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Intuition and the Crisis of Modern Epistemology: Comparative Insights from Mulla Sadra and Henri Bergson for Islamic Education

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Abstract

This study aims to critically examine the role of intuition within the crisis of modern epistemology by conducting a comparative analysis of the philosophical thoughts of Mulla Sadra and Henri Bergson. The research is motivated by the dominance of rational-empirical paradigms in contemporary knowledge systems, which tend to marginalize intuitive and non-discursive modes of knowing. Using a qualitative library research approach, this study applies systematic literature review procedures combined with comparative analysis and content analysis based on Krippendorff's framework. Primary and secondary sources are critically examined to explore the epistemological structures of intuition in both thinkers. The findings reveal that intuition plays a more fundamental and transformative role in knowledge acquisition than traditionally assumed. Mulla Sadra conceptualizes intuition (*'ilm al-hudhuri*) as an ontological and integrative mechanism that unifies reason, revelation, and spiritual experience, thereby producing holistic knowledge. In contrast, Henri Bergson positions intuition as a method of direct experience that enables access to the dynamic nature of reality (*durée*), functioning as either a dominant or complementary alternative to rational analysis. These differences reflect two distinct epistemological orientations: integrative-transcendental (Sadra) and intuitive-phenomenological (Bergson). The novelty of this study lies in its effort to bridge classical Islamic philosophy and modern Western philosophy within a single comparative epistemological framework, while also situating intuition as a response to the limitations of modern rational-empirical epistemology. This study contributes to the development of an integrative epistemological paradigm by demonstrating that intuition can serve as a foundational dimension of knowledge when harmonized with reason and revelation. Furthermore, it offers significant implications for Islamic education by proposing a holistic framework that integrates cognitive, intuitive, and spiritual dimensions in the learning process.

Keywords: Intuition, Epistemology, Mulla Sadra, Henri Bergson, Islamic Education

Introduction

Human beings fundamentally require education as a means of survival, growth, and the actualization of their intellectual potential (Mundiasari, 2022). Through education, individuals develop cognitive capacities that enable them to process, construct, and validate knowledge. This process is closely related to the inherent human disposition of curiosity, which drives individuals to continuously question, explore, and understand reality (Vera & Hambali, 2021). Consequently, education becomes not merely a social institution but an epistemological pathway through which humans engage with sources of knowledge and construct meaning in their lives.

In the landscape of modern epistemology, the dominant paradigm for acquiring knowledge has long been shaped by rationalism and empiricism. Rationalism emphasizes logical reasoning as the primary source of valid knowledge, while empiricism prioritizes sensory experience and empirical verification (Trirahmayati & Mansur, 2025). This rational-empirical framework has significantly contributed to the advancement of modern science and technology; however, it simultaneously tends to marginalize non-discursive forms of knowledge, particularly intuition. As a result, contemporary epistemology faces what many scholars describe as a "crisis of reductionism," where complex human experiences and deeper dimensions of reality are oversimplified into measurable and observable constructs (Dreyfus & Taylor, 2015; Polanyi, 1966).

Recent interdisciplinary studies in psychology, philosophy, and cognitive science have increasingly highlighted the importance of intuition as a legitimate mode of knowing. Adinolfi and Loia (2022) argue that intuition plays a crucial role in decision-making under conditions of uncertainty, while Pedwell (2023) introduces the notion of "algorithmic intuition," demonstrating how artificial intelligence systems mimic human intuitive processes in pattern recognition and rapid judgment. Similarly, Gigerenzer (2007) emphasizes that intuitive thinking often operates as an adaptive and efficient cognitive mechanism, especially in complex and uncertain environments. These developments indicate a significant epistemological shift, where intuition is no longer viewed as irrational but as a complementary or even essential component of knowledge production.

Despite this growing recognition, the theoretical foundation of intuition within epistemology remains underexplored, particularly in comparative philosophical studies. Existing research tends to focus on applied aspects of intuition, such as in education and psychology. For instance, Qonitatillah (2022) conceptualizes intuition as a spiritual effort to attain knowledge from divine sources, while Usmiyati et al. (2022) demonstrate its role in enhancing students' problem-solving abilities in mathematics. However, these studies lack a rigorous philosophical grounding that situates intuition within broader epistemological frameworks. This reveals a critical research gap: the absence of in-depth comparative analysis of intuition as an epistemological mechanism across different philosophical traditions.

