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## RECONTEXTUALIZING CLASSICAL PHILOSOPHY IN ISLAMIC PUBLIC SPHERE: FAHRUDDIN FAIZ'S NGAJI FILSAFAT AS A POSTMODERN PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICE

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### *Abstrak*

Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana filsafat klasik direkontekstualisasi dalam ruang publik Islam melalui Ngaji Filsafat oleh Fahruddin Faiz. Fenomena ini dianalisis sebagai bentuk pedagogi postmodern yang menegosiasi kembali batas-batas antara tradisi Islam dan pemikiran rasional-filosofis. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, penelitian ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana nilai-nilai dan konsep filsafat klasik seperti gagasan Socrates, Plato, Aristoteles, Al-Ghazali, Ibn Sina dihadirkan dalam format kuliah yang resonan dengan komunitas Muslim perkotaan. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa Ngaji Filsafat berfungsi sebagai ruang alternatif untuk artikulasi, memadukan spiritualitas, rasionalitas, dan refleksi kritis secara cair, inklusif, dan sensitif terhadap konteks. Hal ini mencerminkan dinamika baru dalam praktik keagamaan kontemporer, yang menantang dikotomi antara iman dan akal sekaligus membuka kemungkinan baru bagi pendidikan filsafat dalam masyarakat Muslim. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa rekontekstualisasi filsafat klasik tidak hanya memungkinkan dalam ruang publik Islam, tetapi juga berkembang melalui pendekatan pedagogis non-tradisional, dialogis, dan dekonstruktif.

**Kata Kunci:** Rekontekstualisasi, Filsafat Klasik, Ruang Publik Islam, Pedagogi Postmodern, Ngaji Filsafat, Fahrudin Faiz.

### **Abstract**

*This research examines how classical philosophy is recontextualized within the Islamic public sphere through Ngaji Filsafat study sessions led by Fahrudin Faiz. The phenomenon is analyzed as a form of postmodern pedagogy that renegotiates the boundaries between Islamic tradition and rational-philosophical thought. Using a qualitative approach, the study explores how the values and concepts of classical philosophy—such as the ideas of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Al-Ghazali, Ibn Sina, and others—are presented in a lecture format that resonates with urban Muslim communities. The findings reveal that Ngaji Filsafat serves as an alternative space of articulation, blending spirituality, rationality, and critical reflection in a fluid, inclusive, and context-sensitive manner. This reflects a new dynamic in contemporary religious practices, one that challenges the dichotomy between faith and reason while opening new possibilities for philosophical education in Muslim societies. The study concludes that the recontextualization of classical philosophy is not only feasible within the Islamic public sphere but also flourishes through non-traditional, dialogical, and deconstructive pedagogical approaches.*

**Keywords:** Recontextualization, Classical Philosophy, Islamic Public Space, Postmodern Pedagogy, Ngaji Filsafat, Fahrudin Faiz.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

In the history of Islamic civilisation, philosophy once served as a central pillar in the development of science, culture, and civilisation. The classical era of Islam witnessed rapid progress in philosophical thought through figures such as Al-Kindi, Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, Al-Ghazali, and Ibn Rushd, who successfully integrated Greek rationality with Islamic revelation.<sup>1</sup> Philosophy was not only

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<sup>1</sup> Hotmasarih Harahap, et al, "Filsafat Islam pada Masa Golden Age dan Kontribusinya dalam Dunia Pendidikan", *Pendidikan Islam dan Multikulturalisme*,

studied as a theoretical discipline, but also embraced as a contemplative tool for deeply understanding existence, ethics, and the nature of divinity.<sup>2</sup> However, over time—particularly with the rise of anti-rational, scripturalist, and doctrinal currents—philosophy has become marginalised within the Islamic scholarly tradition. In many Muslim countries, including Indonesia, it is often regarded as an alien, dangerous, or irrelevant field in relation to the religious needs of the ummah. The dominance of the fiqh-based approach and normative interpretation in Islamic education has pushed philosophy to the margins of the curriculum in madrasahs, pesantrens, and even Islamic universities.<sup>3</sup>

This condition is exacerbated by the stigma that associates philosophy with secularism, liberalism, or even a 'deviation of faith', particularly in public discourse dominated by conservative groups.<sup>4</sup> As a result, the contemporary Muslim generation faces a serious reflective and spiritual crisis: religion is often understood in a mechanistic way, leaving little room for critical reflection or the search for existential meaning. The revitalisation of philosophy in

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Vol. 4, No. 3, 2022; Suwarno, "Kejayaan Peradaban Islam dalam Perspektif Ilmu Pengetahuan", *Islamadina: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam*, Vol. 20, No. 2, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> Azmi Putri Ayu Wardani and Achmad Khudori Soleh, "The Evolution of Islamic Philosophy: Bridging Ancient Wisdom and Contemporary Thought", *Aqlania: Jurnal Filsafat dan Teologi Islam*, Vol. 15 No. 1, 2024.

