Islamic Legal Philosophy as a Framework for Legal Reform in Multicultural Societies

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
	Studies on the philosophy of Islamic law often remain descriptive-normative and repetitive, offering limited guidance for reform in lived legal settings. In Indonesia's multicultural and legally plural society - where state law, Islamic norms, and local adat interact - this gap becomes more consequential, because reform must sustain religious legitimacy while remaining socially workable across diverse communities. This article argues that Islamic legal philosophy can function as a systematic paradigm for Islamic legal reform when articulated through three dimensions: first, an ontological dimension that frames Islamic law as rooted in revelation and enlivened by reason; second, an epistemological dimension that explains lawful discovery through istinbat and istitdal, including the use of maqasid al-shariah and maslahah to engage new issues; and third, an axiological dimension that orients reform toward justice, balance, and prosperity as public goods. With this framework, reform can be pursued methodically: grounded in revelation, methodologically valid, and responsive to contemporary multicultural realities. The article thus positions Islamic legal philosophy not as abstract discourse, but as a practical foundation for consistent and context-sensitive renewal.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Islamic law has unique characteristics compared to other legal systems because it rests on a foundation of revelation believed to be absolutely true, while also providing space for human reason to understand, develop, and apply the law in accordance with life's dynamics (Arifin & Haqqi, 2024; Hidayat, 2024). Since the early days of Islam, Islamic law has not only functioned as a set of normative rules binding Muslims, but also as an ethical and philosophical framework that guides humans towards a more just, balanced, and meaningful life (Anam, 2025). Throughout its history, Islamic law has developed in line with the needs of the people and the challenges of the times, through codification, the formulation of the methodology of usul al-fiqh, and contemporary discourse on the renewal of Islamic law (Anshori & Abdurrahman, 2025).

Indonesia's contemporary legal order is shaped by legal pluralism: state legislation and courts operate alongside religious norms and local customary (adat) regulations, while transnational norms increasingly inform policy debates. Rather than functioning as a single, unified system, law in this setting is produced through ongoing interaction among multiple normative orders that overlap and sometimes compete (Griffiths, 1986; Merry, 1988; Tamanaha, 2017). Within this multicultural and multi-normative context, Islamic law—particularly in the field of family law—must continuously negotiate between maintaining religious legitimacy and meeting public expectations of equal citizenship, justice, and rights protection for diverse groups. Indonesian experiences suggest that codification and reform are rarely purely doctrinal; they are also forms of public reasoning and institutional compromise across Islamic, state, and customary registers (J. R. Bowen, 2003; Kymlicka, 1995).

In the Indonesian context, this dynamic unfolds within a legally plural landscape. Islamic norms and fiqh reasoning interact with state law, societal practices, and local customary norms (adat) that shape how law is understood and implemented in everyday life (Setiawan, 2023). Consequently, discussions on Islamic legal reform in Indonesia are rarely confined to doctrinal debates alone; they inevitably intersect with institutional arrangements, legal culture, and social expectations that are diverse across regions and communities.

This legal pluralism is inseparable from Indonesia's multicultural social reality. As a society marked by ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity, Indonesia presents a setting in which the legitimacy and applicability of legal reforms are continuously negotiated (Crouch, 2013; Hariri & Babussalam, 2024). Islamic legal reform therefore faces a dual demand: remaining faithful to revelation-based foundations while also ensuring that legal outcomes are communicable, acceptable, and socially functional in a multicultural public sphere—especially where legal issues touch shared civic concerns such as justice, welfare, and social harmony (Arifin & Haqqi, 2024; J. R. Bowen, 2003).

However, in facing the modern era marked by globalization, the development of science, technology, and rapid socio-political changes, Islamic law is often required to be reformed. The reform of Islamic law does not only mean formal changes in the text of legislation, but more than that: it includes efforts to reinterpret Islamic law so that it remains in accordance with the basic principles of sharia while being relevant to contemporary needs (Fata, 2013). Within a plural and multicultural context, this challenge becomes more complex, because reform must respond not only to new issues, but also to diverse social sensibilities and multiple normative references operating simultaneously.

