

THE RELEVANCE OF MEHDI HAIRI YAZDI'S EPISTEMOLOGY IN THE TRADITION OF PESANTREN-BASED HIGHER EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY OF PESANTREN ZAINUL HASAN GENGGONG

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Abstract: *Mehdi Hairi Yazdi is a prominent modern philosopher who sought to revive Islamic philosophy by integrating it with Western thought. Drawing on Subrawardi's philosophy of illumination, Mehdi explored its alignment with Western philosophical concepts. A key contribution of his thought to modern Islamic philosophy is the concept of Hudhuri science, an epistemology based on intuition and reason. This research examines the relevance of Mehdi's epistemology to the Pesantren-based higher education tradition at Pesantren Zainul Hasan. Employing a qualitative method with content analysis, the study explores the relationship between Mehdi's epistemology and the Pesantren's educational practices. Findings indicate that the Pesantren Zainul Hasan tradition emphasizes critical reasoning, religious practices, and the pursuit of spiritual blessings, forming the foundation of its higher education epistemology. Both the Pesantren's approach and Hudhuri epistemology share commonalities in acquiring knowledge through Sufistic and rational paths.*

Keywords: *Epistemology; Mehdi Hairi Yazdi; Pesantren; Traditions*

Introduction

Pesantren are a representation of the treasures of Islamic knowledge in Indonesia. In its development, Pesantren have become institutions that integrate various approaches to acquiring knowledge

(epistemology), such as Irfan, Bayani and Burhani.¹ Irfani is an epistemological concept that refers to mystical knowledge characterized by personal insight and deep awareness of the divine and reality. This epistemology emphasizes understanding experience and Intuition, which are often associated with spiritual experiences. Irfani represents a form of subjective knowledge that connects individuals to transcendent truths. Bayani pertains to knowledge conveyed through language and communication. It highlights the importance of rhetoric, poetry, and cultural expression in transmitting knowledge. This knowledge is essential for articulating ideas and emotions, enabling cultural transmission that resonates within a community. Burhani is an epistemology based on logical reasoning and scientific inquiry. This epistemology emphasizes evidence-based support, critical thinking, and rational analysis. It represents a systematic approach to understanding the world, rooted in empirical observation and demonstrative evidence, aiming to produce reliable and verifiable knowledge.² These three concepts reflect diverse dimensions of knowledge within Arab culture. Irfani underscores the significance of subjective and spiritual understanding, Bayani focuses on the communicative aspects of knowledge, and Burhani highlights the necessity of rational and empirical validation. Together, they form a comprehensive epistemological framework that challenges binary thinking about knowledge and promotes a more holistic approach. Integration between these four approaches is nothing new.

Suhrawardi is one of the figures who try to combine Irfani and Burhani. This integration concept is known as the Illumination approach. Suhrawardi's thoughts influenced many figures after him, including Mehdi Hairi Yazdi. Mehdi is a 20th-century Islamic thinker who attempted to revive the Islamic philosophical tradition by integrating Islamic philosophical thought with the West. In his study, Mehdi offers the concept of Hudhuri science. Mehdi stated that Hudhuri science is an irfani process in obtaining the truth and making ratios (husuli) as a medium to justify it.³

¹ Muhamad War, "Nalar Santri : Studi Epistemologis Tradisi di Pesantren," *Fikri* 4 no. 2 (2019): 170. doi: <https://doi.org/10.25217/jf.v4i2.632> (2019).

² Muhammad Abed Al-Jabiri, *Bunyab Al-'Aql Al-'Arabi*, 2009.

³ Mehdi Hairi Yazdi, *The Principle of Grace: in A Philosophical Treatise on Muslim Politics Wisdom and Governance*, (Springer, 2022), <https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/a-philosophical-treatise-on-muslim-politics-mehdi-hairi-yazdi/1140978871>

The Relevance Of Mehdi Hairy Yazdi's Epistemology In The Tradition Of Pesantren-Based Higher Education: A Case Study Of Pesantren Zainul Hasan Genggong

Several researchers have discussed Hudhuri (Knowledge by Presence), including Efendi⁴ and Al-Walid⁵, who explored it from Mulla Sadra's perspective. Efendi stated that Mulla Sadra's unique epistemological approach to Hudhuri lies in its ability to extend beyond personal experience or self-knowledge and transcend into rationality, making it applicable to intellect and other forms of knowledge. According to Mulla Sadra, Hudhuri can be attained through four journeys. The first journey guides seekers in controlling their desires and purifying their hearts. In the second and third journeys, seekers begin to experience ma'rifah (spiritual knowledge), and by the end of the third journey, they enter the realm of guardianship, finally obtaining Hudhuri.⁶ Al-Walid succinctly described Hudhuri as primary knowledge granted by God to humans, with Husuli (acquired knowledge) as supplementary to Ilmu Hudhuri.⁷ Additionally, Mufid proposed that Ilmu Hudhuri, developed by Mulla Sadra, integrates classical ideas from philosophy, mysticism, and kalam (Islamic theology) with the Qur'an and Hadith.⁸ Furthermore, Ihsan examined Ilmu Hudhuri from Suhrawardi's perspective. Suhrawardi's approach to Ilmu Hudhuri illustrates that metaphysics is inseparable from epistemology.⁹ Maulana argued that Ilmu Hudhuri serves as an epistemological approach to affirm the existence of God.¹⁰ Previous studies on Hudhuri have predominantly focused on the

⁴ Endrika Widdia Putri and Salsa Hamidah Efendi, "Hudhuri 's Epistemology in The Perspective of Mulla Shadra's Philosophy of Knowledge," *Majalah Ilmu Pengetahuan dan Pemikiran Keagamaan Tajdid* 25, no. 2 (2022): 148, <https://doi.org/10.15548/tajdid.v25i2.5065>.