<sup>3</sup> See Mustadi and Qamaruddin, "Peran Filsafat Pendidikan Islam dalam Kerangka Pendidikan Islam", *Daarus Tsaqofah: Jurnal Pendidikan Pascasarjana Universitas*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2023. Gatot Kaca, "Filsafat dalam Kurikulum Pendidikan Islam", *Jurnal Manthiq*, Vol V, No 1, 2020.

<sup>4</sup> Ahmad Luthfi and Muhibbuddin, "Liberalisasi Pemikiran Islam dan Kritik terhadap Islam Liberal", *Tahdzib Al Akhlak*, Vol 4, No. 2, 2021. Kamaruddin, "Islam Liberal di Indonesia: Tinjauan Sosiologi", *Jurnal Ilmu Agama: Mengkaji Doktrin, Pemikiran, dan Fenomena Agama* 18, No. 1, 2017. Martin Suryajaya, "Asal-Usul Pemikiran tentang Sekularisme di Abad Pertengahan", *Jurnal Filsafat*, Vol. 32, No. 1 2022.

contemporary Islam is urgently needed—not only to preserve its intellectual heritage but also to address the pressing challenges of our time: the plurality of values, existential anxiety, moral relativism, and the crisis of meaning amid modernity and technological advancement. In this context, philosophy offers the capacity to think deeply, question assumptions, and formulate truths that are not only logical but also ethical and spiritual.

Furthermore, Islamic philosophy can serve as a bridge between tradition and modernity. It is not anti-science; rather, it encourages the integration of revelation and reason, faith and science—making it highly relevant for development in the Islamic public sphere as a means of transforming religious discourse into one that is more inclusive, rational, and reflective. The phenomenon of Fahruddin Faiz's *Ngaji Filsafat* (Philosophy Recitation) is a clear example of this recontextualisation effort. Through a communicative, contextual, and open approach, this recitation has successfully reintroduced classical philosophical thought into the discursive space of contemporary Muslims—both in mosques and on digital platforms. This recontextualisation is important not only as a discourse but also as a pedagogical practice that addresses the intellectual and spiritual needs of the *ummah* in the postmodern era. In the context of academic research, the phenomenon of Faiz's *Ngaji Filsafat* has not yet been thoroughly examined in terms of its role in the recontextualisation of philosophy. Existing studies thus far can be categorised into several areas, namely: (1) thematic studies on

*Ngaji Filsafat*,<sup>5</sup> (2) the format or style of presentation,<sup>6</sup> and audience reception.<sup>7</sup>

Building on this, the present research aims to examine the process of recontextualising classical philosophy within the Islamic public sphere through the *Ngaji Filsafat* (Philosophy Recitation) practice pioneered by Faiz. This study focuses on how the values and concepts of classical philosophy—such as the ideas of Socrates, Aristotle, Al-Ghazali, Ibn Sina, and others—are reinterpreted within the contemporary social and cultural context of Indonesia. Additionally, the research seeks to explore the characteristics of postmodern pedagogy employed in *Ngaji Filsafat*, particularly in terms of learning methods that are dialogical, reflective, inclusive,

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<sup>5</sup> M. Audhafareza Akbar, "Analisis Wacana Dakwah Ngaji Filsafat Cinta Dr. Fahruddin Faiz di Youtube MJS Channel.", *Tesis*, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, 2024: Ihda Shofiyatun Nisa, et. al, "Tingkatan Toleransi Manusia dalam Pemikiran Fahruddin Faiz sebagai Wujud Berfikir Kritis", *At-Ta'lim: Studi Al-Qur'an, Hadis, Pendidikan Islam, dan Hukum Islam*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 2023; Velida Apria Ningrum and Nabila Fajriyanti Muhyin, "Exploring Jalaluddin Rumi's Philosophy of Love through YouTube Content 'Ngaji Filsafat' on MJS Channel", *Putih: Jurnal Pengetahuan tentang Ilmu dan Hikmah*, Vol. 9, No. 1, 2024.