To address this gap, this study focuses on two influential philosophers from distinct intellectual traditions: Mulla Sadra from Islamic philosophy and Henri Bergson from Western philosophy. Mulla Sadra, through his transcendent philosophy (*al-Hikmah al-Muta'aliyah*), conceptualizes intuition (*'ilm al-hudhuri*) as direct, existential knowledge that integrates reason and revelation (Atmaja & Mustopa, 2020). In contrast, Bergson, within the framework of French intuitionism, views intuition as a method for grasping the dynamic and continuous nature of reality (*durée*), which cannot be fully captured by analytical reasoning (Chimisso, 2023). Although both thinkers emphasize intuition, their epistemological orientations differ significantly, particularly in relation to the role of reason, metaphysics, and the nature of knowledge itself.

In the context of Islamic education, this discussion becomes increasingly relevant. Contemporary Islamic education faces the challenge of integrating rational, empirical, and spiritual dimensions of knowledge in a holistic manner. Studies by Fauzi et al. (2022) highlight the importance of integrating Islamic values with scientific knowledge, while Salim et al. (2024) emphasize the role of hidden curriculum in shaping students' character within Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*). These findings suggest that Islamic education requires an epistemological framework that transcends the limitations of purely rational-empirical approaches and accommodates intuitive and spiritual ways of knowing. However, the philosophical foundation for such integration remains insufficiently articulated.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze and compare the epistemological role of intuition in the thought of Mulla Sadra and Henri Bergson, and to explore its implications for Islamic education. Specifically, this research addresses the following questions: (1) How is intuition conceptualized within the epistemological frameworks of Mulla Sadra and Henri Bergson? (2) What are the fundamental differences and similarities between their perspectives? and (3) How can these insights contribute to the development of a more integrative epistemology in Islamic education?

The novelty of this study lies in its effort to bridge classical Islamic philosophy and modern Western philosophy within a comparative epistemological framework, while simultaneously linking the discussion to contemporary issues in Islamic education. By doing so, this research is expected to contribute not only to philosophical discourse but also to the reconstruction of epistemological foundations in Islamic educational theory and practice.

Method

This study employs a qualitative research design using a library research approach, which focuses on systematically collecting, analyzing, and interpreting textual data from relevant literature sources. Library research is defined as a structured method of gathering data through written documents, including books, scholarly articles, and other academic publications, without direct field observation (Zed, 2023). However, unlike conventional descriptive

literature reviews, this study adopts a critical-comparative philosophical approach, aiming not only to describe but also to analyze and synthesize the epistemological concepts of intuition in the thought of Mulla Sadra and Henri Bergson.

To ensure methodological rigor, this research follows a systematic literature review procedure adapted for philosophical inquiry (Tranfield et al., 2003; Snyder, 2019). The data collection process involves three main stages: identification, screening, and eligibility. In the identification stage, relevant sources were retrieved from academic databases such as Scopus-indexed journals, Google Scholar, and major academic publishers using keywords such as *intuition*, *epistemology*, *Mulla Sadra*, and *Henri Bergson*. In the screening stage, sources were selected based on inclusion criteria, namely: (1) relevance to epistemology and intuition, (2) publication in peer-reviewed journals or reputable academic publishers, and (3) conceptual or theoretical contribution to the topic. Sources that were not academically rigorous or lacked direct relevance were excluded. Finally, in the eligibility stage, selected texts were critically reviewed and categorized according to their thematic relevance.

The data used in this study consist of primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include classical and foundational works related to Mulla Sadra's *al-Hikmah al-Muta'aliyah* and Bergson's intuitionism, which provide direct insights into their epistemological frameworks. Secondary sources include peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, and recent academic studies that discuss, interpret, or critique the philosophical ideas of both thinkers. The use of both types of sources allows for a more comprehensive and balanced analysis, ensuring both historical accuracy and contemporary relevance (Creswell, 2014).

In terms of data analysis, this study employs a combination of content analysis and comparative analysis. Content analysis is conducted based on the framework proposed by Klaus Krippendorff (2004), which includes several systematic stages: unitizing (defining units of analysis), sampling (selecting relevant texts), recording/coding (categorizing key concepts), reducing (simplifying and organizing data), inferring (drawing meanings and interpretations), and narrating (presenting findings in a coherent structure). This process enables the researcher to identify key epistemological constructs related to intuition in both philosophical traditions.

