

## THE AMBIVALENCE OF CONTEMPORARY ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHICAL STUDIES



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### Abstract

Islamic philosophy is a critical study to answer the challenges of contemporary life. However, Islamic philosophy currently needs to improve its existence. Direction in the study of Islamic philosophy is essential, both in terms of methods and sources, so that the study of Islamic philosophy is not only in the world of new ideas but rather in existing realities. This article examines the challenges and innovations towards the ambivalence of Islamic philosophy in the contemporary era carried out by contemporary Indonesian Muslim philosophers. This article uses the library study method, which is a research approach carried out by collecting and analyzing information from written sources such as books, journals, articles, and documents related to the topic being discussed. This article finds that the importance of renewal in Islamic philosophical literacy is really needed as a guide for people who want to enter the world of Islamic philosophy with the study of living philosophy, as well as the digitalization of Islamic philosophy as a reflection that Islamic philosophy is fun.

### Abstrak

*Filsafat Islam merupakan suatu kajian yang sangat penting untuk menjawab tantangan kehidupan kontemporer. Namun demikian, filsafat Islam kini tengah mengalami tantangan serius dalam eksistensinya. Arah baru dalam pengkajian filsafat Islam sangat diperlukan, baik dari segi metode ataupun sumber agar kajian filsafat Islam tidak hanya berada dalam dunia ide akan tetapi lebih kepada realitas yang ada. Artikel ini mengkaji tantangan dan inovasi terhadap ambivalensi filsafat Islam di era kontemporer yang dilakukan oleh para filsuf Muslim Indonesia kontemporer. Artikel ini menggunakan metode studi pustaka, yang merupakan suatu pendekatan penelitian yang dilakukan dengan mengumpulkan dan menganalisis informasi dari sumber-sumber tertulis seperti buku, jurnal, artikel, dan dokumen-dokumen terkait topik yang dibahas. Artikel ini menemukan bahwa pentingnya pembaharuan dalam literasi filsafat Islam sangatlah dibutuhkan sebagai pembimbing orang-orang yang ingin masuk ke dalam dunia filsafat Islam dengan kajian living filosofi, serta digitalisasi filsafat Islam sebagai cerminan bahwa filsafat Islam itu asik.*

## INTRODUCTION

*Philosophy* is a scientific discipline that seeks everything to the deepest essence, with scientific thinking procedures and radical methods. The study of philosophy continued to develop from classical Greece to Islam. The development of philosophical studies continues to widen, starting from natural problems, God, religion, humanity, and things that were not considered before. Philosophy is also a foundation needed to progress



because other sciences are formed and developed from studying philosophy (Bagir, 2005, p. 102 – 103).

The journey of studying philosophy certainly runs smoothly; philosophical studies also experience much fierce debate, especially in Islam. Philosophy in the Islamic world brought Islam to a new curtain in the IX century until the XII century (Sudarton, 1996, p. 3). However, after the XII century, philosophy in Islam seemed to freeze because some Islamic scholars refused to accept new ideas and felt sufficient with existing thoughts. The greatest condemnation is leveled against philosophers or philosophy – related matters (Hanafi, 1991, p. 19). Some of the Islamic scholars went so far as to forbid philosophy.

Condemnation or prohibition of philosophy was felt until the XIV century. In the XIV century, the study of philosophy received defense from Ibn Rushd in his various works; one of the most famous is *Tahafut al-Tahafut*. He was defending the study of philosophy (Daudy, 1992, p. 153). Philosophy carried out by Ibn Rushd aimed to lift the image of philosophers and open the barrier of dogmatic knowledge. Ibn Rushd only had such a significant influence in the modern century because philosophy and philosophical studies are still stigmatized (negative judgment) (Machasin, 2011, p. 223).

In the postmodern century, the study of Islamic philosophy experienced great dynamics. The study of Islamic philosophy again found its sexiness to be discussed with the birth of various academic and intellectual works as a form of criticism of Islamic intellectual culture (Muslih, 2012). Studies of Islamic philosophy are broader from various points of view that lead it to the contemporary era. In the contemporary era, Islamic philosophy has given rise to a new awareness of the importance of a thorough, radical, and rational thinking style. In the contemporary era, philosophy and Islamic philosophy are presented no longer as exorbitant discussions but down – to – earth by reflecting on an existing condition or social situation (Abdullah, 1995, p. v).