⁵ Kholid Al Walid, "Husuli dan Hudhuri dalam Konteks Filsafat Hikmah Muta'aliyyah," *Jurnal Yaqzhan: Analisis Filsafat, Agama dan Kemanusiaan* 6, no. 2 (2020): 163, <https://doi.org/10.24235/jy.v6i2.7117>.

⁶ Efendi Efendi, Gazali Gazali, "Hudhuri' s Epistemology," 150.

⁷ Al Walid, "Husuli Dan Hudhuri Dalam Konteks Filsafat Hikmah Muta'aliyyah."

⁸ Fathul Mufid, "Metode Memperoleh Ilmu Hudhuri Menurut Mulla Sadra," *Al-Tabrir: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 12, no. 2 (2016).

⁹ Nur Hadi Ihsan, Martin Putra Perdana, and Yongki Sutoyo, "The Concept of Suhrawardi's Hudhuri Epistemology and Its Relevance to the Contemporary Challenges," *Dialogia* 20, no. 1 (June 7, 2022): 84–108, <https://doi.org/10.21154/dialogia.v20i1.3364>.

¹⁰ Muhammad Iqbal Maulana and Syahuri Arsyi, "Tradisi Filsafat Iluminasionisme dan Pengaruhnya Terhadap Kajian Filsafat Islam," *Tajdid: Jurnal Ilmu Ushuluddin* 20, no. 1 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.30631/tjd.v20i1.140>.

thoughts of Mulla Sadra and Suhrawardi. Moreover, Mehdi's books are only references.

Many studies have been conducted on Pesantren, including the Pesantren Zainul Hasan, the research location in this study. The study of Pesantren Zainul Hasan is divided into two aspects, namely, the development of the institution and the philosophy of Pesantren Zainul Hasan. The first aspect is the development of educational institutions. The development of educational institutions is carried out through curriculum management¹¹, trial application of learning methods¹² and implementation of character education.¹³ Apart from that, kiai leadership is an important aspect of developing pesantren. Kiai became a manager and role model for students.¹⁴ The second aspect of the study is the philosophy adhered to by Pesantren Zainul Hasan. This philosophy is the santri satlogy. The santri satlogy is the values of the Pesantren Zainul

¹¹ Saridudin Saridudin, "Pengembangan Kurikulum Pendidikan Diniyah Formal (PDF) Di Pesantren Ulya Zainul Hasan Probolinggo," *EDUKASI: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Agama Dan Keagamaan* 18, no. 1 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.32729/edukasi.v18i1.690>; Nanang Qosim, "Manajemen Kurikulum Pendidikan Pesantren Salaf (Studi PP. Baitus Sholihin Zainul Hasan Genggong Probolinggo)," *At-Ta'lim* 5, no. 2 (2019).

¹² Fatih Holis Ahnaf et al., "Pengembangan Media Pembelajaran Berbasis Animasi Pada Materi Fonologi Untuk Mahasiswa Menggunakan PowerPoint," *Ainara Journal (Jurnal Penelitian Dan PKM Bidang Ilmu Pendidikan)* 2, no. 2 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.54371/ainj.v2i2.26>; Edi Kurniawan Farid, Mamluatun Ni'mah, and Nur Arifah, "The Teaching of The Speaking Skill Using The Audio-Oral Method for The Students of Islamic Senior High School of Zainul Hasan Genggong Probolinggo," *Mantiqun Tayr: Journal of Arabic Language* 1, no. 1 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.25217/mantiqutayr.v1i1.1197>.

¹³ Nanang Qosim and Abdul Hamid, "Mahasiswa Milenial Berkarakter Santri (Studi Institutut Zainaul Hasan Genggong Probolinggo)," *Fenomena* 19, no. 1 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.35719/fenomena.v19i1.33>; Abd. Aziz and Imam Qalyubi, "The Internalization of Profane and Sacred in Forming the Character of Islamic Santri in the Islamic Boarding School of Zainul Hasan Genggong Probolinggo," 2019, <https://doi.org/10.2991/iccd-19.2019.175>; Herwati, "Penanaman Nilai Relegius Melalui Kegiatan Kerohanian Islam Terhadap Siswa MA Zainul Hasan 1 Genggong Probolinggo," *Qolamuna: Jurnal Studi Islam* 8, no. 1 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.55120/qolamuna.v8i1.652>; Mohammad Fadil et al., "Penerapan Pendidikan Karakter Kemandirian Dan Kepedulian Sosial Santri Di Pondok Pesantren Zainul Hasan Genggong," *Jurnal Pendidikan Berkarakter* 5, no. 2 (2022).

¹⁴ Her Wati, "Kepemimpinan KH. Muhammad Hasan Mutawakil Alallah Terhadap Pengembangan Pondok Pesantren Zainul Hasan Genggong Probolinggo," *At-Turost : Journal of Islamic Studies* 7, no. 2 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.52491/at.v7i2.29>.

Hasan, which is intended as a basis for forming the character of the santri.¹⁵ Guided by the santri satlogi, santri are expected to be able to become role models for society in broadcasting religious values.¹⁶ Pesantren Zainul Hasan is an ideal case study due to its unique position as a Pesantren-based higher education institution. Unlike conventional pesantren that emphasize *kitab kuning* (Islamic classical texts) and *bahtsul masail* (problem-solving discussions based on classical jurisprudence), Pesantren Zainul Hasan has developed a tradition that balances spiritual practices, critical reasoning, and academic discourse.

