

## The Epistemology of Knowledge in Classical Sufism; A Study of Al-Muḥāsibī's Thought (781 AD- 857 AD)

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### Abstract

This article aims to reveal the epistemology of classical Sufism knowledge spanning from 650 AD to 1258 AD, particularly as employed by al-Muḥāsibī, in his works. It focuses on the source of Sufism knowledge, the method of acquiring it, and the validity of Sufism knowledge according to al-Muḥāsibī. The researcher used primary sources, namely al-Muḥāsibī's works including *al-Ri'āyah li Huqūqillāh*, *al-Waṣāyā*, *Risālah al-Mustarsyidīn*, and the book *al-'Aql wa Fahm al-Qur'an*. The data were analyzed using content analysis and hermeneutic philosophical analysis. The results showed that, according to al-Muḥāsibī, the source of Sufi knowledge is revelation, which is manifested in the Qur'an, hadīṣ, and reason. Reason functions as a means of confirmation (*taṣabbut*) for various issues and serves as an indicator of devotion—something attained after undergoing the typical stages of the Sufi path. These stages include purifying the heart from spiritual ailments and impurities, obeying God, and doing good to others. Based on this understanding, al-Muḥāsibī concluded that Sufi knowledge possesses the most convincing validity.

**Keywords:** Sufism, revelation, reason, al-Muḥāsibī

### Abstrak

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mengungkap epistemologi pengetahuan tasawuf klasik yang berkembang antara tahun 650 M hingga 1258 M, khususnya sebagaimana diterapkan oleh al-Muḥāsibī dalam karya-karyanya. Fokus kajian ini meliputi sumber pengetahuan tasawuf, metode perolehannya, serta validitas pengetahuan tasawuf menurut al-Muḥāsibī. Penelitian ini menggunakan sumber primer, yakni karya-karya al-Muḥāsibī seperti *al-Ri'āyah li Huqūqillāh*, *al-Waṣāyā*, *Risālah al-Mustarsyidīn*, dan kitab *al-'Aql wa Fahm al-Qur'an*. Data dianalisis menggunakan analisis isi dan analisis filosofis hermeneutik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa menurut al-Muḥāsibī, sumber pengetahuan tasawuf adalah wahyu yang termanifestasi dalam al-Qur'an, hadīṣ, dan akal. Akal berfungsi sebagai alat konfirmasi (*taṣabbut*) terhadap berbagai persoalan serta menjadi indikator ketakwaan—yang dicapai setelah melalui tahapan-tahapan khas dalam jalan tasawuf. Tahapan tersebut mencakup pensucian hati dari penyakit dan kotoran spiritual, ketaatan kepada Tuhan, serta berbuat baik kepada sesama makhluk. Berdasarkan pemahaman ini, al-Muḥāsibī menyimpulkan bahwa pengetahuan tasawuf memiliki validitas yang paling meyakinkan.

**Kata kunci:** Tasawuf, wahyu, akal, al-Muḥāsibī

## INTRODUCTION

Epistemology is one of the important studies of three things in philosophy, namely ontology, epistemology, and axiology. Epistemology is a way of gaining knowledge, the sources of knowledge, and the scope of knowledge.<sup>1</sup> There are three main issues related to epistemology. First, what is the source of knowledge, where does true knowledge come from and how do we know it? Second, what is the nature of knowledge, is there a world that is truly outside of our minds, and if there is, can we know it? Third, whether our knowledge is valid, how can we distinguish between what is true and what is false?<sup>2</sup>

In the Western system of knowledge or philosophy, there are two contrasting views regarding the source of knowledge. The first view is called rationalism, which believes that knowledge can be obtained based on reason (a priori), while the second view is commonly called empiricism, which means the opposite, namely knowledge can be obtained based on the senses or experience (a posteriori). The school of rationalism was pioneered by Rene Descartes (1598-1650), and the school of empiricism by David Hume (1611-1776 AD). From these two schools, Immanuel Kant (1724-1804 AD) emerged, known as the school of criticism. Criticism is a theory of knowledge that seeks to unite the two kinds of elements in the philosophy of rationalism and empiricism in a balanced relationship, one inseparable from the other.<sup>3</sup> In resolving this difference of view between rationalism and empiricism, Kant argued that knowledge should be a priori synthesis.<sup>4</sup> Here reason and sensory experience are needed simultaneously.

In contrast to the Western intellectual tradition, which is dominated by rationalism and empiricism, there are two trends in the Eastern Islamic intellectual tradition. First, rational knowledge is based on rational logic and is discursive. Some of its figures can be mentioned such as al-Kindī (185-265 AH), al-Fārābī (258-339 AH), Ibn Sīnā (370-428 AH), and so on. Second, intuitive knowledge that comes from intuition, dhauq, or inspiration. There are many names for this type of intuitive knowledge, as noted by Amin Syukur and Masyharuddin.<sup>5</sup> For example is Ibn ‘Arabī calls it *al-Ma‘rifah*.<sup>6</sup> Suhrawardi named *Hikmah Isyraqiyyah*,<sup>7</sup> Muhammad Ghallab gave the

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<sup>1</sup> Suaedi, *Pengantar Filsafat Ilmu* (Bogor: IPB press, 2016).

<sup>2</sup> Harold Titus, *Persoalan-persoalan Filsafat* (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1984).

<sup>3</sup> Muhtasir Rizal and Misnal Munir, *Filsafat Ilmu* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2003), 81–82.

<sup>4</sup> P Hammersma, *Tokoh-Tokoh Filsafat Barat* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 1983), 89.

<sup>5</sup> Amin Syukur and Masyharuddin, *Intelektualisme Tasawuf: Studi Tentang Tasawuf al-Ghazali* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2002), 72.

<sup>6</sup> Abu Al-A‘la Afifi, *Filsafat Mistik Ibn ‘Arabi*, (Jakarta: Gaya Media Pranata, 1969), 55.

<sup>7</sup> Sayyed Husein Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages (Ibn Sina, Suhrawardi Dan Ibn ‘Arabi)* (Cambridge, U.K: Oxford University Press., 1986), 69.

name *Ma'rifah Tanassukhiyah*.<sup>8</sup> 'Prophetic philosophy', according to Roger Garaudy,<sup>9</sup> and 'philosophy of intuition' according to Hendri Bergson.<sup>10</sup>

About this epistemological approach, one of the contemporary Islamic thinkers, Muḥammad 'Ābid al-Jābirī, offers an epistemological reconstruction that can help develop religious science that is felt to be different from the science in the Western world. In general, al-Jābirī's criticism is aimed at Arab-Islamic reasoning which ultimately merges into a '*turaṣ*' or "culture". Al-Jābirī has the view that, so that the Arab revival project does not experience historical disconnection, culture should be the starting point for criticizing reason. Therefore, the problem of the decline of the Arabs is caused by their being trapped in understanding and treating culture, which tends to move towards "circular" and does not even move towards "renewal". So in this case al-Jābirī offers an epistemology of Islamic studies which includes three aspects, namely, *bayānī*, *irfānī* and *burhānī*.<sup>11</sup>

