

## Sufism in the Perspective of Epistemology of Science

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**Abstract:** The development of philosophical thought in Islam contributed to the fertile life of Sufism in the Muslim world. Sufism is an object of thought which until now continues to be studied amidst the swift currents of modernization and globalization. Islam in practice is actualized through various forms, and one of them is through the teachings of Sufism. Sufism is not just a religious practice that is merely spiritual, but as a "means" to find the truth. In this context, Sufism becomes necessary and important to be studied through the perspective of the epistemology of science.

**Keywords:** mysticism, perspectives, Epistemology of science

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### I. INTRODUCTION

Humans are God's creatures that are blessed with perfection. He is a religious homo. Religiosity is basically embodied in various aspects of human life, not only when someone is carrying out ritual activities (worshiping), but also when carrying out other activities that are driven by divine power. Not only those related to visible activities, but also those that are not visible and occur in the heart. Therefore, one's diversity includes various sides or dimensions.

According to Glock and Stark, religion is a symbolic system, belief system, value system, and institutionalized system of behavior, all of which are centered on issues that are lived up to the most meaningful (ultimate meaning) which are covered in five types of religious dimensions, namely the belief dimension, dimensions of religious worship or practices (ritualistic), dimensions of appreciation (experiential), dimensions of experience and dimensions of religious knowledge (intellectual).<sup>1</sup>

This view is compatible with Islam, although not entirely the same. In Islam there are four dimensions of religiosity, namely the dimensions of belief that are aligned with creed, the dimensions of religious practice are equated with sharia, the dimensions of experience are aligned with morals, and the dimension of science.<sup>2</sup>

Islam as a complete and complete system of religious teachings, of course, gives place to the type of religious appreciation which is exoteric (born; *shari'at*) and religious appreciation that is esoteric (inner; essence). In this esoteric section lies what is called Sufism or Sufism. Therefore, according to Asmaran. US. Sufism is an inherent part of every Muslim's life.<sup>3</sup>

According to A. RivaySiregar, the term Sufism is widely known in the Islamic region since the end of the 2nd century Hijri, as a continued development of the ascetic piety or zahid who clustered in the foyer of the Medina mosque. This group specializes in worshiping and developing spiritual life by neglecting worldly life. This is the beginning of the growth of Sufism called asceticism phase (the first phase).

Then entering the 3rd century Hijri had seen a concrete transition from Islamic asceticism to Sufism with the concept of *mahabbatRabi'at al-Adawiyah* (second phase). In this phase, there is a change in the term zahid to Sufi, conversations also arise about the issue of what is a clean soul, what is moral and how is its coaching method, and other theoretical problems.

Furthermore, various theories emerged about the levels that must be taken by a Sufi (*maqamat*) and the characteristics possessed by a Sufi for a certain level (*ahwal*), also developed a discussion of *ma'rifat*, as well as a set of methods to reach the mortal level. and *ittihad*. Along with this development, several Sufism writers appear such as al-Muhasibi, al-Kharraj, al-Junaid and others, so that in this phase it can be said that Sufism is no longer merely

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<sup>1</sup> Djamaluddin Ancok dan N. Suroso, F. *PsikologiIslami, Solusi Islam atas Problem-problem Psikologi*. Yogyakarta: PustakaPelajar, 1994.p. 76-77.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 80-81.

<sup>3</sup> Asmaran A.S. *Sufisme dan Islam Masa DepandalamKhazanah*Nomor 53 August-September 2000.Banjarmasin: IAIN Antasari, 2000.p. 39.

practical knowledge, but he (Sufism) has been born as a new knowledge in the treasures of Islamic culture, and talk about Sufism continues to develop to more specific things, such as how the concepts of intuition, *kasyf* and *dzauf*.<sup>4</sup> The development of Sufism since its inception until now is still interesting to study. One important effort to place Sufism as a separate science is through tracking the epistemology of science itself. This tracking becomes important in the framework of confirming Islamic philosophy which has its own distinctions from other philosophies.

## II. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 2.1 *The principles and characteristics of Sufism*

Islam, in practice, is actualized by its adherents in various forms. One of them is through the teachings of Sufism. Sufism as a science is basically inseparable from the basic principles that distinguish it from other (religious) sciences such as kalam science and *fiqh*. In summary, these basic principles can be stated as follows:

1. Sources of Sufism. There are three sources used in Sufism, namely religious texts (Qur'an and Hadith), actions of the Companions of the Apostles, and - most - inner experiences (personal intuition-feelings) of the Sufis themselves;
2. The object is the inner/spiritual experience of humans in relation to God (metaphysical things);
3. The premise used is true knowledge (intrinsic), that is knowledge which is only obtained in *ma'rifat* through mortal and *kasyf*, not by reason or senses;
4. Methods in Sufism:
  - a. *Takhalli*, the intention is to cleanse the soul from bad qualities and attitudes and release the soul from dependence on worldly delights;
  - b. *Tahalli*, the intention is to familiarize yourself with the qualities and attitudes that are commendable, and fill the soul / spirit with repentance, *khauf* and king ' , *zuhd*, *faqr*, *tafakkur*, *zikr*, and pleasure;
  - c. *Tajalli*, the meaning is *fana* and *baqa* in asthma, *af'al*, nature, and substance of Allah *Ta'ala*, so that the truth of *nur* is revealed.
5. Means / tools used are heart (heart), while according to *Qusyairi* are *qalb*, spirit and *sirr*, not the mind and senses are born;
6. Purpose; in the opinion of al-Ghazali is *qurb* (near as close as possible) to God, so that he gets *ma'rifat* (gift of knowledge that is essential from God as the owner of all knowledge).

Until now, Sufism is a teaching that is practiced by Muslims through various forms and schools of thought. Sufism since the beginning has contributed to the development of Islam and Islamic thought. As revealed by Amin Abdullah, Sufism is like a 'magnet'. He did not appear on the surface but had extraordinary powers. Through various *tarikat* practices - for some Muslims -, Sufism continues to color the face of religious diversity in the midst of the swift currents of modernization, even the current of globalization that afflicts humankind today.

### 2.2 *Epistemology of Sufism*

The subject of religious experience in religious studies, especially in the psychology of religion, cannot really be abandoned or ignored. Religious experience must be distinguished from dogma or credo and worship.<sup>5</sup>

In the conception of Islam itself there are concepts of Faith, Islam, and Ihsan that can be described in the detailed description of the discussion, but it is a unity that cannot be separated in the lives of religious people. Ihsan in the conception of Islam is often interpreted as an aspect of *batiniyyah*. This aspect of *batiniyyah* is also attached to the teachings of Sufism.

In the view of Sufism, knowledge is one of the names of Allah (Asma al-Husna). According to the Prophet SAW, knowledge is the light (*nur*) of Allah. The Divine Light can only be absorbed and reflected as well as possible, if the "lens" and "mirror" of the human mind and heart that seek and receive it are quite clear, clean (holy) from dirt and liver disease.

There is a verse in the Koran that tells us that if man, God's servants have devoted to Him, then He (God) will be his hand when he (His servant) works, will be his eyes when he sees, and his ears when he heard. This is the verse that forms the basis of what is called *hudhuri* knowledge or knowledge that is presented directly by God to the human heart and mind without the mediation of concepts or sensory propositions. *Hudhuri* is a kind of knowledge that is absorbed through intuition, silence and clarity of mind.

From the ontology side, humans who love and are loved by God will unite. In the sense that humans have absorbed God's attributes and deeds into his personal life. His personal ego has been dissolved (mortal) into the 'Divine Ocean'. There is only Existence, the Almighty, the Almighty. What appears from his behaviour and speech as

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<sup>4</sup> Siregar, A. Rivary. *Tasawuf dari Sufisme Klasik ke Neo-Sufisme*, Jakarta: P.T. RajaGrafindoPersada, 1999.p. 36-37.

<sup>5</sup> Amin Abdullah. *Studi Agama: Normativitas atau Historisitas?* Cet. III, Yogyakarta: PustakaPelajar, 2002.p. 148.

well as his life-attitude are the *tajaliat al-Ilahi* (manifesting the Godhead) or the appearance of the attributes and will of God.

In the perspective of Islamic philosophy, the study of ontology cannot be separated and is always intertwined with epistemology and axiology in an integrative-comprehensive-holistic manner. Islamic epistemology is essentially monotheistic, and monotheism in Islamic concepts is not only related to theological concepts, but also in the concepts of anthropology and epistemology.<sup>6</sup>

The existence of humanity will increasingly perfect the process along with the development and increase of knowledge that is absorbed from the universe and from God the Creator of the Universe. Between the term 'nature', science, and *al-'alim* (God who knows everything), is a root word that has one *alif*, *lam* and *mim* letters. Nature is like a laboratory and a super-encyclopedia mega book that shows signs of God's greatness and the breadth of His knowledge.

Sufism as a means of purifying the soul and the human mind is one of the main pillars that accompany rationality to achieve the clarity of science, the nature of truth and the perfection-welfare of human life. Between activities of *dhikr* and *dhikr* must go in a balanced, synergistic, holistic, and integral manner in the life of humankind in general, especially for Muslims, if they want to realize the Divine mission of Islam into *rahmatanlil' alamin*.

In the world of Muslim thought there are at least three kinds of theories of knowledge. First, rational knowledge; second, sensory knowledge, and the third is *kasyf* knowledge obtained through inspiration.<sup>7</sup> Of these three types of sources of knowledge acquisition, the acquisition of knowledge through the first and third paths is dominant in the Muslim world of thought.

Discussion of an epistemology of a science - according to KamraniBuseri - means talking about two things. First, what means by humans to reach knowledge (truth / reality), and second, what is called the truth or reality. Both can also be used to track Sufism through the epistemology of science.