From the discussion above, studies on Hudhuri, particularly from the perspective of Mehdi Hairi Yazdi, have yet to be explored. This research will focus on Mehdi Hairi Yazdi's epistemological concept, as he is an Islamic thinker inclined to adopt the ideas of two figures widely studied about Hudhuri, Mulla Sadra and Suhrawardi. Additionally, this study will examine the traditions found in higher education institutions affiliated with the Zainul Hasan pesantren. These traditions serve as the epistemological foundation of pesantren-based higher education institutions, making them an intriguing subject of study. Zainul Hasan pesantren embodies philosophical values explored through other philosophical approaches at the higher education level. Consequently, higher education traditions in the Zainul Hasan pesantren are directed towards understanding and applying these philosophical values through the traditions present within the educational environment. Furthermore, this research aims to analyze the relevance of epistemology within these traditions about Mehdi Hairi Yazdi's epistemology. It is expected to provide insights into the relevance of Mehdi Hairi Yazdi's epistemology to the epistemology of higher education institutions within the Zainul Hasan pesantren environment, grounded in the existing traditions.

¹⁵ Ismatul Izzah, "Manajemen Religious Culture Satlogi Santri Pondok Pesantren Zainul Hasan Genggong Probolinggo," *Al-Ta'lim: Jurnal Pendidikan* 6, no. 1 (2020): 45–63, <https://ejournal.unzah.ac.id/index.php/attalim/article/view/336>; Imam Bukhori, "Satlogi SANTRI Pesantren Zainul Hasan Genggong Pajarakan Probolinggo: Local Genius Penguat Karakter Bangsa," *Humanistika: Jurnal Keislaman* 6, no. 1 (2020).

¹⁶ Herwati Herwati, "Satlogi Santri Sebagai Sistem Nilai Dan Falsafah Hidup Pesantren Zainul Hasan Genggong Probolinggo," *Lisan Al-Hal: Jurnal Pengembangan Pemikiran Dan Kebudayaan* 15, no. 1 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.35316/lisanalhal.v15i1.944>.

Method

The object of study in this research encompasses the epistemological thoughts of Mehdi Hairi Yazdi and the traditions within Pesantren Zainul Hasan, particularly as they relate to higher education. Data on Mehdi Hairi Yazdi's thoughts were collected from his works and secondary texts discussing his epistemology. In contrast, data on the traditions of Pesantren Zainul Hasan were gathered through interviews with relevant figures, direct observation of practices, and analysis of documentation detailing Pesantren's activities and educational structure.

This research adopts a qualitative approach grounded in the context of Pesantren Zainul Hasan, an Islamic educational institution that integrates traditional Pesantren values with higher education principles. The case study focuses on how the traditions of Pesantren Zainul Hasan align with or diverge from Mehdi Hairi Yazdi's epistemological framework. By examining this specific case, the research aims to provide a deeper understanding of the interplay between Intuition, rationality, and tradition in shaping an educational system that addresses both spiritual and intellectual needs.

The methodology involves textual analysis of Mehdi Hairi Yazdi's works, such as *The Principles of Epistemology in Islamic Philosophy*, to extract his ideas on Intuition (irfani) and rationality (burhani). These ideas are synthesized into a coherent epistemological framework emphasizing the integration of spiritual and rational knowledge acquisition. Fieldwork includes interviews with key informants, such as educators, administrators, and students, to provide insights into the implementation and perception of traditions in the context of higher education. Observation of practices such as *tarekat*, *majlis sholawat*, and academic discussions is conducted to identify how these embody elements of Intuition and rationality, while historical and contemporary documents related to Pesantren Zainul Hasan's curriculum, traditions, and pedagogical methods are reviewed to contextualize the findings.

The research employs a content analysis model to systematically compare and interpret data from Mehdi Hairi Yazdi's works and Pesantren Zainul Hasan's traditions. The analysis aims to identify the foundational concepts in Mehdi's epistemology, such as the balance between Intuition and rationality, and the extent to which these concepts are reflected in the educational traditions of Pesantren Zainul Hasan.

The study also explores the points of alignment and divergence between Mehdi's epistemology and the observed practices.

Result and Discussion

Mehdi Hairi Yazdi's Epistemology

Mehdi Hairi Yazdi was a prominent figure in Islamic philosophy and political thought from Iran. Born in 1923, he began his basic education with training in a seminary established by his father, 'Abd al-Karim Hairi Yazdi, who was also an influential figure in Iran. At 28 years old, he received his ordination in Islamic jurisprudence from Grand Ayatollah Borujerdi.¹⁷ In 1952, the University of Tehran recognized his legal qualifications as equivalent to a doctoral degree in theology, allowing him to join its faculty.¹⁸ Additionally, Hairi Yazdi pursued further academic education at the University of Toronto, where he earned a PhD in Islamic philosophy before the Iranian Revolution. This degree added depth to his ability to integrate Islamic traditions with modern approaches.