It is in this context that Islamic legal philosophy plays a crucial role. Islamic legal philosophy does not merely discuss Islamic law as a rule, but rather examines it at a philosophical level: the nature of the law, its sources and methodology for establishing it, and the goals and values it seeks to achieve. In other words, Islamic legal philosophy provides the ontological, epistemological, and axiological foundations that serve as the conceptual foundation for Islamic legal reform (Aini, 2017). Islamic legal ontology discusses the nature of Islamic law, its sources, and the fundamental reasons why it was established. Islamic legal epistemology relates to the methodology of istinbāṭ and istidlāl, namely the way law is extracted from its sources through the tools of ushul fiqh and rational argumentation. Meanwhile, Islamic legal axiology discusses the goals, benefits, and values to be realized by the law, as formulated in the maqāṣid al-syarī'ah.

Unfortunately, studies of Islamic legal philosophy in contemporary literature are often descriptive and normative. Many writings merely repeat classical explanations of the sources of law, the methodology of ijtihad, or the maqāṣid al-syarī'ah without linking them to the concrete context of Islamic legal reform. As a result, Islamic legal philosophy is often seen as merely an abstract discourse that is difficult to apply to real-world problems, such as family law, sharia economics, human rights, and even modern bioethics. In fact, Islamic legal philosophy has the potential to bridge the gap between revealed texts and contemporary reality, provided it is studied systematically and directed toward a clear theoretical construct.

Furthermore, modern Islamic legal reforms often face criticism. Some accuse them of being a form of westernization or liberalization that ignores Islamic law. On the other hand, others reject any form of reform, citing the need to preserve the purity of Islamic teachings. In multicultural societies, these tensions can intensify because legal debates are not only intra-religious, but also unfold in the wider public arena where different communities may evaluate reforms through different moral and cultural lenses. This conflict demonstrates an epistemological gap: there is no agreed-upon framework for Islamic legal philosophy as a common foundation for the reform process. Therefore, a paradigm of Islamic legal philosophy is needed that can affirm the position of Islamic law: it remains based on revelation, utilizes reason as a means of reasoning, and is oriented toward the common good.

Several classical and contemporary Muslim thinkers have contributed to building a philosophical framework for Islamic law. Al-Ghazâlî (1983), for example, emphasized the importance of the maqāṣid al-syarī'ah as the ultimate goal of Islamic law, namely safeguarding religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property. Ibn Rusyd (2007) demonstrated how reason can be used broadly to understand and interpret legal texts. Meanwhile, modern thinkers such as F. Rahman (2024) and Auda (2022) emphasize the need for a contextual and systemic approach to Islamic law, so that it can respond to the challenges of the times. From all these thoughts, it is clear that Islamic legal philosophy is not merely a theoretical discourse, but has direct implications for the dynamics of Islamic legal reform (N. Yusuf et al., 2024).

However, there is a persistent academic problem: many studies of Islamic legal philosophy focus on theoretical explanations disconnected from real-world applications. The repetitive and normative tendencies in explaining the ontology, epistemology, and axiology of Islamic law make these studies feel distant from practical needs. However, if formulated in a more measured and methodological manner, Islamic legal philosophy could provide a clear direction for legal reform, both at the level of thought and legislation

(A. Yusuf & Wijaya, 2021). Therefore, this research is crucial to clarify how Islamic legal philosophy can serve as a consistent and relevant paradigm for Islamic legal reform.

This research is based on the belief that Islamic legal philosophy holds a strategic position as a bridge between normative revealed texts and ever-changing social realities. By placing Islamic legal philosophy within an ontological, epistemological, and axiological framework, Islamic legal reform can be implemented without losing the authenticity of its sources. Moreover, Islamic legal reform based on Islamic legal philosophy will have dual legitimacy: normatively remaining rooted in sharia, and rationally responding to the needs of the times. Based on this background, this research aims to answer two main questions. First, how can Islamic legal philosophy provide a systematic conceptual and methodological framework for Islamic legal reform? Second, to what extent can Islamic legal philosophy serve as a theoretical foundation that ensures that Islamic legal reform remains faithful to the sources of revelation while remaining relevant to the dynamics of contemporary life?