This epistemological issue has been studied by classical Islamic thinkers. Some tend to base their knowledge on sacred texts, such as the *mutakallimīn*, *fuqaha*, and hadith experts. Others tend to rational thinking and experimentation, as done by Muslim philosophers. Still others emphasize intuition or "taste" by cleansing the heart as a means of obtaining knowledge directly from God, such as Sufi scholars. However, some fundamental problems arise when epistemology is applied rigidly. First, scientific methods that emphasize rationality have definitively and convincingly eliminated revelation as a source of knowledge because they consider knowledge to originate from human reason. This is contrary to Islamic science and civilization, which claims revelation (al-Qur'an) as central to science. Second, scientific methods that prioritize empiricism seem to reject transcendent realms, such as the *malakūt* or unseen realm, because they cannot be proven or observed empirically.<sup>12</sup>

Therefore, in reality, not all scholars use only one epistemology; they also use other epistemologies within certain limits. For example, the *mutakallimīn* use sacred texts and reason. Similarly, Muslim philosophers combine knowledge of reason and sacred texts. Sufis emphasize taste or cleansing the heart and continue to use sacred texts and reason-based knowledge. One of their notable figures in this regard is al-Muḥāsibī.

He was born in 165 AH / 781 AD, the beginning of the Abbasid reign. At this time thought in the Islamic world had begun to reach a high level of development where thought did not just

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<sup>8</sup> Muhammad Ghallab, *Al-Ma'arif 'Inda Mufakkiri al-Muslimin* (Mesir: Dar al-Nasyr al Miṣriyyah, n.d.), 78.

<sup>9</sup> Roger Garaudy, *Janji-janji Islam* (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1981), 69.

<sup>10</sup> Lois O Katsoff, *Pengantar Filsafat* (Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana, 1992), 69.

<sup>11</sup> Muhammad Abid Al-Jabiri, *Bunyab Al-Aql Al-Arabi* (Beirut: Al-Tsaqafi Al-Arabi, 1991), 23.

<sup>12</sup> Zainuddin Sardar, *Exploration in Islamic Science* (Albani: Sunny Press, 1989).

stop as the result of individual cultivation, but developed into schools with their methods and systems. It was this scientific climate that shaped al-Muḥāsibī as a senior Sufi figure who mastered various disciplines both external and internal. He was qualified in the fields of fiqh, hadīṣ, and logic until he finally “converted” to Sufism<sup>13</sup> because he experienced methodical doubts about the various disciplines he studied. Many later scholars were influenced or even claimed to be influenced by al-Muḥāsibī, such as Imam al-Gazālī and Junaid al-Baghdādī. Al-Muḥāsibī’s expertise is evident from his works such as *al-Ri’āyah li Huquqillāh* in fiqh and tasawuf, *al-‘Aql wa Fahm al-Qur’an* in tafsir, *A’māl al-Qulūb wa al-Jawāriḥ* in tasawuf and others.

Regarding the figures to be discussed, there are several studies related to this research including, First, Abdul Moqsith's research entitled 'The Study of Sufism of Al-Harits Ibn Asad Al-Muḥāsibī Study of *al-Ri’āyah li Huquqillāh*'.<sup>14</sup> This research reveals that the teachings of al-Muḥāsibī’s Sufism in *al-Ri’āyah li Huquqillāh* are characterized by non-Falsafī Sufism or better known as Sunni Sufism. Second, is Miftahul Ula’s research entitled Human in Sufi View (Study of al-Muḥāsibī Thought). This research reveals the model or concept of man in the treasures of Sufism which focuses on the Falsafī pattern and the Sunni pattern.<sup>15</sup> Third, Khoirul-Faizin’s article entitled Moral Psychology of al-Muḥāsibī (Study of the Book of *al-Ri’āyah li Huquqillāh*, the results of this study reveals that through his work, al-Muḥāsibī analyzes as a whole the various forms of human egoism, the method of training, and how to guard against it. The main forms of egoism he discusses are: *riya*’ (narcissism); *kibr* (megalomania); *ujub*, and *girrah*.<sup>16</sup> In contrast to the studies or research that have been described, this paper seeks to uncover al-Muḥāsibī’s epistemology of knowledge in his works, especially regarding the source of Sufism knowledge, the way of obtaining Sufism knowledge, and the validity of his Sufism knowledge.

## METHODS

The approach used is the approach of philosophy and Sufism. The historical approach is also used as a means to find out the biography of al-Muḥāsibī, because a thinker will not be separated from the formation of history, the situation and conditions of his era.<sup>17</sup> The historical approach will be

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<sup>13</sup> Ibn Taqiy Al-Din Al-Subki, *Tabaqāt al-Syafi’iyyah* (Kairo, 1324).

<sup>14</sup> Abdul Moqsith, “Kajian Tasawuf Al-Harits Ibn Asad Al-Muḥāsibī Studi Kitab Al-Ri’āyah Li Huquq Allah,” *Istiqro’* 15, no. 1 (2017).

<sup>15</sup> Miftahul Ula, “Manusia Dalam Pandangan Sufi: Telaah Pemikiran al-Muḥāsibī (781-857 M)” (Yogyakarta, UIN Sunan Kalijaga, 2002).

<sup>16</sup> Khoirul Faizin, “Psikologi Moral Al-Muḥāsibī (Studi Atas Kitab Ar-Ri’āyah Li Huquq Allah,” *Al-‘Adalah: Kajian Keislaman Dan Kemasyarakatan* 16, no. 2 (2012).

<sup>17</sup> Muhammad Nazir, *Metode Penelitian* (Jakarta: Ghalia Indonesia, 1988), 56–57.

very useful to know the historical, sociological, and cultural background that surrounds and influences the attitudes and thoughts of the character under study.

To uncover and reconstruct al-Muḥāsibī's thought, the researcher took two research steps. The first step is the research data collection technique. In this case, researchers distinguish data sources into two: primary sources and secondary sources. The primary data sources in this case are the works of al-Muḥāsibī namely *al-Ri'āyah li Huqūqillāh*,<sup>18</sup> *al-Waṣāyā*,<sup>19</sup> *Risālah al-Mustarsyidin*<sup>20</sup> and the book *al-'Aql wa Fahm al-Qur'ān*<sup>21</sup> while the secondary sources are all research and other writings related to the research theme.

The second step is to analyze the research data using content analysis and hermeneutic analysis<sup>22</sup> by Hans-Georg-Gadamer. According to Gadamer, to understand a text, the interpreter must discard all forms of preconception so that the interpreter becomes open to the statement of a text. Instead, the interpreter anticipates and interprets according to what the interpreter has (*vorhabe*), what he sees (*vorsicht*), and what he will get later (*vorgriff*), not with considerations that have been owned by a previous interpreter.<sup>23</sup>

## DISCUSSION

### *Biography of Al-Muḥāsibī*

His full name is Abū 'Abdillāh al-Hārīš bin Asad al-Muḥāsibī,<sup>24</sup> born in the city of Baṣrah where the emergence of the Mu'tazilah School, around 165 H / 781 AD.<sup>25</sup> His father, Asad al-'Anazy was a follower of the *Qadariyah* School while his mother was very hostile to *Qadariyah* or free will school.<sup>26</sup> Another history says that his father was a *Rafidlah* or *Wāqifiyyah*.<sup>27</sup> His childhood life is not much known, until finally he moved with all his family members to Bagdād which became the intellectual and cultural center of Islam and the world at that time, then his life was spent more in the city. But from the available historical information, Baṣrah as the birthplace of the Islamic rationalist school, Mu'tazilah, helped shape the character of his personality.