<sup>6</sup> Sugeng Purwanto, et al, "[Serat Siti Jenar: Retorika Dr. Fahrudin Faiz dalam Ngaji Filsafat](#)", *Mumtaz: Jurnal Studi Al-Qur'an dan Keislaman*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 2021; Ibnu Maulana Aries, "Gaya Retorika Fahrudin Faiz Dalam Ngaji Filsafat", *Diakon: Jurnal Media dan Komunikasi*, Vol.3, No. 1, 2020; Puja Mardiana, "Integrasi Pendekatan Spiritual-Filosofis dalam Kajian Filsafat Fahrudin Faiz sebagai Metode Dakwah Terapeutik", *Al-Nahyan: Jurnal Komunikasi dan Penyiapan Islam*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 2025.

<sup>7</sup> Acmad Abdul Arifin and Muhammad Nur Kholish Abdurrazaq, "Hubungan Menonton Tayangan Video Ngaji Filsafat Akun Youtube MJS Channel dengan Respon Kebijaksanaan Viewers", *Alhadharah: Jurnal Ilmu Dakwah*, Vol. 21, No. 2, 2022; Sarah Afifah and M. Khairul Arwani, "Faktor Kepopuleran Kajian Dr. H. Fahruddin Faiz, S.Ag., M.,Ag. Di Kalangan Generasi Z", *Al-Imam: Journal on Islamic Studies, Civilisation and Learning Societies*, Vol. 4, 2023; Helma Winda and Rahma Wati, "Muslim Youth, Reception Community, and Social Media: Ustaz Fahruddin Faiz Philosophy", *Wasilatuna: Jurnal Komunikasi Penyiapan Islam*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 2023.

and non-authoritative. Through this approach, the study also aims to assess the impact and relevance of the recitation in shaping the critical awareness and spirituality of young Muslims who are active participants in the religious public sphere.

The contribution of this research is significant both academically and practically. Academically, it enriches the study of contemporary Islamic philosophy by highlighting the recontextualisation of classical traditions in response to the dynamics of modernity and postmodernity. This study also proposes a new pedagogical model in religious education—one that emphasises dialogue and reflection—as an alternative to philosophy and religious learning that is often constrained by dogmatism. In addition, it contributes to the literature on the Islamic public sphere in Indonesia, particularly by showing how the study of philosophy can serve as a medium for transforming religious discourse into one that is more inclusive and critical. From a practical perspective, the research offers valuable insights for educators, scholars, and da'wah activists on the importance of integrating classical philosophy into teaching methods that are adaptive and relevant to the needs of contemporary society. Overall, this study promotes the recontextualisation of philosophy as a discipline that is not only theoretically significant but also practically applicable in addressing the crises of meaning and identity faced by modern Muslims.

## METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using a case study method to gain an in-depth understanding of the process of recontextualising classical philosophy in the *Ngaji Filsafat* sessions initiated by Faiz. The qualitative approach was chosen for its

exploratory and interpretative nature, allowing the researcher to examine the meanings, experiences, and socio-cultural contexts underlying the phenomenon under study. Data were collected through participatory observation, based on the author's direct participation in the study sessions at Masjid Jenderal Sudirman, Yogyakarta, as well as online via video recordings and interactions on digital platforms such as the YouTube "MJS Channel". In addition, secondary data were obtained from various literature and audience comments on the "MJS Channel". The collected data were analyzed using content and thematic analysis techniques, aiming to identify narrative patterns that illustrate the recontextualisation of philosophy and postmodern pedagogical practices. Through this method, the study seeks to present how classical philosophy is revitalized in contemporary Islamic public spaces through dialogical and reflective study formats.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### GENERAL OVERVIEW OF *NGAJI FILSAFAT*