In the field of Islamic legal reform studies in Indonesia, several studies have demonstrated the urgency of harmonizing Islamic law with the modern social context. For example, Millati (2017) emphasized that Islamic legal reform is not merely a refresher of old legal material, but also requires affirming the existence and relevance of Islamic law within the national legal system—through an emphasis on the public good (maqāṣid al-syarī'ah) and a systematic ijtihad method. This study highlights the changing institutional and legal culture aspects in Indonesia, thus demanding an adaptive approach to Islamic law that remains grounded in sharia principles.

More specifically to the Indonesian academic tradition, research on reform figures such as Hasbi Ash-Shiddieqy, Hazairin, Munawir Sjadzali, Ibrahim Hozen, Sahal Mahfuz, and Ali Yafie demonstrates the importance of formulating fiqh that is in accordance with the cultural characteristics and needs of Indonesian society (Rahman, 2014). Their perspective offers an ijtihād strategy that considers local values ('urf) and the contemporary context, so that Islamic law is no longer understood as a static system, but as a living, dynamic and dialogical heritage.

Another representative study examines the transformation of inheritance law in Indonesia, implemented through the Compilation of Islamic Law (KHI), in which Islamic legal philosophy serves as a normative basis responsive to social realities. This study asserts that in the context of inheritance, Islamic legal philosophy—particularly the principles of social justice and benefit, serves as a bridge between sharia texts and the needs of a modern, pluralistic society (Hasanah et al., 2025). This demonstrates that a philosophical approach is not merely a theoretical foundation but can serve as a basis for concrete reform in national Islamic law.

2. METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a library research method (Bauböck, 2008). The research data were obtained from primary literature in the form of classical works by scholars of *ushul fiqh* such as al-Ghazālī (*al-Mustaṣfā*) and al-Syāṭibī (*al-Muwāfaqāt*), as well as contemporary literature in the form of books and journal articles discussing the philosophy of Islamic law, maqāṣid al-syarī'ah, and Islamic legal reform. Secondary data in the form of previous research results, academic reports, and relevant scientific articles were also analyzed to enrich the perspective and strengthen the argument.

Data analysis was conducted using the content analysis method, which examines the text's content to identify key ideas, compare perspectives, and formulate a theoretical synthesis regarding the ontology, epistemology, and axiology of Islamic law (G. A. Bowen, 2009). The analysis process was conducted systematically through three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2014). With this method, the research is expected to produce a measurable, structured, and applicable theoretical understanding that explains the role of Islamic legal philosophy in the renewal of Islamic law in the contemporary era.

3.   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the philosophical tradition, each discipline addresses more than just technical or practical aspects, but also touches on deeper fundamentals regarding the nature, methods of acquiring knowledge, and the ultimate goal of that knowledge (Rahmatillah, 2020). This philosophical framework helps position a science not merely as a collection of theories, but as a complete, measurable system of knowledge that is relevant to human life. Thus, philosophy always serves as a fundamental foundation connecting the principles, methods, and benefits of a science.

Accordingly, Islamic legal philosophy is structured within the same analytical framework. It does not stop at normative explanations of law, but rather uncovers the philosophical foundations behind it. Therefore, this discussion will encompass three main dimensions: ontology, epistemology, and axiology, as a gateway to a deeper understanding of Islamic law (Fattah, 2015). Through these three dimensions, Islamic law can be understood not only as texts and rules, but also as a system of knowledge with a clear essence, method, and utility.

3.1 Ontology as the Essence of Islamic Law

Ontology, in its terminology, comes from the words *ontos* (being) and *logos* (science). In philosophy, it is defined as the branch that discusses the nature of existence. Aristotle called it *first philosophy*, the science of existence as it exists. In Islamic literature, Ibn Sina defined ontology as the discussion of *mawjud* (something that exists), including its relationship to the first cause, namely Allah SWT (Wuri, 2022). Thus, ontology discusses not only what exists, but also why something exists and how its existence is explained philosophically.