In contemporary times, ideas in the study of Islamic philosophy continue to develop. The grounding of Islamic philosophical studies continues to be carried out, one of which is the future of Islamic philosophy and the construction of Islamic philosophical studies that are more actual and known from various aspects (Usuluddin, 2012, p. 268). However, the study of contemporary Islamic philosophy has also fluctuated; although the study of Islamic philosophy has been carried out both in terms of books and journals and research, the discussion of Islamic philosophy is still considered heavy, especially for beginners who want to study philosophy, especially because the study has more to do with divinity, kalam than human problems themselves.

According to Mulyadi Kartanegara in the book *Gate of Wisdom*. Accessing sources from Islamic philosophy in the contemporary era is easy, but many of these sources are written only monolithically. The study of Islamic philosophy is only widely displayed in one aspect, such as philosophical studies only focusing on history, figures, and theological problems. On the other hand, the study of Isalm's philosophy is considered to be trapped in a specific or specific study. For example, the philosophy of science, the concept of divinity, the concept of man, and the concept of nature and studies like this are interesting, but for people who already understand philosophy, what about beginners who want to plunge into the circle of philosophy? (Kartanegara, 2006, p. 2 – 7).

Indonesia is one of the countries where the growth and development of philosophical studies or Islamic philosophy is marked by several universities offering Islamic philosophy majors. However, this department is very quiet of enthusiasts. Islamic philosophy is still considered an exorbitant study and does not make a real contribution to life. The study

of contemporary Islamic philosophy is narrowing. Another challenge experienced by contemporary Islamic philosophy demands innovation and revitalization so that the study of Islamic philosophy is not monotonous to be discussed in a broad context. Recently, Indonesia held a workshop on studying Islamic philosophy as a form of seriousness in developing Islamic philosophical studies. This paper will examine the challenges and innovations to the ambivalence of Islamic philosophy in the contemporary era. However, Islamic philosophy is an important study that must be done broadly, not only on abstract problems. By looking at some studies of Islamic philosophy, they began to discuss the situation around them. With innovation in philosophical studies, it is hoped that it can become a new direction in philosophical studies, relying on the theoretical and practical levels. This novelty is also expected to create a new awareness of the importance of philosophical studies in dealing with various existing problems in the contemporary era. Islamic philosophy is a way of *life* and a way of *thinking*.

## AMBIVALENCE OF ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHICAL STUDIES

Philosophy as a tool not only functions as a dissector or motor that leads to understanding something from life but also finds wisdom in life because this is the culmination of philosophizing. Philosophy should have a wider place of study today. From what has been inherited by philosophical scholars, it should be treated and developed by employing the novelty of methods, a more radical theory of analysis of the process of thinking.

The development of Islamic philosophy today is one of the most important studies in responding to crises in the contemporary world, such as environmental crises, religion, and thought. However, the development of Islamic philosophical studies so far can be seen from various books and sources in the community. Other facts of Islamic philosophy remain the same as studying history, metaphysics, schools, or figures. The study of Islamic philosophy has not experienced significant development or contribution to the study of Islamic philosophy itself, which should be broader (Sholeh, 2016, p. 7).

In the contemporary era, efforts to develop the study of Islamic philosophy continue to be carried out, considering the role of philosophical studies is very important in responding to the challenges of an increasingly complicated life. As the *mother of science*, the method of thinking should be produced not just by history, metafiction, and other abstract studies but also the product of epistemology or the product of studies practically related to real life. Although philosophy is indispensable in life, it is still considered a confusing study and has a high standard for understanding (Muslih, 2004, p. 29).

A new orientation in the study of Islamic philosophy is needed to answer all current human problems, such as cases of transnational ideology, postcolonial radicalism, the politicization of religious identities, local religions, *black campaigns* smelling of SARA, environment, and moral ethics in others that are more applicable. The study of Islamic philosophy has a very strategic proposition in accommodating or solving existing contemporary problems (Fauroni, 2017, p. 416).