Both before and after the 1979 Iranian Revolution, Mehdi Hairi Yazdi was known as a critical thinker. He was actively engaged in discussions about theories of governance and the role of philosophy in the context of Islamic politics. His most renowned work, *Hekmat va Hokumat* (Wisdom and Governance), was published in 1995, in which he critiqued the constitutional structure following the revolution and presented views on social contract theory within Islamic thought. However, the book was banned from publication domestically due to its sharp criticism of the concept of *velayat-e faqih* or the guardianship of the jurist in Iran.¹⁹

Mehdi Hairi Yazdi was also widely recognized for his

¹⁷ Mehdi Hairi Yazdi, "Prologue: The Main Arguments of Mehdi Hairi Yazdi's *Wisdom and Governance*," in *A Philosophical Treatise on Muslim Politics Wisdom and Governance*, vol. 21, 2022, 1–19, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-96658-4_1.

¹⁸ Mehdi Hairi Yazdi, *A Philosophical Treatise on Muslim Politics Wisdom and Governance* (Springer Nature, 2022).

¹⁹ Hairi Yazdi, "Prologue: The Main Arguments of Mehdi Hairi Yazdi's *Wisdom and Governance*."

contributions to bridging classical Islamic philosophy with Western thought. He pioneered productive dialogue between Islamic and European philosophy, exploring issues considered problems in European philosophy and offering solutions through his works. He authored nearly ten books, most of which focused on Islamic philosophy from a comparative perspective, establishing him as one of the leading representatives of traditional Islamic philosophy in contemporary Iran.²⁰

Mehdi Hairi Yazdi's epistemology seeks to integrate the Illuminationist approach of Suhrawardi with the Existentialist perspective of Mulla Sadra.²¹ He develops a unique framework that blends these two philosophical traditions, offering a comprehensive view of how knowledge is attained. Hairi Yazdi argues that pursuing knowledge involves a dual process encompassing Hudhuri (knowledge by presence) and Husuli (knowledge by correspondence). These methods reflect the interplay between direct, intuitive understanding and conceptual, mediated reasoning. Hairi Yazdi emphasizes that these two epistemological methods are not mutually exclusive but are interconnected in an existential cause-and-effect relationship. Hudhuri provides the foundation for primary, intuitive truths, while Husuli builds upon these insights to formulate structured and verifiable knowledge. Together, they form a dynamic process of discovering truth, illustrating how illumination and rational correspondence coexist and complement one another in pursuing knowledge.²²

Knowledge with presence (Hudhuri) is a type of knowledge in which all relationships are within their framework so that the entire anatomy of the idea can be seen as correct without any implications for external object references that require exterior relationships. The characteristic of Hudhuri science is its freedom from the dualism of truth and error. Another characteristic is the freedom of this knowledge from the distinction between knowledge and conception and knowledge and belief. An example of this knowledge is real knowledge for the subject who knows performatively and directly without the intermediary of any mental representation or linguistic symbolism.

This knowledge is manifested through all human expressions in

²⁰ Hairi Yazdi.

²¹ Mehdi Hairi Yazdi, *Universal Science: An Introduction to Islamic Metaphysics*, 2015.

²² Mehdi Hairi Yazdi, "Menghadirkan Cahaya Tuhan: Epistemologi Iluminasionis Dalam Filsafat Islam" (Bandung: Mizan, 2003).

general and through self-judgment in particular. In short, Hudhuri science is knowledge about objectivity directly present in the mind of the knowing subject. This type of knowledge is self-evident and has a self-objective object.²³ In short, Hudhuri knowledge is obtained through Intuition. Intuition is obtained from self-readiness. Self-readiness is obtained by carrying out Sufistic and ascetic activities to discover the presence of God in humans.²⁴

Knowledge by correspondence is a type of knowledge that involves both subjective and separate objective objects and includes a correspondence relationship between one of these objects and another. The combination of external and internal objects, along with the maximum degree of correspondence between them, constitutes the essence of this knowledge. The involvement of the double meaning of objectivity characterizes correspondence knowledge. This knowledge has a subjective object, which is the essence required by correspondence knowledge. It has an objective object which lies outside the conceptual order and is the objective reference of knowledge.²⁵

These two methods of knowledge have a relationship. Yazdi uses the Suhrawardi Illumination relation to describe the relationship between the two. Illumination Relationships are not designed to link one side of a relationship to another. Thus, separate entities are bound into one whole. The relationship between these two pieces of knowledge is a cause-and-effect relationship. In this relationship, knowledge with presence (hudhuri) has creative priority over correspondence knowledge (husuli).²⁶ Hudhuri science is used to achieve something that cannot be achieved by reason. Moreover, Husuli science is used to explain spiritual experiences logically.²⁷

²³ Hairi Yazdi.

²⁴ Ahmad Khudori Soleh, *Filsafat Islam Klasik-Modern*, 2016.

²⁵ Hairi Yazdi, *Universal Science: An Introduction to Islamic Metaphysics*.

²⁶ Hairi Yazdi, "Menghadirkan Cahaya Tuhan: Epistemologi Iluminasionis Dalam Filsafat Islam."

²⁷ Soleh, *Filsafat Islam Klasik-Modern*.