Within the framework of Islamic legal philosophy, ontology refers to fundamental questions about the nature of Islamic law: what is its source, why it exists, and how its existence is justified. Ontologically, Islamic law is understood as law rooted in the revelation of Allah SWT through the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Both are absolute normative sources and serve as the foundation for the existence of Islamic law. Without revelation, Islamic law lacks an ontological foundation that distinguishes it from man-made positive law. As emphasized by several studies, the sources of Islamic law are not only normative but also metaphysical, as they are viewed as divine commands containing absolute truth (Mifathul, 2022). However, revelation as a source of law would be meaningless without the presence of reason. Reason acts as an instrument that enables revelation to be understood, interpreted, and applied in an ever-changing social reality. Therefore, reason has an ontological position in Islamic law: it is not merely a tool, but part of the existence of the law itself. Al-Ghazālī in *al-Mustaṣfā* states that the text of revelation is the basis of sharia, but reason is needed to understand the meaning of the word, determine the *illat* of the law, and apply sharia

provisions in cases not explicitly mentioned in the text (Husamuddin, 2023). Thus, revelation and reason complement each other as the ontological foundation of Islamic law.

The dialectic between revelation and reason in Islamic law is also evident in the practice of ijtihad (Dhestiana, 2019). Islamic legal ontology not only recognizes the existence of revelation as a source but also views the ijtihad activities of scholars as part of the existence of law itself. Ibn Rushd in *Bidāyat al-Mujtahid* shows how different methods of reason in understanding texts give rise to diverse opinions in *fiqh* (Madani, 2017). This indicates that ontologically, Islamic law exists not only in the form of sacred texts, but also as a product of human thought that is valid as long as it is based on revelation. Sharia as divine law remains absolute, but *fiqh* as a product of reason is relative and dynamic.

In the Indonesian context, the ontological dimension of Islamic law also impacts its presence in the public sphere. The Compilation of Islamic Law (KHI) is evidence that Islamic law exists not only as a religious norm but also as a legal system that exists within society (Fitri & Sh, 2020). Ontologically, Islamic law is viewed as part of the national legal system, originating from revelation but enlivened by reason through legislative mechanisms and social adaptation. Thus, the existence of Islamic law in the modern context does not lose its transcendental roots, but also does not neglect the role of human rationality in managing it.

However, the ontological presence of Islamic law in Indonesia cannot be separated from a multicultural and legally plural public sphere, where state law, customary (adat) norms, and diverse religious traditions coexist. In this setting, Islamic law "exists" not only as a transcendental norm and rational construction, but also as a lived normative order that is negotiated through institutions, social practices, and inter-community interactions (Griffiths, 1986; Merry, 1988). Accordingly, ontological reflection on Islamic law for reform needs to recognize plurality as a social fact, so that reform remains faithful to revelation while capable of operating within overlapping normative orders.

Contemporary studies also show that the *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah* is the ontological foundation of Islamic law. Essentially, Islamic law exists to safeguard five basic principles of life: religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property. These values originate from revelation but are understood and formulated through reason (Umar, 2017). Thus, the existence of Islamic law can be explained and justified ontologically: it originates from revelation, is understood through reason, and is intended for the benefit of mankind. This is what makes Islamic law unique: it has a transcendental basis, yet remains able to interact with empirical reality through the workings of human reason.

From this description, it is clear that the ontological essence of Islamic law rests on two main pillars: revelation and reason. Revelation provides legitimacy and authority for law, while reason makes it alive, dynamic, and relevant throughout time. The ontology of Islamic law thus affirms not only the existence of law as a sacred text but also as a normative-rational system present in human life. This synergy between revelation and reason makes Islamic law not merely a normative norm but also a way of life capable of responding to the needs of the times without losing its transcendental foundation.

3.2 Epistemology as a Method of Exploring Islamic Law

Epistemology is etymologically derived from the Greek words *epistēmē* (knowledge) and *logos* (science) (Maulina & Nurjannah, 2018). In philosophy, epistemology is understood as a branch that discusses the origins, methods, and validity of knowledge. If ontology focuses on the nature of something's existence, then

epistemology pays attention to the questions of how knowledge is obtained, how its truth is tested, and what is the valid basis for calling something knowledge. In the context of Islamic legal philosophy, epistemology means the study of how Islamic law is explored, interpreted, and formulated so that it can become a guideline for the community.

Traditionally, the epistemology of Islamic law is built on two major concepts: *istinbā ṭ* and *istidlāl*. Both are rational-religious methods used by scholars of *ushul fiqh* to derive law from the sources of sharia. *Istinbāṭ* means the process of extracting law directly from the primary sources, namely the Qur'an and Sunnah, through the rules of *ushul fiqh*. While *istidlāl* means the process of legal reasoning that involves additional arguments such as *ijmā', qiyās, istihsān, maslahah mursalah, sadd al-dzarī'ah*, and others, all of which function to bridge the text with new realities (Nalang, 2015). Thus, the epistemology of Islamic law answers the question of how normative provisions in texts can be transformed into living laws in society.