### 1. Challenge

The dichotomy of bullying against philosophical studies continues with the emergence of a new stigma against philosophical studies. Previously, the study of Islamic philosophy was attacked by al-Ghazali as a mistake and defended by Ibn Rushd. However, the impact of al-Ghazali's attack can still be felt today. Even some people consider studying philosophy as "madness" without meaning. From this, it can be seen

that historical trauma makes philosophical studies in Islam less developed and quiet interest in philosophical studies (Mulkhan, 2007, p. 135).

What al – Ghazali criticizes philosophy lies not in the error of philosophy but in Muslim philosophers he considers wrong in concluding a problem. Like the qadim of nature, God does not know particular problems, and so on. This bothers al – Ghazali's mind because it is not by the teachings of the Qur'an. That moved him to criticize philosophy scathingly. However, interestingly, al – Ghazali also used philosophy in his criticism. This indicates that philosophy is still allowed by Muslims but must be followed by the Qur'an and Sunnah signs.

However, what happened today is that his followers then misinterpreted what al – Ghazali did, so philosophy is forbidden to be done by Muslims until now. They generally consider that Islamic philosophy and religion have different foundations, which is fundamental. Therefore, many people in the Islamic world today do not philosophize in life. This is certainly different from the advanced Western world because they philosophize from what Muslims in the West have left behind at that time.

According to M. Amin Abdullah, the magnitude of al – Ghazali's influence cannot be denied as one of the causes of the undevelopment of Islamic philosophical studies. From this statement, many points of view express disagreement with philosophical studies. Other causes can be seen from studies carried out in philosophical studies, including (Ali dkk, 1998, p. 265). *First*, there are still many philosophical studies, such as repetitions of what has been studied before. *Second*, most philosophical research is oriented towards a concept or idea rather than looking at the reality of life, be it in terms of tradition or social culture (Fauroni, 2017, p. 413).

On the other hand, what makes studying Islamic philosophy unattractive to the contemporary era is work orientation; studying philosophy, what do you want to become? Or statements about the use of philosophy today. This makes the study of philosophy continue to be depressed and coupled with the rapid development of science outside philosophy with a more definite work orientation. Studying philosophy is also considered a lesson that will only waste time and must be clarified (Adian, 2001, p. i).

Such challenges have given rise to skepticism in the study of philosophy. The study of philosophy will only present discussions that need to be more grounded. In the current era, philosophical studies are needed again; philosophical studies must also provide more popular innovations or studies that are easier to understand by ordinary people. New patterns in philosophical studies must also emerge, not only regarding abstract studies or studies that only contain a view of something.

## 2. Innovation

The challenge to the study of Islamic philosophy in the contemporary era is a natural thing. This proves that the existence of Islamic philosophy has remained, although few enthusiasts of Islamic philosophy studies are faced with technological advances and a practical mindset. In this contemporary era, scholars of Islamic philosophy continue to conduct various studies so that Islamic philosophy becomes more interesting in its study orientation, not only at the exorbitant but also down – to – earth studies. A more down – to – earth study of Islamic philosophy will be very useful for contemporary humans with many problems.

The study of Islamic philosophy is faced with various views, dichotomies, and problems. The study of Islamic philosophy in recent decades has found a new one worth exploring. Especially in Indonesia, the study of Islamic philosophy has changed direction to a more practical one by paying attention to aspects in front of humans. In Indonesia,

the study of philosophy has gradually experienced development, especially through studies at Islamic religious universities, by making Islamic philosophy one of the concentrations of study programs (Mauludi, 2014, p. 143). The study of Islamic philosophy at Islamic universities in Indonesia is a program aimed at developing Islamic studies.