<sup>18</sup> Abi Abdillah Harits bin Asad Al-Muhasibi, *Ar-Ri'āyah Li Huqūq Allah* (Beirut: Dar Al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, n.d.).

<sup>19</sup> Abi Abdillah Harits bin Asad Al-Muhasibi, *Al-Waṣāyā*, 1st ed. (Beirut, 1986).

<sup>20</sup> Abi Abdillah Harits bin Asad Al-Muhasibi, *Risālah Al-Mustarsyidin*, 5th ed. (Kairo: Dar Al-Salam, n.d.).

<sup>21</sup> Abi Abdillah Harits bin Asad Al-Muhasibi, *Al-'Aql Wa Fahm al-Qur'An*, 1st ed. (Beirut: Dar Al-Fikr, n.d.).

<sup>22</sup> Paul Ricoeur said that hermeneutics is the process of deciphering which goes from manifest content and meaning to latent or hidden meaning). See Richard E. Palmer, *Hermeneutics* (Evauston: Northwestern University Press, 1969), 43.

<sup>23</sup> E Sumaryono, *Hermenutik; Sebuah Metode Filsafat* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1999), 83.

<sup>24</sup> Al-Muḥāsibī is his title, taken from the word *ḥasaba-yuḥāsibu-muḥāsabah* which means to calculate (introspection). This is based on his core teachings that emphasize self-introspection. See, Michael A. Sells, *Early Mystics Islamic Mysticism* (New York: Paulist Press, 1996).

<sup>25</sup> P.A.R Gibb and J.P Kramer, *Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam* (Leiden: E.J Brill, 1974).

<sup>26</sup> Abd al -Hayy Ibn 'Imad Al-Hanbaly, *Syadẓarāt Al-Dẓahab*, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Maktabah al-Tijari li al-Thaba'ah wa al-Nasyr wa al-Tauzi', n.d.), 103.

<sup>27</sup> Abu Nu'aim Al-Isfahani, *Hilyah Al-Awlia'*, X (Beirut: Dar Al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, n.d.), 75.

At least before moving to Bagdād, it is likely that he had studied with the Mu‘tazilah in Baṣrah even though he later disliked the Mu‘tazilah. In the end, the intellectual methods he learned from the Mu‘tazilah colored his Sufism.<sup>28</sup>

The youth of al-Muḥāsibī was also spent among the scholars of hadīṣ and fiqh where he gained knowledge from various experts in both fields. He narrated traditions from the traditionists (*rijāl al-isnād*) of the time among them Hasyim bin Basyīr,<sup>29</sup> al-Muḥāsibī narrated traditions from him directly. This can be seen from the phrase ‘*haddatsanā*’ when narrating it. Then from Marwan bin Syuja‘,<sup>30</sup> from Wakī‘ bin al-Jarrāh,<sup>31</sup> from ‘Ubad bin al-‘Awwām, ‘Alī bin ‘āṣim, Syuraih bin Yūnus, and from Yazīd bin Hārūn<sup>32</sup> and so on. The hadīṣ he narrated revolved around matters of fiqh and its details, as he narrated from Hāshim about ‘iddah, repentance of adulterers, the amount of zakat, and about alms. It is also reported that he studied fiqh with al-Shafī‘ī (150-204 AH) during his second visit to Bagdād.<sup>33</sup> In addition, he studied linguistics and Qur’anic interpretation with an expert at that time, Abū ‘Ubaid al-Qāsim bin Salām, the author of two famous books namely Garīb al-Ḥadīṣ and al-Amwāl.<sup>34</sup>

As for al-Muḥāsibī’s spiritual teacher, he never clearly names him, he only mentions an ‘*alim*’ whom he took as a guide. This is as stated by ‘Abd al-Qādir ‘Aṭa’, it seems that al-Muḥāsibī studied almost all disciplines and he was not so concerned with *sanad* and tended to be self-taught, but in fact it was from here that al-Muḥāsibī matured in science until Syaikh ‘Abd al-Ḥālim Maḥmūd, former syaikh of al-Azhar said that al-Muḥāsibī had reached the level of *mujtabid muṭlaq*.<sup>35</sup>

### ***Tasawwuf: The End of Al-Muḥāsibī’s Skepticism***

Al-Muḥāsibī was not originally a person who ventured into Sufism. His conversion to Sufism came after a study of various schools of thought. It seems that, like any true seeker of truth, he was skeptical of what he already had and mastered. Because what he had mastered and understood did not bring peace, instead it made him even more disturbed. His anxiety increased when he saw the phenomenon that occurred at that time. He saw that the *halaqah* of knowledge, both hadīṣ

<sup>28</sup> Gibb and Kramer, *Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam*, 410.

<sup>29</sup> He was Abū Mu‘awiyah Hashim b. Bashir b. Qasim al-Wasithi (104-183 AH). A leader and memorizer of hadiths. See Ibn Hajar Al-Asqalani, *Tabdżīb Al-Tabdżīb*, XI (Beirut: Dar Al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 1994), 59–64.

<sup>30</sup> He was Marwan b. Shuja' Abi 'Amr al-Jazary (184 AH- ). Most hadīṣ scholars accepted his hadith. See Ibn Sa‘ad, *Kitab Al-Tabaqat al-Kabir* (Kairo: Maktabah Al-Kaniji, 2008), 72.

<sup>31</sup> Waki’ bin Jarrah bin Malih al-Ru‘asy (130-197 H), a muhaddist who is tsiqqah, ma'mun, 'Alim, rafi' and hujjap... See Ibn Sa‘ad, 75.

<sup>32</sup> His full name is Yazid bin Harun bin Zadzi bin Tsabit al-Wasithi (118-206 AH). A tsiqah, hafidz, and imam in the science of haditp. See Al-Asqalani, *Tabdżīb Al-Tabdżīb*.

<sup>33</sup> Abd Al-Fattah Abu Ghadah, *Introduction in Risalah Al-Mustaryidin*, 5th ed. (Kairo: Dar Al-Salam, 1983), 15.

<sup>34</sup> Hussein Al-Qawwatily, *Introduction in Al-‘Aqlu Wa Fahm al-Qur’An*, 1st ed. (Beirut: Dar Al-Fikr, 1971), 17–18.