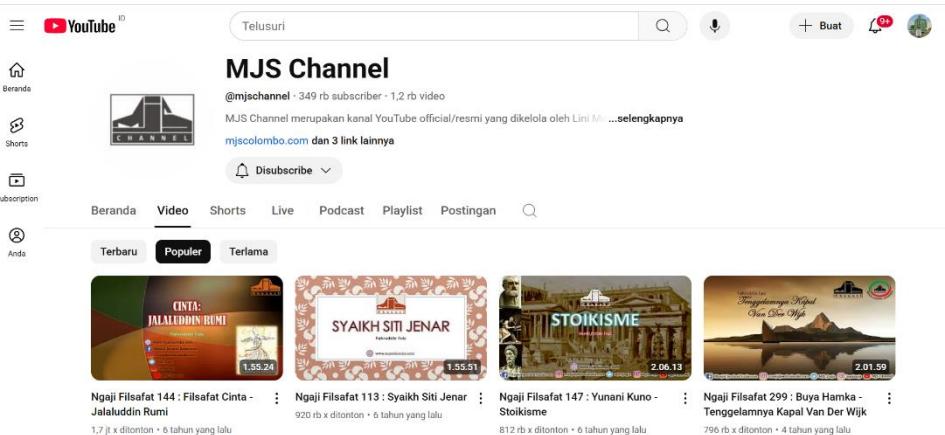
*Ngaji Filsafat*, led by Dr. Fahruddin Faiz, is an innovative form of intellectual and spiritual da'wah that emerged in response to the need among Indonesian Muslims for a reflective space capable of addressing existential and intellectual anxieties more deeply. This study group was first initiated in the early 2010s at the Jenderal Sudirman Mosque (MJS) in Yogyakarta. This campus mosque has historically served as a centre for students' religious and intellectual activities.<sup>8</sup> Faiz, a lecturer in Islamic philosophy at the Faculty of

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<sup>8</sup> Puthut EA, "Mengurai Kedalaman dan Kejernihan Dr. Fahruddin Faiz | Semenjana" in <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ApeeRfLbWEs&t=18s>, on 25 May 2025.

Ushuluddin and Islamic Thought, UIN Sunan Kalijaga, utilises this space to revive the tradition of philosophy openly and inclusively.

*Ngaji Filsafat* sessions are held every Wednesday (Thursday night) at 8:00 PM. The author (Muhammad Alwi HS) is a direct student of Faiz at UIN Sunan Kalijaga and was an active participant in the philosophy study sessions from 2014 to 2023. In 2014 and for about two to three years thereafter, the forum was conducted entirely offline, with around 10–15 student participants. Since 2019, attendance has grown to include hundreds of participants from various backgrounds, filling both the rooms and courtyard of the Jenderal Sudirman Mosque. The initial format of the sessions was dialogical and critical, but since 2019, interactive discussions have typically been held after the main lecture concludes.<sup>9</sup> This shift was also influenced by the online broadcasting of the sessions via the YouTube channel @mjschannel. In other words, the philosophy study sessions are now conducted in a hybrid format, both offline and online.



YouTube @MJS Channel featuring Ngaji Filsafat as the Popular Video.

<sup>9</sup> Tim Ngaji Filsafat, "Di Belakang Pak Faiz!!! | Dokumenter | Belakang Layar Ngaji Filsafat", in <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=woRodGR5U8o>, on 2 January 2025.



The atmosphere of *Ngaji Filsafat* at Jenderal Sudirman Mosque, Yogyakarta.

The material from *Ngaji Filsafat* sessions between 2013 and 2017 has been documented by the author in a book titled *Ngaji Filsafat Fahruddin Faiz* (2019)<sup>10</sup>. The study materials are also available in a more comprehensive form on the YouTube channel “MJS Channel.” The content presented includes philosophical theories such as epistemology, thematic socio-contemporary issues, and the thoughts of prominent thinkers. The sessions explore the ideas of major Western philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, Nietzsche, and Heidegger, as well as classical Muslim thinkers like Al-Farabi, Al-Ghazali, Ibn Sina, and Ibn Rushd. Additionally, the study features thinkers from the Indonesian context, such as Kuntowijoyo, Tan Malaka, Soekarno, and others. These *Ngaji Filsafat* have transcended their local origins and evolved into a national phenomenon, attracting audiences across different age groups and social classes.

As of June 2, 2025, the YouTube channel @mjschannel had 349,000 subscribers. This number is expected to continue growing in

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<sup>10</sup> Muhammad Alwi HS, *Ngaji Filsafat Fahruddin Faiz*, (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pranala, 2019).

line with the increasing popularity of the *Ngaji Filsafat*. Moreover, this digital presence solidifies *Ngaji Filsafat* as part of the virtual Islamic public sphere, serving as a discursive arena where texts, reason, and the social context of the Muslim community intersect. Faiz's main strength lies in his ability to simplify and contextualise complex philosophical concepts using accessible language, enriched with metaphors rooted in Indonesian culture, and tailored to contemporary issues such as modern existential anxieties, spirituality, love, and the search for self. One of the most significant themes explored in *Ngaji Filsafat* is classical philosophy, which Faiz recontextualises—a topic discussed in the following section.