Although the challenges of Islamic philosophy are quite severe, on the other hand, scholars of Islamic philosophy continue to exist, such as Amin Abdulllah with the improvisation of the theory of integration of interconnection and Mulyadi kertanegara with locus living philosophy, Fahrudin Faiz digitized philosophy. According to the writer Fahrudin Faiz, he gave a great touch of innovation in the study of Islamic philosophy. On the other hand, we can also find that many forums study Islamic philosophy. Other innovations can also be seen from the efforts of the Indonesian government to provide scholarships for study programs that could be more desirable. If reexamined and looking at the present life, studying Islamic philosophy is very important.

The study of Islamic philosophy has an important position in understanding every development. The study of Islamic philosophy also functions as a filtration of the development of thought, culture, religious attitudes, streams, and politics (Minhaji, 2007, p. 166). The study of Islamic philosophy, which is faced with the duality of feelings between challenges and innovations, has provided a new space for scholars of Islamic philosophy. Nowadays, the study of Islamic philosophy is more varied and more interesting than before, focusing only on the study of figures, history, and dichotomous thoughts of a figure. The study of Islamic philosophy has provided a more practical understanding of philosophy.

#### **a. Renewal of Islamic philosophical literacy**

To re-attract enthusiasts in philosophical studies that have been very difficult to understand, there have been many developments and shifts in the pressure points of study seen from the latest sources of Islamic philosophy itself. More and more Islamic philosophical literature is published in Indonesia, both in the form of translated works and written directly by Indonesian scholars (Nasution, 1973). This literacy renewal is important so that Islamic philosophy is easier to understand; Islamic philosophy books written by Sirajuddin Zar, such as *Islamic philosophy pocketbooks* written by Haidar Bagir Kerrigan Gates, written by Mulyahdi Kertanegara, *before philosophy* written by Fahrudin Faiz, *knowing Islamic philosophy* published by Mizan, there is also *History Philosophy in Islam* written by T.J. D. Boer, *Philosophical Studies 1 and 2* published by Lkis, *basic books of Konteporer Islamic philosophy* written by M.T Mishbah Yazdi and so on.

From books circulating in Indonesia, both translations and books from Islamic philosophy scholars, there is an expansion and plurality in the study of Islamic philosophy. The studies and discussions in the latest philosophical books have touched on all aspects, such as metaphysics, epistemology, logic, ethics, aesthetics, the history of science, politics, and so on (Leaman, 2001, p. 1 – 6). This shows that the study of Islamic philosophy is wider than metaphysical studies or abstract studies (Nasr dan Leaman, 2003, p. 55 – 59).

#### **b. Reconstruction of methodologies and approaches**

The development in terms of methodology is also a form of novelty in the study of Islamic philosophy. Methodological reforms can be seen in the fruit of Abed al – Jabiri and Arkoun; from these two figures, the author sees differences in methodology used in Islamic philosophy (al – Jabiri, 2000, p. 245). Is one of the figures who criticized Islamic

thought using sociohistorical methodology and schematic thinking methods using only texts and religious experience? (Baso 2017, p. 44). Arkoun, as in the three scientific traditions, uses historical–critical methodology with historical, sociological, and anthropological approaches, seeing Arkoun's thought, which is heavily influenced by Western and Eastern thought, projected in the study of Islamic philosophy. Arkoun wanted to incorporate a new method in studying Islamic philosophy, not only relying on pre–existing methodologies (Baedhowi 2008, p. 25).

Some scholars of Islamic philosophy, such as Arkoun, who also study Western philosophy, are beginning to be agitated by the scarcity of Muslim thinkers who seriously explore the comparative study between Islamic philosophy and Western philosophy as a field of working on Islamic philosophy. It must be admitted that the development of the philosophical tradition in the Western world is more developed than in the Islamic world. Thus, Islamic philosophy should dialogue with Western philosophy, which is capable of metaphysical theoretical means in contemporary human praxis to develop its studies.

The need for the study of Islamic philosophy to be developed towards comparative studies with philosophical thought in the West will give rise to new polemics in studying Islamic philosophy. Most Islamic philosophers agree that the themes of Islamic philosophy studies must be related to contemporary problems that are the concrete needs of life today and not just stories or history about the thoughts of previous philosophers. The study of Islamic philosophy must be compared with the Western philosophical worldview—the latter tradition is more developed and superior today. This comparative study is also one of the concerns that fans of Islam philosophy will tend to prioritize Western philosophical views when the comparative model is carried out.