In the field of modern-day philosophy of science, many epistemologies have arisen with their own philosophical backgrounds and with differing views on the two main problems above. At least according to the writer's observation, there are no less than 7 (seven) major types of epistemology that become trends, namely empiricism, positivistic, rationalistic, phenomenological, hermeneutic, pragmatism and metaphysical realism.

To obtain a synthesis-analysis of which epistemology should be suitable for use in Sufism, it can be stated as follows:

1. Empiricism and Positivistic Epistemology; these two epistemologies clearly contradict Sufism because - according to this epistemology - the means used to obtain true knowledge is sensory observation. Something is considered true if measured empirically, can be verified and correspondence. While Sufism is outside the senses;
2. Rationalistic Epistemology; This epistemology relies on means of finding true knowledge using reason (ratio) or argumentation of rationality. A knowledge is considered true if the way to achieve it is in accordance with the procedures that apply in scientific reasoning (coherence). Even though there are new developments in this flow such as the emergence of critical rationalism, it remains on the ground of rationality and human meaning, not reaching the metaphysical-transcendental (spiritual-divine) aspects which characterize the study of Sufism;
3. Phenomenological epistemology; when borrowing the opinion of A. RivaySiregar in his book *Sufism from Classical Sufism to Neo-Sufism*, and *Simuh's* opinion in his book *Sufism and Its Development in Islam*, then this epistemology is suitable for use in developing and researching mysticism in Islam (*tasawwuf*), because:
  - a. This epistemology assumes that the personal experience, intuition and morality of the religion embraced by the subject must be considered in understanding the phenomenon, because behind the phenomenon there is a noun;
  - b. The basic assumptions used are intentional and transcendental (reductionist) logic, so the metaphysical-transcendental appreciation can be recognized as true and higher knowledge;
  - c. What applies in Islamic mysticism (Sufism) is intuition, then the appropriate philosophical approach is the intuitive approach, and this approach is used by phenomenological epistemology. The intuitive approach can imply a more original and existential recognition. Spiritual experience in a direct relationship with God experienced by a Sufi is evidence of an argument about the truth of God, and at the same time as evidence of a real and essential arrangement (in Kant's term; it is called the "area of the nomen"). Likewise, in the psychology of the last stream - humanistic - the scientific community is now discovering new developments called transpersonal psychology.
4. Hermeneutic Epistemology; This epistemology makes language and text to gain meaning and knowledge through a logic-linguistic approach and end in semantic (textual-contextual) truth. If we acknowledge that religious texts (Qur'an-Hadith) or Sufi experience written in a book become one of the sources of Sufism, then within a certain extent this epistemology can also be used to enrich the building of Sufism. Why is it said in "some extent"? Because the reality of the Qur'anic verses and the Prophet's hadith that touches on the main (epistemological) problem in Sufism is relatively small, it also requires carefulness in interpreting. Then it must also be acknowledged that writing

<sup>6</sup> Musa Asy'arie. *Filsafat Islam, SunnahNabi dalamBerpikir*. Yogyakarta: LESFI, 2002.p. 67.

<sup>7</sup> Amin Abdullah. *Studi Agama: NormativitasatauHistorisitas?*Op.cit. p. 250.

cannot fully explain the spiritual-intuitive experience of a Sufi who tends to use "symbolic language" in his expression as is the case when he (Sufi) mortal and *kasf*, where the words that appear are *syatahat*;

5. Epistemology of Pragmatism; This epistemology also seems incompatible with the foundations of Sufism. Because the measurement of truth in epistemology is oriented to solving the problems of human life that are functional, praxis and technological, and can change at any time. While the truths in Sufism are true (transcendental) truths;
6. Epistemology of Metaphysical Realism; as a whole, this epistemology (Popper's version) cannot be used to design the science of Sufism, because it uses the premise of falsifiability with probabilistic deductive logic, and its universal metaphysical concept is only on the human spiritual plain not on the transcendental-religious plain as found in Sufism. But the basic idea of the "scourge of values" and giving space to something metaphysical is also a breath of fresh air for the development of Islamic sciences. Noeng Muhajir, for example, tried to elevate Popper's epistemology to the universal-transcendental-religious sciences with the name "concept of transcendental idealization".

It must be admitted honestly, the development of philosophical thought in Islam has contributed to a large enough life for the fertile life of Sufism in the Muslim world.

### III. CONCLUSION

From the analysis stated above, the authors conclude: First; The most suitable (primary) epistemology of some of the above epistemologies in order to build and develop Sufism is phenomenological epistemology. Whereas hermeneutic epistemology and metaphysical realism can be used as supplementary (secondary) epistemology for certain aspects. Second; Sufism today is no longer just a Sufi practice or asceticism that is outside of science but has truly become a science that has met the criteria in the philosophy of science.

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