## RECONTEXTUALISING THE NARRATIVE OF CLASSICAL PHILOSOPHY

In the practice of *Ngaji Filsafat*, Faiz has successfully recontextualised classical philosophical ideas from great thinkers such as Plato, Socrates, Al-Ghazali, and Ibn Sina, making these abstract concepts accessible and comprehensible to contemporary Indonesian Muslim audiences. Faiz employs a dialogical approach that emphasises Socratic critical questioning, encouraging participants not to passively accept teachings but to actively explore their meaning and relevance in everyday life. This approach aligns with Faiz's interpretation of Aristotle's thought, which holds that the ultimate goal of human life is *eudaimonia*—a life that is both happy and meaningful.<sup>11</sup> True happiness, in this view, does not lie

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<sup>11</sup> Sukaina Hijri, "Acting virtuously as an end in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*",

*British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, Vol. 26, No. 6, 2018; Benito Cahyo Nugroho, "Eudaimonia: Elaborasi Filosofis Konsep Kebahagiaan Aristoteles dan Yuval Noah Harari", *Focus*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2020.

in fleeting pleasures but in the practice of virtue and the realisation of one's highest potential through reason.

In his *Ngaji Filsafat*, Faiz often explains that *eudaimonia* can be understood today as inner peace that arises from living in harmony with one's conscience and noble values, rather than merely achieving material wealth or social status. In this context, the process of recontextualisation is evident, among other things, in the following statement:

“People today chase happiness by buying things, travelling, or seeking praise. But Aristotle invites us to reconsider: Is our life truly aligned with goodness? Have we fulfilled our functions as humans—as servants, thinkers, and social beings?”<sup>12</sup>.

Similarly, other classical philosophical concepts are reinterpreted. Plato's idea of the world of forms and ideal reality is connected to Islamic understandings of spirituality and the purpose of life.<sup>13</sup> Faiz translates Plato's ideas into simple language, using everyday metaphors that resonate with Indonesian societal experiences—for example, comparing the real world to a “film of life” that must be watched consciously to avoid becoming lost in illusion.<sup>14</sup> This approach makes Greek philosophy, which can seem foreign, more familiar and applicable. When conveying Al-Ghazali's thoughts, particularly on scepticism and the search for inner meaning,<sup>15</sup> Faiz emphasises the importance of introspection

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<sup>12</sup> Fahruddin Faiz, “Ngaji Filsafat 22: Aristoteles - Etika Nikomakea”, in @MJS Channel, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S12aMqMhGKE>, on 11 December 2025.

<sup>13</sup> Russell Bertrande. *Sejarah Filsafat Barat*, terj, (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2007).

<sup>14</sup> Fahruddin Faiz, “Ngaji Filsafat 103: Plato - Kebahagiaan”, in @MJS Channel, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qN4ugFgjBSU>, on 09 Maret 2016.

<sup>15</sup> Mahdi Ranaee, “Al-Gazali, Descartes, and Their Sceptical Problems”, *Maimonides Review of Philosophy and Religion*, Vol. 3 2024.

and spiritual experience as paths to understanding the true God. He adapts Al-Ghazali's Sufi philosophical language into popular terms and accessible social contexts, using analogies like the "soul's journey" and "heart purification," concepts commonly used in traditional Islamic study practices in Indonesia.<sup>16</sup>

Meanwhile, Faiz explains Ibn Sina's thought,<sup>17</sup> which integrates reason and revelation by combining logical and religious approaches. He highlights the relevance of Ibn Sina's epistemology in addressing modern challenges, such as the conflict between science and religion that many young Indonesians currently face. Faiz reframes Ibn Sina's teachings using contemporary language and real-life examples—such as technology and digital ethics—making classical philosophy feel alive and relevant.<sup>18</sup>

Language adjustment is a key element in this process of recontextualisation. Faiz uses everyday language that is relaxed yet rich in meaning, accompanied by metaphors easily understood by Indonesia's diverse society. The themes he raises are always linked to contemporary social issues, such as the search for identity, value confusion in the digital era, and moral challenges amid globalisation. Thus, *Ngaji Filsafat* serves not only as a space to study classical philosophical theories but also as a medium for critical and spiritual reflection relevant to Indonesia's current socio-cultural conditions.