The author can see that the reconstruction of methodology and approach also has a role in developing Islamic philosophical studies. Thus, various approaches are needed because philosophy will almost become impossible without a clear and cohesive approach (Asy'arie, 1999, p. vii–viii). The existence of Islamic philosophy books written by many Islamic scholars with various approaches and methodologies proves that the study of Islamic philosophy continues to be in motion, explored, and easy to understand. According to Mulyadi Kartanegara, a scholar of Islamic philosophy, the study of Islamic philosophy should be rebuilt, considering the existing structure with the contextualization of problems that develop today both in terms of fiction and metaphysics, ethics, and so on.

### c. Dialoguing Islamic philosophy

Various efforts have been made to improve the study of Islamic philosophy, starting from updates in terms of methodological sources and approaches. All these efforts have not been in vain; this novelty gave rise to a more intense dialogue of Islamic philosophy among philosophical scholars. The dialogue of Islamic philosophy provides a new space and orientation for studying Islamic philosophy. Recently, many studies of Islamic philosophy have emerged by discussing them with Western philosophy with the latest issues in the study of Islamic philosophy. The development of literature and studies of Islamic philosophy in Indonesia shows the tendency of dialogue between Islam and the West. This can be seen in several works of Amin Abdullah, who has tried to dialogue between different traditions or eras regarding certain philosophical topics or issues. Of course, this kind of study model has positive value and needs to be further developed in the present (Abdullah, 2002).

The dialogue of Islamic philosophy can also be seen from the epistemology initiated by Amin Abdullah, namely *integrative and interconnective*. According to Amin Abdullah,

dialogue in studying Islamic philosophy is important considering the problem of urbanizing knowledge and the scope of study. *Integrative and interconnective* are used as a form of study that extends to a theme with integration and harmony (Abdullah, 2014, p. 33). In essence, this epistemic writing shows that the study of science is closely related to other sciences, including the study of Islamic philosophy (Ismail dkk, 2013, p. 40).

There is an assumption that philosophy is a science that is very difficult to understand and not cool by giving a label like this philosophy as if only for people who understand philosophy. To answer things like this, one of the mosques in Yogyakarta, better known as the General Sudirman Mosque (MJS), presents philosophical studies with methods that are easy to understand so that people can accept philosophy, the academic and non-academic worlds. Ngaji philosophy is a routine agenda in this mosque, discussing philosophical themes of Greek, Western, Eastern, Modern, and Post-Modern, carried out every Wednesday from 8 pm to 10 pm. This philosophy lecture was first held in 2013.

The dialogue of ngaji philosophy becomes interesting if combined, as happened at the General Sudirman Mosque Yogyakarta (MJS) with the Ngaji philosophy event. In the ngaji philosophy activities guided by Fahrudin, Faiz became interested in philosophy. The studies on philosophy conducted by MJS are very easy to understand. The dialogue of philosophical studies that has been considered very difficult to understand when in MJS philosophy studies is very light. As if dichotomies or discredits of philosophy can be dismissed. The author sees that the space for philosophical studies such as MJS is very necessary, considering that philosophical studies so far that have been skyrocketing can be closer to philosophical scholars' lives. The study conducted by MSJ can reflect how important the study of philosophy is in life. The dialogue of philosophical studies is very interesting because it discusses various philosophical thoughts and schools. MJS is also not a publisher of philosophical studies with language that is easier to understand.

The ngaji philosophy activity supervised by Fahrudin Faiz was attended by most philosophy students of UIN Yogyakarta. However, it does not rule out the possibility that this ngaji was attended by the public, non-philosophy students of UIN Yogyakarta. Ngaji philosophy, packed with easy-to-understand language, has made Ngaji philosophy acceptable to everyone. To make it easier in the presentation of Maji philosophy, the material is displayed in *slide* form as a guideline in the delivery of material to make it easier for followers of ngaji philosophy to understand what was conveyed by Fahrudin Faiz with narratives that are very easy to understand and feel through the use of Rajasthan combined with contemporary issues (Purwanto, 2021).