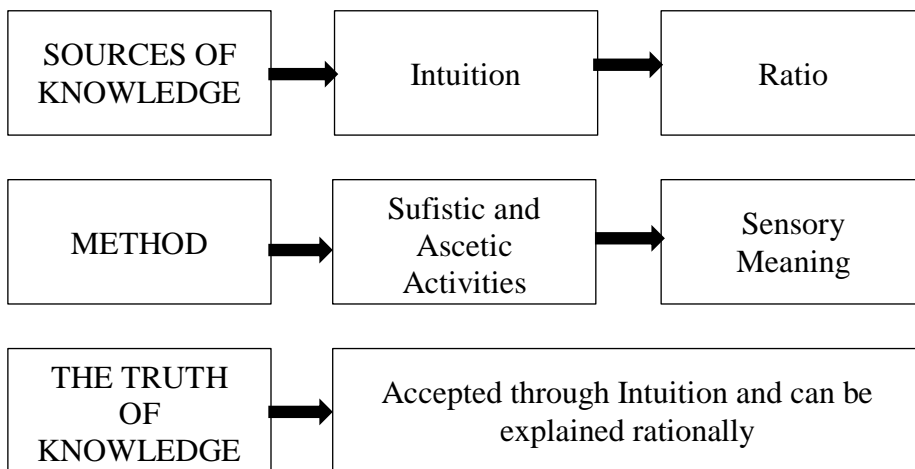


Chart 1. Epistemology of Mehdi Hairi Yazdi

Mehdi Hairi Yazdi's epistemology extends Suhrawardi's Illuminationist philosophy (Israqi) and Mulla Sadra's existentialism. Hairi Yazdi sought to revive Sufistic philosophy, which had declined among Islamic thinkers and in addition to integrating Illuminations and existentialist thought, Mehdi, through the concept of *hudhuri* (knowledge by presence), attempted to combine Ibn Sina's concept of the soul with the analytic philosophy of Wittgenstein and Russell.²⁸ Methodologically, *hudhuri* shares similarities with *irfani* knowledge. However, the method of *Hudhuri* proposed by Mehdi Hairi Yazdi is simpler than *irfani*. *Irfani* employs the methods of *ahwal* (spiritual states) and *maqamat* (spiritual stations) as steps to acquire knowledge. These stages of *ahwal* and *maqamat* must be traversed to attain *kashf* (unveiling or illumination). In contrast, *Hudhuri* does not require a sequential process of *actual* and *maqamat*.²⁹

Pesantren Zainul Hasan Higher Education Traditions

Pesantren Zainul Hasan has three universities: Universitas Islam

²⁸ Mehdi Aminrazavi, "Know Ibn Sinian Is Suhrawardi's Theory of Knowledge?," *Philosophy East and West* 53, no. 2 (2003): 203.

²⁹ Soleh, *Filsafat Islam Klasik-Modern*.

Zainul Hasan, Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Hukum Zainul Hasan and Hafsaawati University. These three universities have various traditions that serve as a reference for santri (students) in their behaviour. In this study, the focus will be on the traditions of the three universities. These traditions include developing critical reasoning, practising congregations and sholawat assemblies (Islamic spiritual practices), and seeking blessings (*barakah*). The santri traditions described come from literature research combined with the personal experience of the author, who is also a supporter of the Pesantren.

First, developing students' critical reasoning is a crucial aspect of higher education, particularly within institutions like Pesantren Zainul Hasan. Rather than imparting theoretical knowledge, these institutions prioritize fostering critical thinking skills. This approach is based on the belief that education should equip students to analyze problems in a realistic, in-depth, and academically accepted manner. Critical reasoning is about acquiring information and developing the intellectual tools to critically evaluate and address challenges within a specific field of study. At Pesantren Zainul Hasan, this development of critical reasoning is pursued through lectures and student discussion activities. Lectures serve as the foundational medium for presenting theoretical knowledge, but the real emphasis is placed on engaging students in active discussions. These discussions encourage students to challenge ideas, formulate arguments, and refine their perspectives based on logical reasoning and evidence. This dynamic interaction in the classroom promotes an environment where students are not merely passive recipients of knowledge but active participants in intellectual exploration. One of the main objectives of this approach is to cultivate the ability to respond to real-world problems within the student's academic discipline. By applying critical reasoning, students are trained to approach issues from multiple angles, carefully analyze available evidence, and arrive at solutions grounded in reason and reflection. This method encourages deeper engagement with the subject matter and prepares students to contribute thoughtfully to their fields.³⁰

Second, the practice of congregations and prayer assemblies plays a significant role in shaping the spiritual life of students (santri) at

³⁰ Nur Fatimah, "Observasi" (Probolinggo, 2023).

Pesantren Zainul Hasan. One of the key traditions that influence the students is their involvement in *tarekat* practices, which, though not universally adopted across all pesantren, has strong roots within the Pesantren Zainul Hasan. The *tarekat* followed at this pesantren is the Nahsabandiyah Ali Ba Alawi, a Sufi order that emphasizes spiritual discipline and soul purification. The teachings of this *tarekat* are centred around spiritual guidance, self-reflection, and the cultivation of virtues such as humility, patience, and sincerity.

While the Nahsabandiyah Ali Ba Alawi *tarekat* is an integral part of the spiritual life at Pesantren Zainul Hasan, it is not the only religious practice observed. The pesantren also organizes various prayer assemblies (*majlis sholawat*) to foster a deeper connection between students and Allah. These prayer assemblies are common in many pesantren, providing an opportunity for collective worship, reflection, and spiritual growth. At Pesantren Zainul Hasan, there are three prominent *majlis sholawat*: the Majlis Sholawat Tamru, the Majlis Sholawat Hasbana, and the Majlis Sholawat al-Khoir.

The activities within these prayer councils, though not as intricate or ritualized as the practices associated with the *tarekat*, serve a similar spiritual purpose. The central goal of these assemblies is to deepen the participants' spiritual connection to Allah through prayer and reflection. The rituals in these assemblies typically include *tawasul* (seeking intercession), *tablil* (recitation of the phrase "La ilaha illallah"), the recitation of the Mawlid Diba'i (a poetic tribute to the Prophet Muhammad), and the repetition of various *sholawat* (blessings upon the Prophet Muhammad). These practices help create an atmosphere of devotion and reinforce the importance of prayer in the students' daily lives.