<sup>35</sup> Al-Muhasibi, *Al-Waṣṣya*, 56.

and fiqh, had been polluted with elements of personal or group pride and popularity. While other groups of scholars prefer to '*uṣṭāḥ*' without thinking about the dilapidated condition of society, or else they praise or seek face in front of the ruler for material gain, all of which are very far from even the teachings of Islam brought by the Prophet PBUH, his companions and straight successors. This intellectual and spiritual anxiety that he experienced as he expressed as an autobiography in the *muqaddimah* of the book *al-Waṣāyā*:

It has been explained that this *ummah* will be divided into seventy-plus groups. Among these groups, only one will be saved, while the rest only Allah knows their fate. For the rest of my life I have witnessed strife among the *ummah*. That is why I prefer the clear and passable path that leads to the Hereafter, and that is of course with the guidance of the '*ulama*. I have commented extensively on the verses of Allah through the commentaries of the jurists. I have also paid attention to the condition of the *ummah* and researched the development of the madhabs and the issues that have arisen among the people. I found that there were deep differences between them. The disputes have swept away many people and saved very few. I also saw that each of them claimed to be the surviving sect. They also think that all groups outside of them are destroyed.

I tried to find my identity amongst all these groups. I found it difficult at first, but eventually I decided to rely on the guidance of those who had been guided to the truth. I turned to knowledge and a clear mind for guidance. In the end, I got clarity from the Qur'an, the Sunnah and the consensus of the (righteous) *ummah*. Verily, the servant who follows his desires will be prevented from seeing guidance. So I began to abandon my lusts from my heart. I stopped and did not interfere in the disputes of the *ummah* over which group was saved, based on being wary of the impulses of the passions, refraining from passing judgment before everything was clear and bright and determined to choose the path of salvation for my soul.

It turned out that I found the only way of salvation was to hold fast to piety to Allah, to carry out all His obligations, to be wara' towards the halal and haram things and the restrictions (*hudūd*) of Allah. Also being sincere in carrying out obedience to him and in imitating the behavior of the Prophet Muhammad SAW.

To find out what is obligatory and *mustahabb* (recommended), I looked to the reports of the scholars. That is how I found out what was agreed upon and what was disputed. I found that all the '*ulama* agreed on the things that are obligatory and *mustahabb*, just as the '*ālim* (people who understand) about Allah, who are always pleased with Him, who abstain from everything He has forbidden, and who follow the footsteps of the Messenger of Allah and prioritize the Hereafter over the world. Finally, I chose a group that had been agreed upon by these righteous servants.

I gained knowledge from those whose numbers were very rare. Their existence is in accordance with the words of the Prophet Muhammad, “Islam first came in a foreign state, and at some point it will return as foreign as the first time it appeared, so how fortunate are those who are foreign” because they are among those who are rare in defending their religion.

So great is the calamity that has befallen me because I have lost many pious people. I was also worried that death would suddenly come for me while I was still in confusion because of the disputes of the *ummah*. Finally, I decided to look for an *‘alim* whom I had never found before. I was very careful in my choice. In the end, the Most Merciful One guided me to a group of people who adhered to the values of piety, *wara’*, and prioritizing the Hereafter over the world. I felt that all their instructions and advice were in accordance with the behavior of the leaders of the people who were guided. They gathered to give advice to the *ummah*, not for disobedience. They never despair of Allah's Mercy, are patient and willing to face all trials, Allah's destiny, and are grateful for all pleasures. They encourage others to return to Allah.<sup>36</sup>

What al-Muḥāsibī says in his autobiography, it seems that he experienced what is called an intellectual crisis and truth. This is reminiscent of what was done about three centuries later by his successor, al-Gazālī when he composed an autobiography on his work *al-Munqiz min al-Ḍalāl*.<sup>37</sup> Like al-Gazālī, al-Muḥāsibī also took the path of Sufism as an attempt to escape the doubts that surrounded him. Although al-Muḥāsibī does not directly mention that the group he chose was the Sufis, what he says about the scholar who guided him implies that he was a *murayyid* in the world of Sufism. In addition, his own statement, “Thirty years passed, during which I heard nothing except from my head, and then thirty years passed, during which I heard nothing except from Allah.”<sup>38</sup> This implies that during these thirty years, I heard nothing except from Allah. This implies that for thirty years he concentrated more on the external sciences that emphasize rational study such as *kalam*, *hadīṣ* and *fiqh*. Then he turned to Sufism, which relies on *dzawq* (intuition) by purifying the heart (via purgativa) so that his inner consciousness is sharp and can hear the “whispers” of God. If we look at what he said above, it means that it was when he was about thirty years old that he made the conversion to Sufism. If al-Muḥāsibī was born in 165 A.H., then it means that his psychological crisis took place around 195 to 200 A.H. This was during the height of the political and leadership crisis of the Abbasid government and the power struggle between

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<sup>36</sup> Al-Muhasibi, 53–54.

<sup>37</sup> Many researchers claim that al-Ghazālī was an indirect student of Al-Muḥāsibī. See A.J Arberry, *Sufism an Account of The Mystics of Islam* (London: George Allen & Unwin, n.d.).

<sup>38</sup> Harun Nasution, *Ensiklopedi Islam Indonesia* (Jakarta: Djambatan, n.d.), 682.



al-Amīn and al-Ma'mun, which finally saw al-Amin killed in 198 A.H.<sup>39</sup> It was in this situation that al-Muḥāsibī wrote al-Waṣāyā which also marked his conversion to Sufism.

Although initially, al-Muḥāsibī had a rationalist tendency that relied on reason. But he saw that the schools that used reason as a source of knowledge, in fact, produced conflicting views that were difficult to resolve with reason and became an unanswerable antinomy. Especially when it comes to metaphysical and eschatological issues. Although the position of reason is important, however, as the opinion of the Sunnis, he puts it under the science. Knowledge in al-Muḥāsibī's view is something that comes from the Qur'an and hadīṣ. This means that he prioritizes naqli sources over 'aqli. This is as L. Massignon<sup>40</sup> quoted Husain al-Qawwatilī, that reason for al-Muḥāsibī was not created to justify good or bad, weighing between the thoughts of the devil's whispers or from God. Rather reason is an ability that is useful for uncovering which is preferable between two things that God has commanded. Thus, reason for al-Muḥāsibī functions as a reinforcement (*taṣabbut*), which is to restrain the nafs before acting to be patient and not hasty. Man knows with knowledge and is reinforced (*taṣabbut*) with reason. The analogy between the two is that knowledge is like a torch that illuminates while reason is like vision itself.<sup>41</sup>

### **Source of Knowledge**

The Source of Knowledge is generally viewed from the perspective of science, the theory of truth in the context of religion is sourced to the truth of rationalism, empiricism, pragmatism, criticalism and intuitionism. While the theory of truth in Sufism can be understood through the five aspects of the source, but in this case, al-Muḥāsibī started his Sufism reasoning through the ratio and then collated with intuitive truth, so that ontologically it is a form of dualism of truth between reason and heart. This is evident in al-Muḥāsibī's work entitled *al-'Aql wa Fahm al-Qur'ān*.

The classification of Sufism into Sunni and Falsafī is an implication of the Sufis' epistemological reasoning. Sunni Sufism focuses on *ahklak* as the main study, while Falsafī Sufism is more inclined towards the theoretical reasoning of human reason. Although at that time the mention of Falsafī did not yet exist, it was factually practiced by philosophical Sufi groups and most of the Mu'tazilah. Thus both are a picture between the truth of empirical reason and rationality in the eyes of science. It's just that epistemology in Sufism is part of the instinct of a *salik* to reach the realization of his god.