Istinbāṭ holds a central position in Islamic law. It is an intellectual activity to extract law from revealed texts through the tools of *ushul fiqh. Usul fiqh* scholars developed a set of rules for interpreting the wording of the Qur'an and Sunnah. This study includes linguistic analysis, such as distinguishing between general (*'ām*) and specific (*khāṣ*) , absolute and *muqayyad*, true and figurative, and commands (*amr*) and prohibitions (*nahy*). Furthermore, *istinbāṭ* also involves determining *the illat* (legal grounds) that form the basis for the enactment of a law (Izzah, 2021). For example, the prohibition of *khamr* in the Qur'an is not only understood as a prohibition on certain drinks, but because of the *illat* of intoxication, all intoxicants are categorized as haram. The process of *istinbāṭ* is thus an epistemological work that transforms texts into laws that can be applied to concrete cases.

In addition to *istinbāt*, Islamic legal epistemology also includes *istidlāl*, namely seeking evidence to achieve the desired goal through a process of legal reasoning through evidence that is not explicit in the Qur'an and Sunnah, but is methodologically recognized such as the use of *qiyas, istihsan, maslahah mursalah, 'urf* etc. *Qiyās*, for example, is a form of *istidlāl* in which the law of a new case is determined based on the similarity of *illat* with the case already existing in the text. A classic example is the prohibition of modern narcotics which is analogous to *khamr* because both are intoxicants. Similarly, *maslahah mursalah* is used as a legal argument in new cases for which there are no textual provisions, such as traffic regulations or rules on digital transactions. All of this shows that *istidlāl* is an epistemological mechanism that allows Islamic law to adapt to the times without losing the legitimacy of sharia (Mifathul, 2022).

Scholars also emphasize that *istinbāṭ* and *istidlāl* are inseparable. *Istinbāṭ* functions to explore the legal meaning of the revealed text, while *istidlāl* functions to connect the text with new realities that are not explicitly mentioned. Imam Shafi'i in *al-Risālah* emphasized the importance of the Sunnah as an explanation of the Qur'an, but simultaneously acknowledged the role of *qiyās* as a valid method of *istidlāl*. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah added that if a law cannot be found in the text, then maslahah must be the primary consideration (Muharom, 2020). Thus, Islamic legal epistemology operates through a dialectic between text (*istinbāṭ)* and context (*istidlāl*), so that the law remains sourced from revelation while being relevant to the needs of society.

In modern developments, the epistemological methods of Islamic law have expanded. Fazlur Rahman proposed the "double movement" theory as a form of modern *istinbāṭ*: first, understanding the meaning of the text in its historical context; second, extracting its universal moral principles for application in the contemporary context. With

this theory, Islamic law is not understood literally, but substantively. On the other hand, Jasser Auda offers a systems theory in Islamic law, which emphasizes that the *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah* must be central to *istidlāl*. Within the *maqāṣid* framework , Islamic law can be reinterpreted to address modern issues such as human rights, democracy, the environment, and digital technology (Hasanah et al., 2025).

Islamic legal epistemology, based on *istinbāṭ* and *istidlāl*, is also crucial in the Indonesian context. For example, the Compilation of Islamic Law (KHI) was compiled by combining the two. Some rules are derived directly from *istinbāṭ* from the Qur'an and Sunnah, such as provisions on marriage and divorce. However, others are established through *istidlāl*, taking into account the welfare of Indonesian society, such as regulations regarding inheritance distribution or marriage registration. This demonstrates that Islamic legal epistemology can function practically within the national legal system, making Islamic law not merely a normative text, but a living law within society (Siswanto, 2023).

In a plural and multicultural society, the "context" that informs istidlāl needs to be treated systematically, including social diversity, local 'urf, and the potential tensions among overlapping normative orders. In this sense, 'urf and maslahah considerations operate not merely as supplementary arguments, but as methodological bridges for translating revelation-based principles into rules that can be publicly justified and institutionally workable (J. R. Bowen, 2003; Tamanaha, 2017). Therefore, epistemological renewal requires an explicit integration of maqāṣid-based reasoning and contextual mapping, so that istinbāṭ remains grounded in ushul fiqh while istidlāl remains responsive to the realities of a multicultural public sphere.