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<sup>16</sup> Fahruddin Faiz, "Ngaji Filsafat 227: Imam Al-Ghazali – Al-Khasyfu wa Al-Tadyin", in @MJS Channel, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ODahUn6vUKA>, on 17 April 2019.

<sup>17</sup> Abdullah Hosseini Eskandian, et. al, "The Conceptions of Divine Revelation: A Comparative Study of the Views of Ibn Sina and Mulla Sadra", *Teosofi*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 2023.

<sup>18</sup> Fahruddin Faiz, "Ngaji Filsafat 40: Ibnu Sina", in @MJS Channel, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6UqHJuP9X5Q>, on 30 April 2014.

## RECONTEXTUALIZATION STRATEGY: LANGUAGE, METAPHOR, AND LOCAL THEMES

In *Ngaji Filsafat*, Faiz presents a distinctive strategy for recontextualising classical thought, employing language adaptation, the use of contextual metaphors, and an emphasis on local themes relevant to the everyday realities of Indonesian society. This is clearly evident, for example, in the way Faiz reinterprets Aristotle's concept of *eudaimonia*—the idea that true happiness is a meaningful life lived through the practice of virtue and the actualisation of human rationality.

In this context, Faiz does not retain the terminology of classical philosophy in its original form; rather, he translates it into vocabulary that is more familiar and infused with a spiritual-religious nuance. For example, *eudaimonia* is not explained as "happiness in the sense of the ultimate existential goal" in a technical academic manner, but instead is translated as inner peace or living in harmony with conscience and noble values.<sup>19</sup> This phrasing resonates with the religious sensitivity of Indonesian Muslim society, which is more accustomed to concepts like inner peace or sincerity in life rather than Western moral-philosophical terminology. Thus, Faiz bridges Aristotelian philosophy with the horizon of Islamic understanding without losing its depth of meaning.

Furthermore, Faiz relies on everyday metaphors familiar to the urban middle class and Indonesian society. Activities such as shopping, travelling, and seeking social validation on social media are used as symbols of false happiness, contrasting with Aristotle's

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<sup>19</sup> Fahruddin Faiz, "Ngaji Filsafat 22: Aristoteles - Etika Nikomakea", in @MJS Channel, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S12aMqMhGKE>, on 11 December 2013.

call to return to virtue (*arete*) and the fulfilment of human purpose. This style demonstrates the use of experiential metaphor, where abstract ideas are explained through concrete activities, making classical philosophy feel neither foreign nor elitist. Recontextualisation is also evident in how Faiz incorporates Aristotelian concepts within the theological framework of Islam. For example, when he states that the function of humans is to be servants, thinkers, and social beings, he deliberately integrates the Aristotelian concept of *telos* into the anthropological structure of Islam: humans as '*abd* (servants of God), '*aql* (rational beings), and *khalifah* (social-religious beings).<sup>20</sup> This is a form of thematic transposition, where Greek philosophical theories are reworked to build a relevant and contemporary Islamic narrative, making Faiz a cultural translator between the West and Islam.

This approach reinforces the role of *Ngaji Filsafat* as a form of postmodern pedagogy—learning that rejects the absolutism of meaning and encourages reinterpretation based on cultural and social contexts. In this way, Faiz not only transmits knowledge but also transforms it into a means of spiritual and cultural enlightenment for Indonesian Muslims.

Another example can be found in Al-Ghazali's complex thought, particularly regarding the intellectual and spiritual journey toward God.<sup>21</sup> Al-Ghazali's ideas on methodological doubt (*al-shakk al-manhaji*) and the search for true meaning through direct experience (*dzawqî*) were originally presented in the language of

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<sup>20</sup> Fahruddin Faiz, "Ngaji Filsafat 274: Aristoteles – Kepemimpinan", in @MJS Channel, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MFfePhclpLw>, on 02 December 2020.

<sup>21</sup> Mohd Rosmizi and Salih Yacel, "The Mujaddid of His Age: Al-Ghazali and His Inner Spiritual Journey", International Journal of Islamic and Civilizational Studies, Vol. 3, No. 2, 2016.

advanced philosophy and theology. However, Faiz simplifies these concepts into communicative and emotional spiritual narratives, such as the importance of “finding the voice of the heart,” “understanding life’s guidance through restlessness,” and “recognising God in inner silence.” Concepts like *ma’rifah*, *tajarrud* (renunciation of worldly things), and *mujahadah* (spiritual struggle) are translated into terms such as heart purification, inner honesty, and the journey back to oneself.<sup>22</sup> This linguistic effort not only simplifies but also enriches the meaning with a religious tone that resonates with the sensibilities of the Indonesian Muslim community.