The source of knowledge of al-Muḥāsibī's Sufism cannot be separated from the two epistemologies above, because in addition to proselytizing which focuses on the study of the heart

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<sup>39</sup> Ibn Katsir, *Al-Bidāyah Wa al-Nihāyah*, X (Kairo: Dar Hijr, n.d.), 223.

<sup>40</sup> Al-Qawwatily, *Introduction in Al-'Aql Wa Fahm al-Qur'An*, 223.

<sup>41</sup> Al-Muhasibi, *Ar-Ri'ayah Li Huquq Allah*, 22–23.

and morals through his group which later became known as *al-Muḥāsibīyah*. But, as explained earlier, he also sought to explain his theoretical views on the concepts of knowledge and reason. In this context Al-Muḥāsibī placed human reason as part of the source of knowledge in Sufism, the role of reason in his Sufism received enormous attention.

According to al-Muḥāsibī, reason refers to three notions: reason is instinct (*garīḥah*), reason is understanding (*al-fahm*), and reason is inner vision (*al-baṣīrah*).<sup>42</sup> Of these three notions of reason, according to al-Muḥāsibī, the essence of reason in his own view is reason in the sense of instinct or *garīḥah*. This is as al-Muḥāsibī said:

فأما هو في المعنى و الحقيقة لا غيره، فهو " غريزه " وضعها الله سبحانه في أكثر خلقه، لم يطلع عليها العباد بعضهم من بعض، و لا اطلعوا عليها من أنفسهم برؤية ولا بحس ذوق ولا طعم. وإنما عرفهم الله إياه بالعقل منهم، فبذلك العقل عرفوه وشهدوا عليه بالعقل الذي عرفوه به من أنفسهم بمعرفة ما ينفعهم و معرفة ما يضرهم...<sup>43</sup>

As for the essence of intellect, (and nothing else), it is an “instinct” given by Allah to most of His creatures, which cannot be known by one's fellow human beings, nor by oneself by sight, touch, or feeling. Verily, Allah informs people of their intellect with the intellect that is in them. With it, the mind knows itself (reason), and with it it testifies to what it knows of itself. Knowledge of that which benefits or harms mankind.

Al-Muḥāsibī's categorization of reason into three types was emphasized by Ibn Sina, who distinguished between intellect and heart (*qalb*). Al-Muḥāsibī interpreted reason as *al-fahm*, or the perception of physical knowledge. Ibn Sina further divided reason into four categories: '*aql hayulani* (material reason), '*aql malakat* (intellect), '*aql bi al-fi'il* (active reason), and '*aql mustafad* (acquired reason).<sup>44</sup> The intellect, which means both instinct and understanding, seems relevant to the four categories of reason modeled by Ibn Sīnā. The heart (*qalb*), according to Ibn Sīnā, is part of the human soul that plays a role in thinking, intuition, and spiritual understanding. The *qalb* is not just a physical organ but also the center of consciousness, the place of intuition, and the source of deep knowledge. Perhaps this is what al-Muḥāsibī calls the '*aql baṣīrah*.

According to al-Muḥāsibī, the sense of *baṣīrah* is obtained through obedience and the purification of the soul (*taẓkiyah an-nafs*). In line with this, Ibn Sīnā stated that the *qalb*, as part of the human soul<sup>45</sup>, can play a significant role if a person can control the souls of plants and animals.

<sup>42</sup> Al-Qawwatily, *Introduction in Al-'Aql Wa Fahm al-Qur'an*, 143.

<sup>43</sup> Al-Muhasibi, *Al-'Aql Wa Fahm al-Qur'an*.

<sup>44</sup> Juwaini and Juwaini Dan Nik Yusra Bin Musa, "Konsep Akal (Suatu Analisis Terhadap Pemikiran Al-Farabi Dan Ibnu Sina)," *Substansia* 12, no. 2 (n.d.): 394–96.

<sup>45</sup> Ibn Sina classified the soul into three types: the vegetative soul, the animal soul, and the human, or rational, soul.

Furthermore, Ibn Sīnā explained that a person's nature depends on which of the three souls affects him. If the human soul is perfect when it leaves the body, and if the rational soul can control the plant and animal souls, then the person will experience eternal pleasure in the afterlife. Conversely, if he leaves the body in an imperfect state due to being dominated by the animal and plant souls, he will be eternally miserable in the afterlife.<sup>46</sup>

However, like the Sufis and in general the Sunnis, although al-Muḥāsibī emphasized the importance of reason for human beings and even said that it is the essence of human beings.<sup>47</sup> He still treats, or rather places reason under knowledge. Knowledge in al-Muḥāsibī's view is something that is based on the Qur'an and the Prophet's Hadīṣ. Reason has no authority to determine that something is good or bad. It is the text or sharia that can determine both of these things, more so on matters of metaphysics and faith such as knowing God, obviously reason cannot be relied upon because it is not its territory.<sup>48</sup> In fact, according to him, including the perfection of reason from God is the recognition of reason of its inability to find God,<sup>49</sup> namely reason that recognizes that there is a greater light than the light of reason itself, namely divine revelation which reason also recognizes the truth.<sup>50</sup>

Louis Massignon responded to what al-Muḥāsibī put forward above as quoted by Husain al-Qawwatily, Massignon said:

That reason in al-Muḥāsibī's view cannot justify good and evil, nor to weigh between which whisper of God and the whisper of the devil. Rather it is an ability that should be used to reveal which is more important between the two commandments commanded by God<sup>51</sup>

Furthermore, al-Muḥāsibī relates the relationship between reason, knowledge and faith that a person's sobriety depends on the quality of his knowledge (*ma'rifah*),<sup>52</sup> his *ma'rifah* depends on the quality of his mind, and his mind depends on the quality of his faith. This means that in dealing with all problems, in addition to using reason, one must also not put aside the two main sources of Islam, namely the Qur'an and *sunnah*, even both of which must be prioritized. Knowledge and reason are the main tools in *taṣabbut* (confirmation) in dealing with problems.

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<sup>46</sup> Alwizar, "Pemikiran Pendidikan Ibnu Sina," *An-Nida; Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 40, no. 1 (n.d.): 71–72.

<sup>47</sup> Al-baghdadi, *Tārikh Bagdad*, n.d., 213.

<sup>48</sup> This is as al-Muḥāsibī said *واستعمل عقلك لله بترك التدبير* See Al-Muhasibi, *Risalah Al-Mustasyidin*, 49.

<sup>49</sup> Al-Muhasibi, *Al-'Aql Wa Fahm al-Qur'an*, 248.

<sup>50</sup> Yusuf Al-Qardhawī, *Al-Gaṣālī : Antara Pro Dan Kontra* (Surabaya: Pustaka Progresif, n.d.), 85.

<sup>51</sup> Al-Qawwatily, *Introduction in Al-'Aqlu Wa Fahm al-Qur'an*, 102.