Furthermore, a comparative analytical framework is applied to examine similarities and differences between Mulla Sadra and Henri Bergson across several dimensions, including the nature of knowledge, the role of intuition, the relationship between reason and intuition, and their metaphysical foundations. Comparative philosophy, as suggested by Rorty (1992) and Jullien (2000), is not merely juxtaposition but involves critical dialogue between traditions to uncover deeper philosophical insights. Therefore, this study emphasizes interpretative analysis rather than simple comparison, aiming to construct a more integrative understanding of intuition within epistemology.

To enhance the validity and reliability of the findings, this research employs theoretical triangulation, where multiple perspectives from different philosophical and educational discourses are used to interpret the data (Flick, 2018). In addition, the study ensures transparency by clearly outlining data selection criteria and analytical procedures, thereby increasing its replicability. The analytical process is conducted iteratively, meaning that interpretations are continuously refined through repeated engagement with the texts.

Through this methodological framework, the study seeks to produce a deep, critical, and systematic analysis of intuitive epistemology in both thinkers, moving beyond descriptive exposition toward conceptual synthesis. This approach is expected to provide a robust foundation for understanding intuition not only as a philosophical concept but also as a relevant epistemological framework for contemporary Islamic education.

Results and Discussion

Intuitive Epistemology in Mulla Sadra: Toward an Ontological Integration of Knowledge

The analysis of Mulla Sadra's thought reveals that intuition (*'ilm al-hudhuri*) cannot be reduced to a mere cognitive faculty; rather, it constitutes an ontological mode of knowing that transcends representational epistemology. Unlike modern epistemology, which is largely grounded in the dichotomy between subject and object, Sadra develops a metaphysical framework in which knowledge is understood as the presence of being itself within the knower (Kalin, 2010). This ontological grounding is rooted in the principle of the primacy of existence (*ashalat al-wujud*), which positions existence, not essence, as the ultimate reality.

Historically, Sadra's intellectual project emerged from the synthesis of four major traditions in Islamic philosophy: Peripatetic philosophy, Illuminationism, *'irfan* (gnosis), and *kalam* theology (Nasr, 2006; Trisno & Bakri, 2022). However, rather than merely combining these traditions, Sadra reconstructs them into a coherent epistemological system known as *al-Hikmah al-Muta'aliyah*. This system integrates rational demonstration (*burhan*), scriptural authority (*bayani*), and intuitive unveiling (*irfani*) into a unified structure of knowledge (Rosowulan et al., 2022). In this sense, intuition is not opposed to reason but functions as its completion and existential realization.

Furthermore, Sadra's concept of *ittihad al-'aqil wa al-ma'qul* (the unity of the intellect and the intelligible) represents a radical departure from representational theories of knowledge. Knowledge is not a passive reflection of external reality but an active ontological transformation in which the knower becomes identical with the known (Kamal, 2006). This process is deeply connected to the theory of substantial motion (*al-harakah al-jawhariyyah*), where the human soul undergoes continuous ontological

transformation toward higher levels of existence (Khair, 2021). Thus, knowledge acquisition is simultaneously an epistemic and existential journey.

In a broader philosophical context, Sadra's epistemology resonates with contemporary critiques of objectivist epistemology. For instance, Polanyi (1966) argues that knowledge always involves a tacit dimension that cannot be fully articulated. Similarly, Heidegger (1962) critiques the dominance of representational thinking and emphasizes the primacy of *being* over mere cognition. However, Sadra goes beyond these perspectives by embedding intuition within a metaphysical and theological framework, where knowledge ultimately leads to spiritual realization and proximity to the Divine (Muslih et al., 2025). Therefore, Sadra's epistemology offers a comprehensive alternative to modern epistemological paradigms that tend to fragment knowledge into isolated domains.

Henri Bergson's Intuition: A Critique of Rationalism and the Recovery of Lived Experience

Henri Bergson's epistemology emerges as a critical response to the limitations of rationalism and positivism in modern Western philosophy. Bergson argues that intellectual analysis inherently spatializes reality, breaking it into static and discrete units that fail to capture its true nature as continuous and dynamic (*durée*) (Bertens, 2014). In contrast, intuition is presented as a method that allows direct access to the flow of reality, enabling the knower to grasp its inner essence.