Thus, Islamic legal epistemology can be understood as the heart of Islamic legal philosophy. It explains how law is derived, how its validity is guaranteed, and how it is applied in life. *Istinbāṭ ensures* that Islamic law is always based on revelation, while *istidlāl* ensures that it is always contextual. The synergy of the two produces law that is both authentic and dynamic. Without *istinbāṭ*, Islamic law loses its normative footing; without *istidlāl*, Islamic law loses its relevance. Therefore, Islamic legal epistemology is not merely an interpretive technique, but rather a philosophical framework that ensures the continuity of Islamic law throughout history.

In addition to serving as a rational tool for interpreting the text, *istidlāl* also opens up space for legal exploration based on *the maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*. This approach views Islamic law as essentially revealed to safeguard the five basic goals of human life: religion, life, reason, progeny, and wealth. If the text does not provide an explicit answer to a problem, then consideration of the *maqāṣid* can be used as the basis for istidlāl (N. Yusuf et al., 2025). In this way, Islamic law remains grounded in the spirit of revelation, while also being responsive to the needs of the times.

For example, regulations regarding modern traffic or information technology are not explicitly mentioned in the Qur'an or Sunnah. However, through *istidlāl* based on the *maqāṣid*, scholars can establish new rules. The prohibition of reckless driving on the highway can be formulated by referring to *ḥifẓ al-nafs* (protecting the soul) (Fariadi, 2019). Similarly, regulations regarding drug abuse, despite the lack of explicit text, can be declared haram on the basis of *ḥifẓ al-'aql (protecting the mind*). Even contemporary issues such as digital transactions, personal data protection, or medical bioethics can be legally determined through *istidlāl* based on the *maqāṣid* principle.

Within an epistemological framework, *istidlāl* based on *maqāṣid* has two implications. First, it expands the scope of *ijtihād* so that Islamic law is not rigidly bound

to texts. Second, it provides philosophical legitimacy that Islamic law indeed aims to bring about benefits. As emphasized by al-Syāṭibī in al-*Muwāfaqāt*, sharia as a whole was revealed to realize benefits and reject *mafsadat* (Ahmad, 2011). This statement emphasizes that *istidlāl* is not only a logical deduction from texts, but also a creative interpretation based on the ultimate goal of sharia.

Thus, the epistemology of Islamic law through *istinbāṭ* and *istidlāl* cannot be separated from the *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*. *Istinbāṭ* ensures the law's adherence to the revealed text, while *istidlāl* through *maqāṣid* ensures its relevance to the needs of modern humans. Both are combined in an epistemological framework that makes Islamic law not only a normative system, but also an ethical system oriented towards values and welfare.

3.3 Axiology as the Goal and Value of Islamic Law

In the philosophy of science, axiology is defined as the theory of value, namely the study of the purpose, benefits, and practical orientation of knowledge (Sanprayogi & Chaer, 2017). If ontology discusses the nature of Islamic law and epistemology explains how to obtain law, then axiology seeks to answer the question: *why was Islamic law revealed and what wisdom is contained therein?* Thus, the core of the axiology of Islamic law is wisdom as the useful result of the law being applied. Scholars have long emphasized that Islamic law was not revealed without a purpose. Al-Syāṭibī in *al-Muwāfaqāt* states that "the entire sharia was revealed for the benefit of humanity." This benefit is formulated in *the maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*: protecting religion (*ḥifẓ al-dīn*), soul (*ḥifẓ al-nafs*), reason (*ḥifẓ al-'aql*), descendants (*ḥifẓ al-nasl*), and property (*ḥifẓ al-māl*). This is a concrete form of the wisdom of Islamic law, because every provision of sharia ultimately leads to the protection of the five basic aspects of human life (Siska et al., 2025).