<sup>52</sup> Al-Qawwatily, 134.

When viewed at the level of the concept of epistemology described by ‘Abid al-Jābirī, the epistemology used by Al-Muḥāsibī is *bayānī* epistemology which is manifested in taking sources of knowledge from the Qur’an and hadīṣ and also to some extent with *burhānī* epistemology, namely in the aspect of using reason as a source of knowledge for his Sufism.

***Intellect: Sufism’s Acquisition of Knowledge and the Validity of Truth***

Reason, as a source for Sufism knowledge, according to al-Muḥāsibī is actually a test for humans. It is with the potential of reason that God will one day account for all human actions.<sup>53</sup> Thus, Allah’s proof of man is his intellect. Nevertheless, in reason itself there are several problems, and the problems of reason put forward by al-Muḥāsibī are as follows:

***First, Evidence of Reason (al-‘Iyān al-ẓāhir and al-Khabr al-Qāhir)***

According to al-Muḥāsibī, what is meant by *al-‘iyān al-ẓāhir* is all the regular natural phenomena witnessed by humans which are a sign of the Godhead and the greatness of Allah. All of these natural regularities will eventually lead to the conclusion of reason, that there is “something” behind all of this, namely God. While *al-khabr al-qāhir* is all the information given by God by force (*qahr*). Forced here is forced intellectually (*qahr ‘aqliyyun*), where the intellect is forced to believe that information from God must be true. And what is meant is the Qur’an which invites the mind to think and reflect which ultimately invites humans to glorify God, as al-Muḥāsibī says: Among the arguments of reason that indicate the existence of God are the verses of the Qur’an, which show that God is One without unity.<sup>54</sup>

***Second, Intellect Contains the Proofs, the Proofs Contain the Intellect***

The proofs in al-Muḥāsibī’s perspective are *‘iyān ẓāhir* and *al-khabr al-qāhir*. If reason contains the first proof or *‘iyān ẓāhir*, then the essence of reason is in front of the absolute sensory form that can be fully perceived by the mind which ultimately leads someone to believe in the oneness and existence of God. The meaning of the argument containing reason is that what exists in this material world is a world that corresponds to reason. As the instinctive reason given by God to His servant is a type of universal reason *‘aql kaunī*. Therefore, the universe created by God is also the universe that can be perceived by reason *‘kaun ‘aqlī*. The two complement each other.

If reason contains the second proposition, *al-khabr al-qāhir*, then its essence is hidden behind the *khabr*, namely the Qur’an. The verses of the Qur’an on the one hand are indeed a contemplation and proof for reasonable people about Allah, as the other side is also a proof for reasonable people about human life, in this world or in the hereafter. This Qur’anic evidence is

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<sup>53</sup> Al-Muhasibi, *Al-‘Aql Wa Fahm al-Qur’An*, 238.

<sup>54</sup> Al-Muhasibi, 264.

able to help the intellect to distinguish what is beneficial and what is not. The reason, according to al-Muḥāsibī, is not merely reason, but it is an “instinct” that must be used to analyze His verses.<sup>55</sup> As for the meaning of the argument containing reason is no different from the first. That is, all the issues addressed by the Qur'an to reason are always in accordance with reason itself. As the instinctive mind created by Allah is *'aql qur'ānī*, then Allah also revealed the Qur'an that can be reasoned *'qur'ān 'aqlī*. The explanation of al-Muḥāsibī above actually has the understanding that reason is not possible to establish an essence that is denied by the Qur'an, nor is the Qur'an possible to provide a creed that is denied by reason.<sup>56</sup>

**Third, *Al-'Aql huwa al-Mustadil, wa al-'Iyān wa al-Khabr humā 'Illah al-Istidlāl wa Aṣluh***

Here can be seen clearly the position of reason. According to him, reason is not the source of *istidlāl*. The source of *istidlāl* is the universe of nature that can be perceived by the intellect (*ma'qulāt*) on the one hand and the Qur'an on the other. Both are *'illat* for *istidlāl*, the existence of reason depends on the existence of nature on the one hand and the Qur'an on the other, because reason is a branch of one of the two things. This explanation is also the answer to the next problem of reason, namely the impossibility of the existence of a branch without an origin, and the impossibility of *istidlāl* without evidence:

(محال كون الفرع مع عدم الأصل وكون الإستدلال مع عدم الدليل)

**Fourth, *Al-'Iyān Syāhid Yadullu 'Alā Ṣidq, Wa al-Khabr Yadullu 'Alā Gaib***

What this means is that the main or *'aql* which contains two arguments is something that can be relied upon to gain confidence. But if it is reversed it is impossible where *'aql* as a branch is used as *'aql* to gain confidence. This is an explanation of al-Muḥāsibī's words<sup>57</sup>

من تناول الفرع قبل إحكام الأصل سفه

Indeed, reason is the truth, the two proofs are also the truth. However, from al-Muḥāsibī's explanation it can be concluded that these two propositions take precedence over reason. Al-Muḥāsibī did not intend to deny the role of reason, he only tried to place reason proportionally in accordance with its proper position and function, namely using reason for Allah based on or through *al-'iyān al-dẓāhir* and *al-khabr al-qābir*. The last two must take precedence over reason. This may be the intention contained in the expression: رب حق أحق من حق

<sup>55</sup> Al-Qardhawī, *Al-Gaṣālī* : Antara Pro Dan Kontra, 78.

<sup>56</sup> This can be understood from his saying in another work that reason is the Qur'an, but it is wrong to say that the Qur'an is reason.

<sup>57</sup> Abi Abdillāh Harits bin Asad Al-Muhasibi, *Mabiyah Al-Aql* (Kairo: Dar Al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, n.d.), 256.

### **Method of Acquisition**

When Al-Muhāsibī was asked about a person who is given the knowledge of Allah (*‘aql ‘an Allah*), he replied<sup>58</sup>

...إذا كان مؤمناً خائفاً من الله عز وجل. والدليل على ذلك أن يكون قائماً بأمر الله الذي أوجب عليه بالقيام به. مجانباً لما كرهه ونهاه عنه فإذا كان كذلك استحق أن يسمى عاقلاً عن الله. بل لأنه لا يسمى عاقلاً عن الله من يعزم على القيام بشخصه....

(That is) if a believer fears Allah. This can be shown by if a person always carries out the commands that have been obligatory Allah has obliged him. Avoiding and forsaking all that He hates. If this is present in a person, then he is entitled to be called a person of the mind of Allah. (And) therefore, a person who is willing to carry out based on his own desires is not called a person of the mind of Allah (*‘aql ‘an Allah*).