Bergson's distinction between intelligence and intuition is central to his epistemology. Intelligence operates through abstraction, conceptualization, and symbolic representation, making it suitable for practical and scientific purposes. However, it is inherently limited in accessing the deeper, qualitative aspects of reality. Intuition, on the other hand, is a form of immediate knowledge that allows one to "enter into" the object and experience it from within (Hadiwijono, 1985/2016). This distinction reflects Bergson's broader critique of mechanistic and reductionist approaches to knowledge.

Moreover, Bergson's concept of *élan vital* highlights the creative and dynamic nature of life, which cannot be fully understood through analytical reasoning alone. Intuition, therefore, becomes the only epistemological tool capable of grasping this creative evolution (Yusuf, 2012). However, from a critical standpoint, Bergson's reliance on intuition raises significant epistemological challenges. As noted by Hasanah (2016), intuition is inherently subjective and lacks the intersubjective verifiability required for systematic knowledge production. This limitation aligns with Popper's (2002) argument that scientific knowledge must be testable and falsifiable.

Nevertheless, contemporary cognitive science provides partial support for Bergson's insights. Research on decision-making and bounded rationality suggests that intuitive thinking plays a crucial role in complex and uncertain situations (Gigerenzer, 2007). Additionally, dual-process theory, as proposed by Kahneman (2011), demonstrates that human cognition operates through both analytical (System 2) and intuitive (System 1) processes. These findings

indicate that Bergson's emphasis on intuition is not entirely incompatible with modern scientific understanding, although it requires further integration with rational frameworks.

Comparative Analysis: Divergence and Convergence in Intuitive Epistemology

A comparative analysis of Mulla Sadra and Henri Bergson reveals both convergence and divergence in their conceptualization of intuition. At a fundamental level, both thinkers challenge the dominance of rational-empirical epistemology and emphasize the importance of direct, non-discursive forms of knowledge. However, their epistemological orientations differ significantly in terms of metaphysical grounding, methodological integration, and epistemic validity.

First, regarding the nature of knowledge, Sadra adopts an ontological approach in which knowledge is inseparable from being, whereas Bergson adopts a phenomenological approach that emphasizes lived experience. Sadra's concept of knowledge involves the unity of subject and object, while Bergson's intuition involves immersion in the flow of reality without necessarily achieving ontological unity.

Second, in terms of time and reality, Sadra's framework is grounded in metaphysical hierarchy and substantial motion, whereas Bergson emphasizes temporal continuity and qualitative duration (*durée*). While both acknowledge the dynamic nature of reality, Sadra integrates this dynamism within a broader metaphysical system, whereas Bergson focuses on experiential immediacy.

Third, concerning the role of reason, Sadra positions reason as an essential component that must be harmonized with intuition and revelation. In contrast, Bergson tends to subordinate reason to intuition, viewing it as limited to practical and instrumental functions. This difference highlights a key divergence: Sadra's integrative epistemology versus Bergson's complementary (but somewhat dualistic) approach.

From the perspective of contemporary philosophy, Sadra's approach aligns with integrative epistemological models that seek to reconcile different sources of knowledge (Habermas, 1971), while Bergson's approach resonates with phenomenological traditions that prioritize subjective experience (Merleau-Ponty, 2012). Therefore, both thinkers contribute valuable insights, but their integration remains an open philosophical challenge.

Implications for Islamic Education: Toward an Integrative Epistemological Paradigm

The findings of this study have significant implications for the development of Islamic education, particularly in addressing the epistemological fragmentation that characterizes contemporary educational systems. Islamic education has historically emphasized the integration of knowledge, as reflected in classical traditions that combine rational, spiritual,

and ethical dimensions. However, modern educational practices often adopt a dichotomous approach that separates religious and scientific knowledge.

In this context, Mulla Sadra's integrative epistemology offers a robust framework for reconstructing Islamic education. By emphasizing the unity of reason, intuition, and revelation, Sadra provides a model for holistic knowledge that aligns with the objectives of Islamic education (*tarbiyah*). This perspective is supported by recent studies showing that the integration of spiritual and cognitive dimensions enhances both academic achievement and character development (Fauzi et al., 2022).