While the *tarekat* practices and the prayer assemblies have distinct rituals and structures, they share a common objective: to draw students closer to Allah. Both approaches emphasize the significance of communal worship and spiritual development, albeit through different means. The *tarekat* provides a more structured and in-depth path for those seeking deeper spiritual guidance, while the prayer assemblies offer accessible ways for students to engage in worship collectively.³¹

Furthermore, religious assemblies and prayer meetings are not

³¹ Fatimah.

confined solely to the pesantren students; the broader community is also invited to participate. This inclusion helps foster a sense of collective spirituality that transcends the pesantren's walls and extends to the wider society. By involving students and the community in these practices, Pesantren Zainul Hasan strengthens its role as a spiritual hub and reinforces its commitment to educational and religious development.

In this context, the practices of *tarekat* and *majlis sholawat* at Pesantren Zainul Hasan are essential components of the pesantren's holistic approach to education, combining intellectual, spiritual, and communal aspects of learning. These practices offer a rich and supportive environment for students to grow in knowledge and their faith and connection to Allah.³²

Third, efforts to find blessings. Barokah has an important role in the learning process in Pesantren. Barakah means increasing goodness and sustainability. The existence of blessings is a marker of success for students living in Pesantren. The students always hope to gain knowledge that will bring blessings.³³ Blessings (barokah) among the students of the Pesantren Zainul Hasan are associated with the kiai's karamah. Kiai, with his karamah, can guide students both directly and intuitively.³⁴ Santri uses various methods to get blessings, such as kissing the kiai or teacher's hand, fighting over leftovers from the teacher's food or drink, fighting over cigarette butts, and turning over the kiai's sandals; when they receive an order, they immediately do so, it can even be linked to bringing souvenirs when visiting the kiai's residence.³⁵ The university community also recites the Qur'an every Haul Kiai and regularly every month. This activity is carried out so the santri's rabithah syuyuhiyah does not break. So, students continue to receive the blessings of Kiai,

³² Fatimah.

³³ War, "Nalar Santri : Studi Epistemologis Tradisi Di Pesantren."

³⁴ Ahmad Fauzi, "Persepsi Barakah Di Pondok Pesantren Zainul Hasan Genggong: Studi Interaksionalisme Simbolik," *Al-Tabrir: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 17, no. 1 (May 24, 2017): 105–32, <https://doi.org/10.21154/ALTAHRIR.V17I1.848>.

³⁵ Nur Hayati and Arifia Retna Yunita, "Nilai-Nilai Barokah Dalam Pendidikan Agama Islam Di Pesantren Zainul Hasan 2 Tambelang Krucil Probolinggo," *Andragogi: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Agama Islam* 3, no. 2 (2021), <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.33474/ja.v3i2.13896>.

who has died.³⁶

The *Haul Kiai* is an important occasion for the entire pesantren community, as it marks the anniversary of the passing of a revered figure—often a spiritual guide or the founder of the pesantren. On this day, the community gathers for special prayers, including the recitation of the Qur'an, to honour the memory of the deceased Kiai. This recitation is not only an act of reverence but also serves a deeper spiritual purpose: it is believed to strengthen the bond between the living and the deceased, ensuring that the blessings (*barakah*) of the Kiai continue to flow to the students. The act of reciting the Qur'an for the deceased is rooted in Islamic traditions, where it is understood that the rewards of such recitations are transferred to the soul of the departed, bringing them spiritual benefit.

Moreover, reciting the Qur'an every month is part of an ongoing practice at Pesantren Zainul Hasan to preserve the *rabithah syuyubiyah* (the spiritual connection or bond between the students and their spiritual teachers). This *rabithah* is essential for maintaining continuity in the student's spiritual education and ensuring that the guidance and blessings of the deceased Kiai continue to influence and support them. By regularly engaging in these recitations, the students reaffirm their allegiance and connection to the teachings and spiritual legacy of the Kiai, which in turn fosters a sense of continuity and stability in their spiritual development.³⁷

The recitation typically involves collective reading of the Qur'an, often with specific surahs (chapters) or verses chosen for their spiritual significance. Sometimes, the recitations are accompanied by prayers, supplications, and *sholawat* (blessings upon the Prophet Muhammad) to enhance the spiritual atmosphere further. This communal activity helps to reinforce the values of unity, humility, and devotion among the students as they come together to honour their Kiai and the broader spiritual tradition of the pesantren.

The benefits of these recitation practices extend beyond the immediate spiritual impact on the students. They serve as a reminder of the importance of maintaining a connection with past teachers and scholars, whose wisdom and guidance continue to shape the educational

³⁶ Hassan Ahsan Malik, "Wawancara," 2023.

³⁷ Malik.

environment at the pesantren. For the students, participating in these recitations is a way to feel a sense of belonging to a larger spiritual community that transcends time and space, linking them to both their living and deceased teachers.³⁸

In essence, the recitation of the Qur'an during the *Haul Kiai* and every month is a vital practice at Pesantren Zainul Hasan that not only strengthens the spiritual bonds among students and their teachers but also ensures that the blessings and guidance of the Kiai continue to nurture the students' religious and intellectual growth. This tradition is integral to the pesantren's broader mission to provide holistic education, which balances intellectual, spiritual, and communal development.