Faiz also frequently uses metaphors familiar within pesantren culture and traditional study circles to explain Al-Ghazali’s mystical epistemology.<sup>23</sup> For example, the idea that knowledge alone is insufficient to lead humans to the truth without the purification of the soul is illustrated through the analogy of the “journey of the soul.” According to Faiz, the soul is depicted as a “passenger” who is “returning to its home,” which is God. In another narrative, the heart is likened to a “mirror that must be cleaned to reflect the Divine light.” This metaphor resonates with those acquainted with *wirid*, Sufism, or popular works like *Ihya Ulumuddin*.<sup>24</sup> Faiz revives traditional vocabulary such as “pure heart,” “tranquil soul,” and “inner light,” framing these within philosophical discourse and

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<sup>22</sup> Fahruddin Faiz, “Ngaji Filsafat 341: Imam Al-Ghazali – Mahabbatullah”, in @MJS Channel, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oQiwYcrf35A>, on 16 Februari 2022.

<sup>23</sup> Abdul Kadir Riyadi, *Arkeologi Tasawuf: Melacak Jejak Pemikiran Tasawuf dari Al-Muhasibi Hingga Tasawuf Nusantara*, (Bandung: Mizan, 2016).

<sup>24</sup> Fahruddin Faiz, “Ngaji Filsafat 341: Imam Al-Ghazali – Mahabbatullah”, in @MJS Channel, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oQiwYcrf35A>, on 16 February 2022.

thereby creating a bridge between classical Sufi heritage and contemporary spiritual sensibilities.

In fact, Faiz elaborates on Al-Ghazali's thoughts about the journey toward truth that encompasses both the acquisition of knowledge and inner experience, relating them to the experiences of Indonesian society through themes such as the crisis of meaning in modern life, the existential anxiety of the younger generation, and the loss of spiritual orientation amid consumerist culture. For example, when explaining the importance of introspection and *riyadhah an-nafs* (soul training), Faiz does not rely on classical Arab Sufi illustrations but instead discusses mental health issues, confusion about life's direction, or spiritual depression as a "call of the soul to return to God".<sup>25</sup> In this context, he presents Al-Ghazali as a universal spiritual teacher rather than merely a medieval theologian. Moreover, Faiz's thematic approach is heavily influenced by the structure of traditional Indonesian study circles, where inner transformation is considered an essential part of religiosity. Therefore, although based on philosophy, *Ngaji Filsafat* remains rooted in local patterns of religiosity, bringing Al-Ghazali's thoughts to life in the hearts of the community.

Up to this point, the strategy of recontextualising classical philosophy undertaken by Faiz through *Ngaji Filsafat* represents a form of epistemological and pedagogical renewal within the contemporary Indonesian Islamic intellectual landscape. By adapting language, enriching expressions through contextual metaphors, and emphasising relevant local themes, Faiz has successfully bridged the discourse of classical philosophy—both from the Greek tradition, such as Aristotle, and from the Islamic

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<sup>25</sup> Fahruddin Faiz, "Ngaji Filsafat 105: Al-Ghazali – Kebahagiaan", in @MJS Channel, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dop0MrI\\_CsA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dop0MrI_CsA), on 23 Mart 2016.

heritage, like Al-Ghazali—with the cultural and spiritual sensibilities of modern Muslim society. The reinterpretation of the concept of *eudaimonia* as inner peace in harmony with conscience exemplifies an effort to translate meaning from technical-philosophical terms into a spiritual vocabulary more familiar to the Indonesian Muslim public. A similar approach is evident in Faiz's redefinition of Al-Ghazali's Sufi epistemology, where mystical experiences and inner struggles are translated into a spiritual narrative that is communicative, emotional, and addresses contemporary existential concerns such as the search for meaning, mental health, and spiritual crises.