Furthermore, the insights from Bergson highlight the importance of experiential and intuitive learning processes, which are often neglected in formal education. Incorporating intuitive dimensions into Islamic education can foster creativity, critical thinking, and deeper understanding among learners. This is particularly relevant in the context of pesantren education, where hidden curriculum and spiritual practices play a significant role in shaping students' character (Salim et al., 2024).

In the contemporary era, characterized by rapid technological advancement and epistemic complexity, the integration of intuitive and rational knowledge becomes increasingly important. As Kahneman (2011) demonstrates, effective decision-making requires the interplay of analytical and intuitive thinking. Therefore, Islamic education must move beyond purely rational-empirical approaches and embrace a more holistic epistemological paradigm that integrates intuition as a legitimate source of knowledge.

Ultimately, this study proposes an integrative epistemological framework that combines the strengths of Mulla Sadra's metaphysical synthesis and Bergson's phenomenological insights. Such a framework can serve as a foundation for developing Islamic education that is not only intellectually rigorous but also spiritually meaningful and contextually relevant.

This study offers a significant novelty by reconstructing the concept of intuition within a comparative epistemological framework that bridges classical Islamic philosophy and modern Western thought. While previous studies tend to examine intuition either in applied educational contexts or within a single philosophical tradition, this research advances the discourse by critically juxtaposing the metaphysical epistemology of Mulla Sadra with the phenomenological intuitionism of Henri Bergson. The novelty lies not only in the comparative dimension, but more importantly in positioning intuition as a central epistemological mechanism within the crisis of modern rational-empirical paradigms. By integrating Sadra's ontological-intuitive framework (*'ilm al-hudhuri*) with Bergson's experiential-intuitive approach (*durée*), this study proposes a new interpretive lens that transcends the dichotomy between rationalism and empiricism, offering a more holistic understanding of knowledge.

In terms of contribution, this research provides both theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, it contributes to the development of

integrative epistemology by demonstrating that intuition can function not merely as a supplementary cognitive tool, but as a foundational dimension of knowledge when harmonized with reason and revelation. This enriches contemporary epistemological discourse, particularly in addressing the limitations of positivistic approaches. Practically, the study contributes to the field of Islamic education by offering a philosophical basis for designing holistic learning models that integrate cognitive, intuitive, and spiritual dimensions. This has implications for curriculum development, pedagogical strategies, and character education, especially in contexts such as pesantren and Islamic schools, where the integration of knowledge and values is essential. Ultimately, this study positions intuition as a strategic epistemological resource for responding to the complexity of knowledge in the modern era.

Conclusion

This study finds that the role of intuition as an epistemological mechanism in both Mulla Sadra and Henri Bergson carries a more significant and complex impact than previously assumed. Specifically, the findings reveal that intuition is not merely a supplementary cognitive process but a fundamental mode of knowing that challenges the dominance of rational-empirical paradigms. Mulla Sadra positions intuition as an integrative epistemological mechanism that operates in harmony with reason and revelation, forming a holistic structure of knowledge. In contrast, Henri Bergson situates intuition as a primary or complementary means of accessing reality beyond the limitations of analytical reasoning. These findings challenge long-standing assumptions that prioritize rationalism and empiricism as the sole valid pathways to knowledge and open new avenues for rethinking epistemology in both philosophical and educational contexts.

In terms of scholarly contribution, this research not only reinforces existing studies that highlight the importance of intuition in knowledge acquisition but also critically re-evaluates and questions the adequacy of purely rational-empirical approaches. Furthermore, it introduces an integrative epistemological perspective that bridges Islamic and Western philosophical traditions, thereby enriching contemporary academic discourse. This study contributes to the development of a more holistic framework of knowledge, particularly within Islamic education, by emphasizing the integration of cognitive, intuitive, and spiritual dimensions as a unified system.

However, this study has several limitations. It is primarily based on a limited scope of philosophical texts and specific intellectual traditions, which may restrict the generalizability of its findings. Additionally, the focus on two major figures (Mulla Sadra and Henri Bergson) means that other relevant perspectives on intuition are not extensively explored. Therefore, future research is recommended to expand the scope by including a broader range of philosophical traditions, empirical studies, or interdisciplinary approaches. Further investigations involving larger datasets, diverse contexts, or applied

educational settings would provide a more comprehensive understanding of intuition as an epistemological foundation and its practical implications in contemporary education.

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