Within multicultural societies, the maqāṣid framework also carries an inclusive ethical demand: the pursuit of maslahah should be oriented toward public welfare that can be shared across cultural and religious boundaries, and toward justice that protects vulnerable groups without erasing difference. From this perspective, maslahah and 'adl function as evaluative criteria for reform outcomes, including whether a rule strengthens dignity, legal certainty, and social cohesion for a diverse citizenry (J. R. Bowen, 2003; Kymlicka, 1995). Therefore, the axiology of Islamic law for reform is not only to secure benefits within the Muslim community, but also to contribute to fair and peaceful coexistence in the wider multicultural public sphere.

However, it is important to note that wisdom should not be understood freely or speculatively. Usul fiqh scholars distinguish between the *'illat* of law and *wisdom*. *'Illat* is a clear and measurable cause of the law, while *wisdom* is the benefit or expected goal of the law. (Dewi & Anggaini, 2025) Al-Ghazālī in *al-Mustaṣfā* emphasized that wisdom cannot be used as a legal basis if it is only an assumption or vague benefit. It must be measurable, real, and in line with the *qath'iy* provisions of sharia (Al-Ghazālī, *al-Mustaṣfā*). Thus, the wisdom in Islamic law is *mu'tabarah* (recognized by the Sharia), not *wahmiyyah* (pseudo) or *mulghah* (rejected by the sharia) (Al-Syāṭibī, *al-Muwāfaqāt*). Wahbah al-Zuḥaylī strengthens this by emphasizing that wisdom must always be placed within the framework of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*. This means that even though human reason is able to grasp the benefits of the law, it must still submit to the framework of values established by the sharia (Zain et al., 2025). This ensures that wisdom does not become subjective or change according to momentary interests, but remains universal, consistent, and does not contradict the *qath'iy nash*.

A concrete example can be seen in the obligation of zakat. Ontologically, it is a divine command, epistemologically revealed through verses and the Sunnah, and axiologically, it contains wisdom in the form of economic equality and social solidarity. This wisdom is measurable because its benefits in reducing social inequality can be directly seen. Similarly, the prohibition of usury (riba) is prohibited; the text of the Quran forbids it, but the wisdom contained in it is preventing economic exploitation and protecting the vulnerable, which can also be measured socio-economically (Putri, 2024).

In the Indonesian context, Islamic legal reform through the Compilation of Islamic Law (KHI) is largely based on considerations of wisdom. For example, the obligation to register marriages is not explicitly stated in the Qur'an, but is established for the benefit of the people, namely to provide legal certainty and protect the rights of women and children (Nasir, 2016). Such legal reform measures must be understood as a form of implementation of the axiology of Islamic law, because it makes social wisdom the legal orientation, while maintaining fidelity to the principle of *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah* (Hasanah et al., 2025). The same thing is also emphasized by several contemporary studies that view Islamic legal philosophy as the basis for legal reform. These studies state that Islamic law must be interpreted not only from a textual perspective, but also from the perspective of its objectives and practical benefits. In this way, Islamic law is not trapped in normative formalities, but rather exists as a living and relevant legal system (Siswanto, 2023).

Thus, the axiology of Islamic law demonstrates that every law possesses wisdom as a useful result that must be clear, measurable, and must not conflict with definite sharia provisions. Wisdom should not be interpreted as something relative or subjective, but must be placed within the framework of maqā ṣid al- syarī'ah to maintain its validity. This is what distinguishes Islamic legal axiology from a mere utilitarian approach. Islamic legal axiology not only considers practical benefits, but also emphasizes that these benefits must be valid according to sharia, in line with the goals of sharia, and consistent with the *qath'iy nash*.

4. CONCLUSION

This article has argued that Islamic legal philosophy can serve as an integral paradigm for Islamic legal reform in Indonesia's multicultural and legally plural environment. Ontologically, it clarifies Islamic law as grounded in revelation while remaining open to rational engagement with diverse social realities. Epistemologically, it positions istinbat and istitdal - including maqasid al-shariah and maslahah reasoning - as disciplined methods for translating normative sources into workable rules amid overlapping state, religious, and customary norms. Axiologically, it orients reform toward justice, balance, and prosperity as public goods that can be communicated across cultural and religious differences. Taken together, these three dimensions provide a coherent pathway for reform that is faithful to sharia, methodologically accountable, and responsive to contemporary challenges. As a library-based study, this article offers a conceptual synthesis; further research should examine concrete reform episodes and court practices across Indonesian regions using socio-legal and comparative approaches to test how this paradigm operates in real multicultural settings.

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