Faiz does not merely convey classical philosophy but reframes it using everyday metaphors and local cultural idioms such as "the journey of the soul," "a pure heart," and "returning to the house of God." This approach not only refines the meaning of philosophy into a form accessible to the general public but also demonstrates the function of *Ngaji Filsafat* as a form of postmodern pedagogy that is dialogical, contextual, and transformative. It avoids dogmatic teaching and instead invites listeners to re-engage with universal noble values through a familiar Islamic framework. Thus, *Ngaji Filsafat* serves as a concrete example of the revitalisation of philosophy in the Islamic public sphere, where knowledge is not only conveyed but also revived as a means of spiritual quest and the formation of ethical awareness. In this capacity, Faiz acts as a cultural translator, connecting the intellectual heritage of East and West with the spiritual dynamics of contemporary Indonesian Muslim society.

## POSTMODERN PEDAGOGY AND THE RECONTEXTUALIZATION OF ISLAM

Faiz's approach in *Ngaji Filsafat* can be understood as a manifestation of postmodern pedagogy grounded in the plurality of meanings, social context, and participatory learning. Unlike conventional education systems, which tend to be linear and dogmatic, Faiz adopts a dialogical, narrative, and reflective approach. In this perspective, philosophy is not positioned as absolute knowledge but as a field of reflection open to interpretation and contextual meaning-making.

This approach aligns with Lyotard's postmodern thought, which emphasizes "incredulity toward metanarratives."<sup>26</sup> Faiz does not transmit classical philosophy dogmatically; rather, he recontextualizes the ideas of Aristotle or Al-Ghazali within the spiritual and social experiences of contemporary Indonesian Muslims. This process can be seen as a form of cultural translation, where technical terms such as *eudaimonia* are transformed into "inner peace in harmony with conscience," and concepts like *ma'rifah* and *mujahadah* are explained through everyday spiritual expressions, such as "purification of the heart" and "the journey back to God." This semantic transformation makes philosophical ideas more accessible and relevant to the urban Muslim community, which faces a crisis of meaning and spirituality in modern life.

Furthermore, the use of experiential metaphors such as "mirror of the heart," "the returning passenger," and "the voice of the heart" demonstrates how Faiz shifts the epistemology of philosophy from an academic-elitist level to a spiritual-popular one. This resonates with Freire's postmodern pedagogical principles,

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<sup>26</sup> Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, (UK: Manchester University Pres, 1984).

which emphasize education as an emancipatory and dialogical practice, where learners actively reflect on, experience, and understand themselves.<sup>27</sup> Philosophy study, therefore, is not merely a means of knowledge transmission but a forum for personal and social transformation. The Islamic public sphere, typically dominated by normative sermons, is transformed into a fluid, open, and critical intellectual arena addressing the realities of modernity.

As a cultural translator, Faiz positions himself at the intersection of Greek philosophy, Islamic theology, and contemporary Indonesian reality. He does not oppose Eastern and Western legacies but weaves them into a new narrative that is spiritual, contextual, and reflective. With a communicative style and a strong spiritual tone, *Ngaji Filsafat* demonstrates that classical philosophy can be revitalized without losing its depth, precisely by making it relevant to the inner needs of contemporary society. Thus, within the framework of postmodern pedagogy, *Ngaji Filsafat* functions as a practice of recontextualizing Islam that not only revives the heritage of classical thought but also renews the way Muslims understand themselves, God, and the world in a complex contemporary landscape, reflecting the principles of Lyotard and Freire regarding knowledge plurality, dialogue, and emancipatory learning.

## CONCLUSION

Fahruddin Faiz's *Ngaji Filsafat* makes an important contribution to the recontextualization of classical philosophy in the contemporary public sphere. By presenting classical philosophy in contextual language and metaphors close to the daily lives of Indonesian Muslim society, Faiz transforms philosophy into a

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<sup>27</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, (New York: Bloomsbury, 2000).

participatory and relevant discourse, while also addressing the elitism of Islamic thought. His postmodern pedagogical approach emphasizes dialogue, reflection, and subjective experience, making philosophy education not dogmatic but humanistic and transformative. This study illustrates Faiz's role as a cultural translator who connects classical intellectual heritage with the spiritual and social realities of modern Muslim communities. The recontextualization of concepts such as Aristotle's eudaimonia and Al-Ghazali's *ma'rifah* within local and contemporary frameworks underscores the relevance of Islamic philosophy in addressing current existential challenges, such as the crisis of meaning and mental health. Overall, this research enriches critical Islamic education theory by offering an inclusive, ethical, and emancipatory pedagogical model, making Ngaji Filsafat a space for learning as well as spiritual and social transformation. []

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