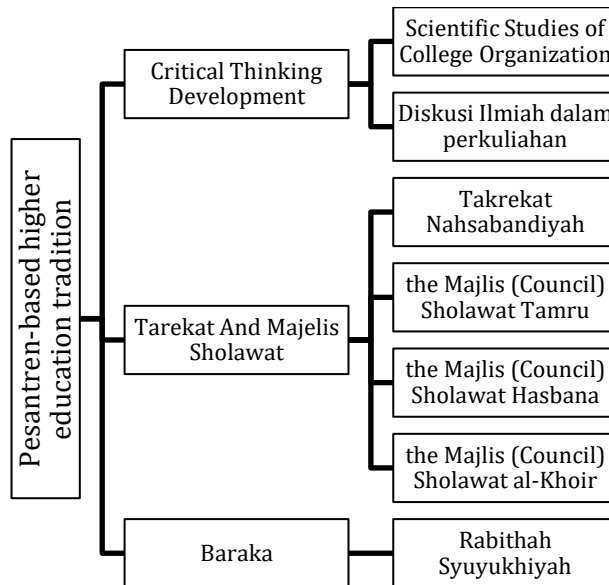


Chart 2. Pesantren-based higher education traditions

Pesantren have a variety of traditions, including the study of *kitab kuning* (classical Islamic texts), *bahtsul masail* (problem-solving discussions), *tarekat* (spiritual paths), and *barokah* (blessings and wisdom).

³⁸ Fauzi, "Persepsi Barakah Di Pondok Pesantren Zainul Hasan Genggong: Studi Interaksionalisme Simbolik."

These traditions reflect the students' intellectual professionalism and religious maturity (*santri*).³⁹ Unlike the general traditions of pesantren, higher education institutions based in pesantren do not emphasize the study of *kitab kuning* as a tradition. This is because students in higher education no longer study *kitab kuning* as intensively as those in other levels of education. Moreover, not all students at the university level reside in the pesantren, and textual study is not the primary focus in higher education. Pesantren-based universities prioritize critical reasoning skills over text analysis. Discussions in universities also differ from *bahtsul masail* conducted in pesantren. In pesantren, *bahtsul masail* involves discussions about contemporary issues analyzed through classical texts.

In contrast, discussions among university-level students emphasize individual rationality rather than textual references. This difference in tradition is attributed to the cognitive maturity of university students, which differs from that of students at lower educational levels. While *bahtsul masail* and the study of *kitab kuning* in pesantren primarily involve textual discussions, university students analyse and synthesise texts.

University students are in a stage of cognitive maturity known as post-formal thinking. Postformal thought is a cognitive developmental stage that recognizes contradictions in the world and is characterized by flexible thinking and the ability to evaluate opposing viewpoints to find truth, synthesizing these ideas into a more comprehensive understanding.⁴⁰ The essence of postformal thinking lies in the ability to manage multiple formal systems or truth systems. This requires a level of subjectivity necessary to commit to one logical truth system and to act within that system.⁴¹ (University students operate beyond the cognitive domain of comprehension, reaching a cognitive analysis and synthesis level.⁴², integrating various thoughts and concepts to discover truth through their studies..

³⁹ War, "Nalar Santri : Studi Epistemologis Tradisi Di Pesantren."

⁴⁰ Elizabeth Scott-Janda and Gulden Karakok, "Revisiting Piaget: Could Postformal Thinking Be the next Step?," *Philosophy of Mathematics Education Journal*, no. 30 (2016): 1–11.

⁴¹ Scott-Janda and Karakok.

⁴² Benjamin S Bloom et al., *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals* (David McKay Company, 1956).

The Relevance of Mehdi Hairi Yazdi's Epistemology to the Pesantren Zainul Hasan Traditions

The traditions of the Zainul Hasan pesantren demonstrate that sources of knowledge are acquired intuitively. Students are required to engage in activities such as tarekat (spiritual practices), majelis sholawat (gatherings for praise), and khotmil Qur'an (Qur'anic recitations) as a means of opening themselves to intuitive knowledge. These activities aim to bring students closer to God and to establish a rabithah syuyuhiyah (spiritual connection) with the kiai (Islamic scholars) who have passed away. Through these practices, it is hoped that the deceased Kiai can provide spiritual guidance. This spiritual guidance is regarded as the pinnacle of a student's knowledge. A student is considered successful if they have experienced guidance from a kiai through their spiritual presence within the student's soul. Furthermore, the tradition of maintaining relationships with educators (kiai or lecturers) and serving them is seen as part of seeking blessings (*barakah*), which purifies the mind, enabling divine light to reach the students.

The traditions of pesantren form the foundation of the epistemology of both pesantren and pesantren-based higher education. War argues that the epistemology of pesantren encompasses burhani, irfani, bayani, and hikmah, based on Al-Jabiri's concept. According to Al-Jabiri, the epistemology of knowledge developed in the Arab world can be divided into three patterns: bayani, burhani, and irfani. Bayani is understood as acquiring knowledge through sacred scriptures or pre-Islamic poetry. Burhani is defined as acquiring knowledge through reasoning (rationalism), while Irfan refers to acquiring knowledge through contemplation (Intuition). The Bayani epistemological model is evident in the tradition of studying kitab kuning (classical Islamic texts), which is closely associated with the pesantren environment. Meanwhile, burhani and irfani models are reflected in the traditions of bahtsul masail (problem-solving discussions) and tarekat (spiritual orders).⁴³

On the other hand, in the epistemology of Pesantren-Based Higher Education, the validation of knowledge does not rely on Intuition. The truth of knowledge is more focused on validation through

⁴³ Al-Jabiri, "Bunyah Al-'Aql Al-'Arabi."

rational and empirical analysis. Intuition is regarded as subjective knowledge, which may or may not be acquired by the students, and it is not a mandatory requirement for the validation of knowledge. Knowledge is considered valid if it can be explained and proven rationally without being based on intuitive experience. Unlike the epistemology of pesantren, the epistemology of pesantren-based higher education does not adopt Bayani as its foundation. It leans more toward Mehdi's epistemological concept. Mehdi⁴⁴'s epistemology does not require Bayani as a source of knowledge. Texts are not considered the source of knowledge's truth but are treated as objects to be studied rationally.

