis from ritual-formal observance to ethical-substantial commitment. Righteous deeds are understood as the whole of moral teachings, social justice, and good deeds that are the common denominator of all religions and civilizations. Thus, Syahrur intends to return the moral-universal dimension to the heart of the definition of Islam, an effort in line with the movement to reconstruct contemporary Islamic thought, which seeks to emphasize the social ethics of the Qur'an over legal formalism (Rahman, 1982).

Through this deconstruction and reconstruction, Syahrur invites Muslims to engage in a critical rereading of fundamental concepts that have been taken for granted (*taqlīd*). The goal is to align religious understanding with the Qur'an's claim that Islam is a religion of fitrah. If Islam is truly in harmony with human nature, then its foundation must be principles accessible to the universal human intellect and conscience, not a series of rituals that demand the restraint of basic instincts. By offering a trilogy of faith in Allah, the Last Day, and pious deeds as true pillars, Syahrur seeks to restore Islam's essence as a rational and moral religion relevant to all of humanity, beyond the boundaries of the particular community of followers of the Prophet Muhammad. This project is not only hermeneutical but also sociological, as it aims to foster a religious consciousness oriented towards public ethics and humanity, rather than ritualistic piety. In this context, Syahrur's thought can be seen as part of a broader effort in the Muslim world to respond to modernity by rediscovering ethical

universalism in the Islamic tradition, alongside that of thinkers such as Abdolkarim Soroush and Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd (Vahdat, 2002).

5. Discussion

The results of this study comprehensively map Muhammad Syahrur's thinking, from his background as an engineer who later became a controversial Islamic thinker, to his monumental work, Al-Kitab wa al-Qur'an: Qira'ah Mu'ashirah. At the heart of his thought lies three main contributions: first, the hermeneutic theory of Qira'ah Mu'ashirah, which emphasizes the distinction between fixed sacred texts and dynamic, contextual interpretations. Second, the development of a new methodology that integrates linguistic, empirical, and rational approaches to interpreting the Qur'an. Third, a radical reinterpretation of basic concepts such as Islam and faith, treating them as distinct entities, as well as the deconstruction and reconstruction of the traditional concept of the Pillars of Islam into three pillars that are more centered on faith in Allah, the Last Day, and righteous deeds. These findings demonstrate Syahrur's systematic efforts to bridge sacred texts with modern reality.

Reflection on these results reveals that Syahrur's intellectual courage was greatly influenced by his cross-disciplinary expertise in engineering and the humanities, which provided him with an analytical framework and enabled him to break free from traditional norms. However, the controversy that accompanied it reflects the enduring tension in the Islamic world between the preservation of tradition (*turats*) and the demands of modernity. The negative response from many traditional scholars shows that the approach is perceived as disruptive to the interpretive authority established over the centuries. On the other hand, acceptance within certain intellectual circles indicates the need for new, relevant readings. Thus, Syahrur's thought serves as a mirror for dynamics and conflicts in contemporary Islamic discourse, as well as a marker of an epistemological shift in the study of the Qur'an.

An interpretation of these findings shows that Syahrur's intellectual project is essentially an attempt to democratize the interpretation of the Qur'an. By emphasizing contextualization, reason, and the integration of science, he implicitly rejects the monopoly of interpretation by certain religious authorities. His concept of a broader Islam (including the prophets before Muhammad) and faith as a special stage, as well as the redefinition of the Pillars of Islam, can be seen as a strategy to expand the scope of salvation and inclusivity in Islam. This stems from his anxiety about rigid ritual formalism and laws that he considers to have obscured the universal and ethical message of the Qur'an. Therefore, his thought is not just a new interpretation, but a project to liberate the text from a reading he considers frozen and no longer touches the problems of the times.

Compared to other Islamic reformers, Syahrur's approach appears to be more radical and systematic in deconstructing basic concepts. If Fazlur Rahman, for example, emphasizes a "double movement" from the past to the present, Syahrur goes further by dismantling key terminology and doctrinal structures, such as the Pillars of Islam. While Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid focuses on literary criticism of sacred texts, Syahrur explicitly incorporates the dimension of exact science into his methodology. What he has in common with other modernist thinkers lies in his rejection of literalism and emphasis on reason. However, Syahrur's peculiarity lay in his technical background, which gave him different metaphors and logics, such as the Copernican revolution analogy, which made his

deconstruction of the traditional Islamic edifice feel more fundamental and challenging than that of his predecessors.

The follow-up to this study opens up several important research agendas. First, it is necessary to conduct a more in-depth study of the practical application of Syahrur's linguistic-empirical-rational methodology in interpreting specific verses related to contemporary issues such as democracy, human rights, or gender, to test their coherence. Second, broader comparative research is needed, not only with Muslim thinkers such as Al-Jabiri or Arkoun, but also with the Western philosophical hermeneutic tradition (Gadamer, Ricoeur) to assess its contribution and uniqueness in global hermeneutic discussions. Third, it is important to examine the impact of Syahrur's social thought at the grassroots level, especially among young urban Muslims, to see the extent to which his radical ideas are absorbed or rejected. Finally, a critical exploration of epistemological weaknesses in its construction, such as the potential for relativism in interpretation or the problem of scientific objectivity as a reference point, becomes necessary to assess the feasibility of a major project in the long term.

6. Conclusion

This study found that Muhammad Shahrur's hermeneutic approach offers a new perspective that challenges traditional methods of interpretation, especially in terms of the interpretation of the five pillars of Islam and faith. Using linguistic, empirical, and rational methods, Shahrur sought to harmonize the teachings of the Qur'an with scientific developments and social changes. His approach offers new ways to understand sacred texts more meaningfully in the modern context, though his ideas have sparked debate among conservative scholars.

The recommendation of this study is the need for further research on Shahrur's method, especially regarding its application across different Muslim regions and cultures. Shahrur's contextual approach can be an alternative for Muslims who want to understand the Qur'an more dynamically, but still need a framework that keeps the essence of Islamic teachings from being distorted.

Further research can focus on a comparative analysis between the Shahrur method and the traditional interpretations of various Islamic schools. In addition, in-depth research on the impact of contemporary hermeneutic methods on the social, political, and legal life of Muslims in the modern era is indispensable for enriching the discourse of global Islamic thought.

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