The seriousness of philosophical studies can also be seen in the Indonesian Islamic Aqidah and Philosophy Association (AAFI), held in Yogyakarta on October 22, 2022. In this activity, the author also invites all scholars of Aqidah and Islamic philosophy studies to commit to developing studies or relations nationally and internationally. The existence of this Association is a step forward in grounding the study of Aqidah and Islamic Philosophy. AAFI, according to the author, can also be considered a forum for developing philosophical and scientific studies, especially Islamic philosophy, which is the focus of AAFI's activities. As the author quoted from *medcom.id*, Amin Abdullah said that AAFI could compete in the issue of the renewal of Society 5.0 not only by prioritizing technological progress but also by emphasizing the field of humanity. Furthermore, Amin Abdullah gave a discourse that the philosophical tradition must start early (equivalent to high school) in facing the challenges of Society 5.0.

One of the remarks delivered by the dean of the Faculty of Usuluddin and Islamic Thought UIN Sunan Kajijaga Yogyakarta said that the studies of Aqidah and Islamic Philosophy are not only asleep in the world of ideas but must also be realized in concrete life. Furthermore, Amin Abdullah added that *philosophy as a way of thinking* is not to find the source of truth but is a vehicle for criticism of all kinds of *half-truths, post-truths, and non-truths*. This activity proves that the study of philosophy must continue to be rolled out both in the academic world and outside the academic world.

Lately, Islamic philosophy enthusiasts continue to shrink in the academic world because there is still a stereotype that studying philosophy will only create confusion in oneself, learning philosophy is misleading, learning philosophy is haram, learning philosophy becomes plural, and learning philosophy is going wild. According to the author, the existence of AAFI can dismiss skewed issues against philosophical scholars. AAFI can present a more up-to-date statement by presenting philosophical themes with current problems not only as much as history or about previous philosophical thoughts but also containing new perspectives in philosophical studies, especially in the study of Islamic philosophy.

## CONCLUSION

Islamic philosophy is a very important discipline in developing Islamic scholarship. The journey of philosophical studies that goes up and down gives its ambivalence to studying Islamic philosophy. Not a few people who pursue the study of philosophy or Islamic philosophy experience a paradigm between answering challenges or giving a new touch to philosophical studies, especially the study of Islamic philosophy. Only a few people who want to bathe in the pool of philosophical studies have difficulties where many sources from Islamic philosophical studies use language that could be more friendly for beginners.

According to the author, a very interesting innovation is the philosophy salary carried out at the General Sudirman Mosque (MJS) Yogyakarta by digitalizing the study of Islamic philosophy. The philosophy lecture guided by Fahrudin Faiz has made the study of philosophy very light and easy to understand by all circles, as if the study of philosophy is not as difficult as what has been alleged so far. Ngaji Philosophy provides a special attraction for people who want to study philosophy in general and specifically (Islamic philosophy). Not only as a place to pay philosophy, MJS also publishes many philosophy books by Fahrudin Faiz in a very easy-to-understand language.

The study of Islamic philosophy finds a new direction. Now, various innovations are being carried out, and the seriousness of the scholars of Islamic philosophy is. One of them is a renewal in terms of methodology with various approaches, as well as various dialogues of various Western and Islamic thoughts. No less important is the renewal in terms of sources; this can be seen from the books written by Fahrudin Faiz using languages that are very easy to understand. Other seriousness can also be seen in the Association of Aqidah and Islamic Philosophy (AAFI) as a forum for growing the study of Aqidah and Islamic Philosophy.

With the various innovations that have been carried out, Islamic philosophy can be analyzed with various contemporary issues, not only those that are more grounded. The study of Islamic philosophy relies on the theoretical level and good practice in responding to the challenges of today's complex life. Published Islamic philosophical literature should be directed not only to transmit Islamic philosophical knowledge from the past but also

to assist its readers in providing answers to contemporary problems from an Islamic philosophical point of view.

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