Similar to Mehdi's epistemology, knowledge of students' traditions is acquired through intuition and the rationalization of objects. Discussions and responsive analyses of contemporary issues are integral to developing students' critical reasoning. Every issue or theoretical concept must be rationally acceptable. Students must be able to explain every issue they propose rationally. Knowledge cannot merely be accepted based on texts but must also be rationally interpreted. The spiritual guidance mentioned earlier, regarded as the culmination of students' knowledge, is also critically read and analyzed to provide confidence in the truth of dreams or inspirations received by the students.

Aspect	Mehdi's Epistemology	Pesantren-Based Higher Education Epistemology
Source of Knowledge	Knowledge is acquired through Intuition and justified by reason.	Knowledge is acquired through Intuition and the rationality of objects.
Method of Knowledge Acceptance	Intuition is followed by rationality.	A combination of spiritual guidance and rational analysis of current issues.
Role of Intuition	Intuition is the primary source of knowledge, which must be justified	Intuition is considered a subjective knowledge source and not an

⁴⁴ Mehdi Hairi Yazdi, "Memahami Arti Ilmu Hudhuri," *Filsafat*, 1994, 26–28.

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Aspect	Mehdi's Epistemology	Pesantren-Based Higher Education Epistemology
	rationally.	absolute truth.
Peran Rasionalitas	Role of Rationality	Rationality is used to analyze and critique each theoretical concept.
Activities for Knowledge Development	Emphasis on intuitive acceptance, which is then rationalized.	Activities such as spiritual paths (<i>tarekat</i>), prayer gatherings (<i>majlis sholawat</i>), Quran recitation (<i>kebotmil Qur'an</i>), and rational discourse aimed at intellectual development.
Validation of Knowledge	The truth of knowledge must be intuitively accepted and rationally justified.	The truth of knowledge is more focused on rational analysis, and Intuition is not an absolute requirement for validating knowledge.
Purpose of Knowledge	To unite with the truth through intuition is justified by reason.	To achieve purification of thought and divine light through spiritual guidance and rationality.

Table 1. The relevance of Mehdi's epistemology and Pesantren-based higher education traditions

This table shows that, although there are similarities in the use of Intuition and rationality, the two approaches differ in the validation of knowledge and the role of Intuition in the learning process. In Mehdi's epistemology, the truth of knowledge must first be accepted intuitively and then justified through rationalization. This means that Intuition is considered the primary and authoritative source of knowledge. Once Intuition is obtained, the next step is to justify the knowledge through reason or logic. The validation of truth heavily depends on whether the

Intuition can be rationally justified. The knowledge is deemed valid if the Intuition can be rationally justified.

Epistemology is a crucial foundation in developing education, including higher education. It influences the way of thinking and the selection of educational methodologies. By understanding epistemology, educational institutions can formulate educational goals, determine study sources, and define methodological steps for acquiring knowledge.⁴⁵ The academic atmosphere and educational output will align with the existing traditions. Through understanding epistemology, educational institutions can develop their institutional distinctiveness.

Conclusion

The traditions of Pesantren-Based Higher Education broadly include the development of critical reasoning, *tarekat* (spiritual orders) and *majlis sholawat* (gatherings for praises and prayers), as well as the pursuit of *barakah* (blessings). These traditions are rooted in the routines and customs of pesantren, though not all pesantren traditions are adopted in pesantren-based higher education. This distinction arises due to the difference in cognitive maturity between university students and pesantren students who are still in school. Consequently, some pesantren traditions have evolved to accommodate the intellectual maturity of university-level students.

Pesantren-based higher education forms a distinct epistemology. Its traditions foster the belief that knowledge can be acquired intuitively through practices such as *tarekat*, participation in *majlis*, and seeking *barakah*. Additionally, knowledge is obtained through rational reasoning about the truth of knowledge, facilitated by discussions inside and outside the classroom. This epistemological framework aligns with Mehdi's epistemology, where Intuition and reasoning are recognized as sources of knowledge. The knowledge acquisition methods in both epistemologies are similar, incorporating elements of Sufism and rationality. However, the two epistemologies differ in their approach to validating truth. Mehdi's epistemology requires continuity between

⁴⁵ Nurul Yaqin, "Manajemen Lembaga Pendidikan Islam," *Madinah: Jurnal Studi Islam* 3, no. 2 (2016): 93–105, <http://ejournal.iai-tabah.ac.id/index.php/madinah/article/view/178>.

Intuition and reasoning, whereas the epistemology of pesantren-based higher education does not impose such a requirement.

This research is expected to contribute to the intellectual heritage of pesantren. Establishing an epistemology based on existing traditions serves as a foundation for the development of pesantren, particularly at the higher education level. This study focuses solely on pesantren-based higher education, thus providing an opportunity for further research on other levels of education and different pesantren models.

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