What al-Muhāsibī says about reason is actually not too surprising. For as is well known he lived at a time when the religious spirit was generally dominated by *zuhd*, *warā’*, and *khauf* to God. Regarding this he took much from al-Hasan al-Baṣrī. In addition, what al-Muḥāsibī said whether about reason or otherwise he always aimed at the formation of a pious human being. Hence, after he expressed reason as it is or the essence, he also followed it up with what it should be. This can be seen in his other works when he says that reason will become *‘aql makkār* (deceitful reason), if it does not have three potentials, namely: prioritizing obedience over disobedience, prioritizing religion (hereafter) over the world, and prioritizing knowledge over ignorance.<sup>59</sup> In other words, reason with all its potential will provide maximum benefits for the owner if it is manifested by obeying all the commands of Allah and avoiding everything He hates. Hence al-Muḥāsibī cites a proverb which says that a reasonable person is one who obeys Allah, while one who disobeys Him is one who is not reasonable.”<sup>60</sup>

If a person has received reason from God, then he will also receive perfection. But the perfection of God’s intellect has no limit, just as no one can put a limit on God’s perfection.<sup>61</sup> It may be that when al-Muḥāsibī explains that God’s intellect has no limit, he means to emphasize that a believer whose enlightened intellect is from God also cannot be given a limit or definition, because God’s intellect is always in the process of advancing with knowledge and patience (*ḥilm*), and it will never be finished.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Al-Muhasibi, 247.

<sup>59</sup> Akal *makkār* is a deceitful mind, i.e. a mind that deceives the master and turns evil into good. See Al-Muhasibi, *Risālah Al-Mustasyidīn*, 97.

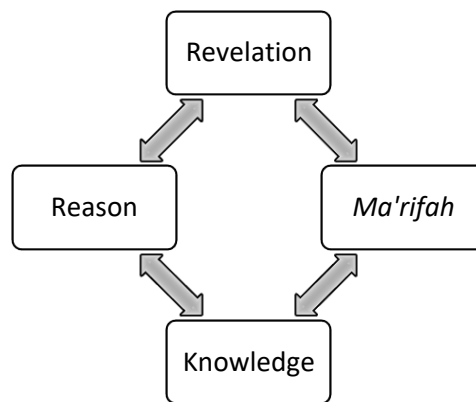
<sup>60</sup> Al-Muhasibi, *Al-Waṣṣyā*, 125.

<sup>61</sup> Al-Muhasibi, *Mahiyah Al-Aql*, 247.

<sup>62</sup> Al-Qawwātily, *Introduction in Al-‘Aqlu Wa Fahm al-Qur’An*, 146.

What is stated by al-Muḥāsibī seems clear, that the reason that he understands as a source of knowledge of Sufism is not as understood by philosophers, especially atheists. Intellect for al-Muḥāsibī is the result of the acquisition of dialectics and processes related to Allah SWT'. Even for al-Muḥāsibī, the station *ma'rifah* that a person reaches if it contradicts God who is represented through the Qur'an and Hadīṣ, then it must be rejected. It is narrated that al-Muḥāsibī once composed a book on *ma'rifah* which left him amazed at the results. But when he saw in the book something that was not in accordance with the Qur'an and Sunnah, he burned it and promised never to write again about *ma'rifah*. This was because he had a high sensitivity to anything that was not in harmony with the Qur'an and Sunnah.<sup>63</sup> Here it appears that al-Muḥāsibī was determined not to violate the provisions outlined by the religion, unwilling to engage in the inner dimension too far from the outer dimension that would cause and attract people in doubt. It was also this principle that he used to criticize Sufis who were caught up in excessive inner deepening (*ta'ammuq*), as well as their extremes (*igla*) in worship which he referred to as pseudo-sufism or false Sufis.

Each source controls each other, so that there is no over or exceeding each other's authority. The description of the linkage of al-Muḥāsibī's sources of knowledge above can be seen in the following figure:



Furthermore, al-Muḥāsibī explains the stages of a person in gaining knowledge of Sufism through dialectics and manifestations of the teachings of the Qur'an-hadīṣ, and knowledge of reason.

The *first* stage; is obedience, al-Muḥāsibī more detailed said that the beginning of the emergence of love is obedience. and this obedience is the fruit of Allah's love for His servants. It is Allah who initiates the onset of obedience by introducing Himself to His servants, and showing them to obey Him. In addition, Allah asks His servants to love Him, even though Allah Himself

<sup>63</sup> Thal'at Ghanam, *Aḍwā' 'Ala al-Taṣawwuf* (Kairo: Alam Al-Kutub, n.d.), 190.

does not need them. Allah entrusts love in the hearts of His lovers.<sup>64</sup> Love for Allah must be manifested in actual obedience. Thus, according to him, people who claim to love Allah without proving it with deeds are just nonsense. Among the signs of a person who loves Allah is that his heart is filled with light which then overflows into the tongue and spreads to all other limbs. As a result of the great love in the heart of a servant, Allah makes his speech luminous or beneficial and useful.

The *second* stage is for a person to enter the ranks of the angels thanks to the light that Allah has deposited in their hearts. In this regard, al-Muḥāsibī says that after Allah entrusts the light in the hearts of His beloved ones, then He shows happiness to His angels. After that the *‘arīf* take the *third* stage; beginning with the opening of the treasures of knowledge and the secrets of the unseen to His lovers. Then they reappear in the midst of society filled with various testimonies (*musyāhadah*), as well as various beauties of Allah’s wisdom that have turned them into people who are privileged in this life because the light (Allah) has brought them to the inner realm or the essence.<sup>65</sup>

Furthermore, the *fourth* stage or the last stage; in this stage there is self-denial (*al-fana’*) and followed by immortality (*al-baqa’*). After this comes knowledge, witnessing (*musyāhadah*), and *ma‘rifat* along with all the aspects contained therein such as the ability to see the unseen and being able to influence the will of others.<sup>66</sup> This is the last stage in *ma‘rifat* which according to al-Muḥāsibī that at this stage the lovers of Allah have reached the level of being able to take action according to the knowledge that is available to them and the will that has been given to them. The following diagram illustrates the acquisition process of *ma‘rifat*:

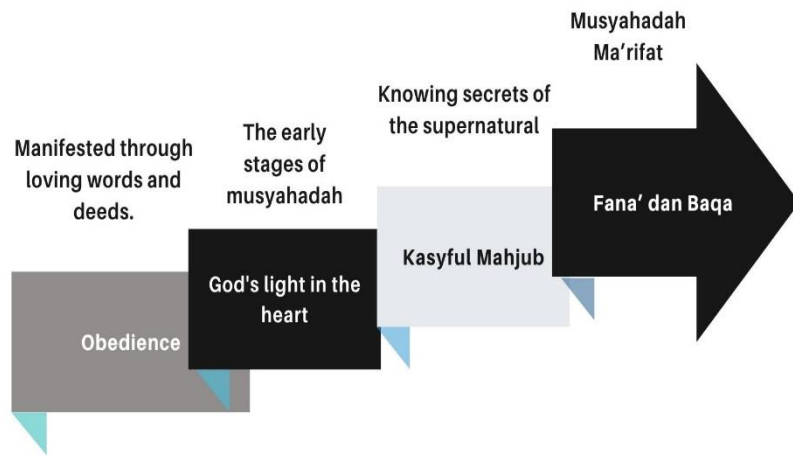
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<sup>64</sup> Al-Isfahani, *Hilyah Al-Awliā’*, 76.

<sup>65</sup> This life of theirs according to Ibn ‘Arabī is called the life of *ma‘rifat* which is certain and ultimate (*ḥāyāh al-ma‘rifah al-yaqīniyyah al-ḥāqqah*). Ghanam, *Aḍwā’ ‘Ala al-Taṣawwuf*, 191–96.

<sup>66</sup> Al-Isfahani, *Hilyah Al-Awliā’*, 76.





This is what led some scholars to conclude that al-Muḥāsibī was to some extent inclined towards illuminationism or *isyraqiyyah*. Although al-Muḥāsibī did not explicitly say that *ma'rifat* can replace or nullify the obligations of the Syari'ah, he even accused such people of being on the wrong path from God. This is what al-Muḥāsibī's disciple Junaid al-Bagdādi had to say.<sup>67</sup>

In turn, more specifically, al-Muḥāsibī's thought became the seed for the thought of moral psychology which later greatly influenced the works of Abū Ṭālib al-Makki, especially the book of *Qūt al-Qulūb*. Furthermore, al-Makki's work had a lot of influence on the works of *Hujjah al-Islām*, al-Gazālī, who is considered the symbol of the peak of Sunni Sufism.<sup>68</sup>

### **Validity of Truth**

The existence of various *firqah* or sects in his time did cause al-Muḥāsibī some confusion. He also observed the opinions and actions of the various sects. In fact, according to al-Muḥāsibī, the differences and disputes of the *ummah* at this time were likened to a deep ocean that drowned many people, few survived. This is because each group preaches that their group is the one that is safe. This is as he stated:

ورأيت إختلافهم بحرا عميقا غرق فيه ناس كبير وسلم منه عصاة قليلة ورأيت كل صنف منهم يزعم أن النجاة لمن تبعهم وأن المهالك لمن خالفهم....

"I see their disputes like a deep ocean that drowns many people, few of whom survive. I also saw that each group thought that those who followed them would be saved and those who differed would be destroyed".<sup>69</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Junaid said that some ma'rifah scholars think that all good deeds are nullified. According to Junaid, those who say this are worse than those who steal and commit adultery. See Ibn Hawazin al-Qusyairi Al-Nisaburi, *Al-Risālah al-Qusyairiyyah Fi 'Ilm al-Tasawwuf* (Dar Al-Khair, n.d.), 314.

<sup>68</sup> A. Sells, *Early Mystics Islamic Mysticism*, 348.

<sup>69</sup> Al-Muhasibi, *Al-Waṣāyā*, 60.

Al-Muḥāsibī also categorized people at that time into 9 (Nine) kinds, namely: 1. People who are pious about the hereafter 2. People who resemble scholars 4. People who sell religion to get the world 5. People who are knowledgeable but do not practice it 6. People who resemble worshipers 7. People who hold on to reason or rationalists 8. One who indulges in lust and the world becomes the goal 9. People who resemble the devil (*ṣayāṭīn al-ins*).<sup>70</sup>

The nature of each of these categories of people is explained by al-Muḥāsibī. None of them interested him but rather confused him. Also as stated earlier, that al-Muḥāsibī had sought the truth by rational methods, the interpretations of the *jurists*, he also sought among the *ahl al-hadīṣ*. But he did not find satisfaction and tranquility, but instead he found an unending debate, each claiming that their group was the right one.

Finally, al-Muḥāsibī made a conclusion and found the path of truth and salvation is to always hold fast to piety to Allah, carry out all His commands, abstain from sinful acts, *wara'* against something that is legalized even more forbidden, and stand on the *sunnah* of the Prophet Muhammad. These criteria he found in the Sufi group that relied on the Qur'an, sunnah, and *salaf al-ṣāliḥ* who were guided. Al-Muḥāsibī said:

I am certain that the one who practices this kind of Sufism will be helped by God, while the one who deviates from it will find it difficult. In my opinion, this kind of person has a lot of black spots in his heart because of his ignorance and denial. I see a solid proof for the one who understands it. In my opinion, practicing it is obligatory at least for myself. I firmly believe in its truth in all my heart and feelings and establish it as the foundation of my religion. Every deed I do is based on it, and every movement I make is in accordance with it.<sup>71</sup>

“..... I wanted to join their ranks, to benefit from them, to obey them, and not to deviate from them, so Allah gave me knowledge that was clear and shone brightly upon me, and I hoped that I would be helped by approaching it, and I was certain that I would be helped by practicing it.”<sup>72</sup>

Al-Muḥāsibī explicitly chose this group of Sufism as his ‘last port of call’ after this long search. This is because the validity of the truth he gets from this group that applies the integralization of teachings and sources of knowledge from the Qur'an and hadīṣ and also reason,

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<sup>70</sup> Al-Muhasibi, 53.

<sup>71</sup> Al-Muhasibi, 58.

<sup>72</sup> Al-Muhasibi, 63.

according to him is very acceptable and convincing and subjectively able to quench his thirst for methodical doubt. This is as Descartes' method of doubt is called 'universal methodical doubt'. This doubt is universal because it stretches indefinitely until it becomes self-limiting. That is, the attempt to doubt will stop when there is nothing to doubt anymore. It is called methodical because the doubt that is applied is the way that philosophical reflective reasoning doubts to reach the truth.<sup>73</sup> Something that is referred to as the method of skepticism or methodical skepticism.<sup>74</sup>

## CONCLUSION

There are several conclusions that result. First, the source of knowledge of Sufism according to al-Muḥāsibī is revelation which is manifested in the teachings of the Qur'an and hadīṣ. These two sources become the main handle for Sufism al-Muḥāsibī. In addition, another source is reason. The intellect as the most important gift of God became a means of confirmation (*taṣabbut*) for the problems that arose. Al-Muḥāsibī is very skillful in discussing reason, although in the end - as is characteristic of Sunni Sufism - he still places reason no higher than revelation. Second, Intellect for al-Muḥāsibī is an indicator of one's devotion. This means that intellectual knowledge can be obtained by first carrying out the typical stages of a Sufi, namely by *tazkiyyah al-nafs*, purifying the heart from various diseases and impurities and carrying out obedience in the form of outwardly carrying out God's commandments and also doing good to other creatures. These steps are realized in *maqāmat* or stations that must be passed in the teachings of Sufism. *Tasawwuf* is according to him the knowledge whose validity is most convincing and can be accounted for and most importantly subjectively makes him feel satisfied in getting the truth. Third, the idea of al-Muḥāsibī's epistemology that integrates rational aspects, *ma'rifat* and revelation is an alternative solution to religious understanding that tends to be textual or rational without spirituality which sometimes gives rise to rigid religious practices. Or spiritual without being supported by rationality and text that leads to *ẓindiq*. The offer of al-Muḥāsibī will be able to bring someone to think critically but still adrift with the text and also spirituality that makes it balanced in life and moderate in religious practice.

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<sup>73</sup> P. Hardono Hadi, *Epistemologi Filsafat Pengetahuan* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, n.d.), 29.

<sup>74</sup> Budi Hardiman, *Filsafat Modern* (Jakarta: Gramedia, n.d.), 38.

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