

KNOWLEDGE IN THE MAIN SOURCES OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF SUFISM IN THE PRE-GHAZZĀLĪ PERIOD

Emrah KAYA*

Makale Bilgisi

Makale Türü: Araştırma Makalesi, **Geliş Tarihi:** 28 Mayıs 2020, **Kabul Tarihi:** 28 Eylül 2020, **Yayın Tarihi:** 30 Eylül 2020, **Atf:** Kaya, Emrah. "Gazzālī Öncesi Tasavvufun Ana Kaynaklarında Bilgi". *Dinbilimleri Akademik Araştırma Dergisi* 20/2 (Eylül 2020): 1403-1427.

<https://doi.org/10.33415/daad.743757>

Article Information

Article Types: Research Article, **Received:** 28 May 2020, **Accepted:** 28 September 2020, **Published:** 30 September 2020, **Cite as:** Kaya, Emrah. "Knowledge in the Main Sources of the Philosophy of Sufism in the Pre-Ghazzālī Period". *Journal of Academic Research in Religious Sciences* 20/2 (September 2020): 1403-1427

<https://doi.org/10.33415/daad.743757>



Abstract

This article aims to elaborate on the pre-Ghazzālī period Sufis' approaches to the concept of knowledge. We know that Ghazzālī, as a milestone in the Islamic thought, satisfies in taṣawwuf after a long quest. He benefits from the Sunnī taṣawwuf already established before him. Therefore, the importance of the sources feeding Ghazzālī's Sufi view is manifest. Thus, in this article, I focus on the ideas of the main figures of the Sunnī taṣawwuf regarding the concept of knowledge. Having stated concisely about what taṣawwuf is, the concepts of knowledge and gnosis were described. And then, the ideas of the Sufis on knowledge and its ways were examined. I concluded at the end of the research that the Sufis restrict human reason (*'aql*) into the worldly life while giving the intuitional knowledge priority. Also, they separate the reality (*ḥaqīqa*) from religious law (*sharī'a*). For the former, intuitional knowledge is a necessity, while the human reason is useful and responsible for the latter. Finally, it is hard to say that compared to Ghazzālī, Suhrawardī, and Ibn al-'Arabī, those Sufis have a consistent epistemology when they set forth their view.

Keywords: Islamic Philosophy, Sufism, Human Reason, Knowledge, Gnosis.

* Dr. Öğr. Üyesi, Sakarya Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi, İslam Felsefesi, emrahkaya@sakarya.edu.tr, Orcid Id: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8889-5587>

Gazzâlî Öncesi Tasavvufun Ana Kaynaklarında Bilgi

Öz

Bu makalenin amacı Gazzâlî öncesi sufilerin bilgi kavramına yaklaşımlarını incelemektir. İslam düşüncesinde önemli bir dönüm noktası olan Gazzâlî'nin, dinî ve felsefî ilimlerin birçoğuna vakıf olduktan sonra, tasavvufta tatmin olduğu bilinmektedir. Onun tasavvuf anlayışında kendinden önce tesis edilen sünnî tasavvufun izlerini görmekteyiz. Bundan dolayı Gazzâlî'nin tasavvuf yönünü besleyen bu kaynakların önemi son derece açıktır. Bu makalede Gazzâlî öncesi dönemde sünnî tasavvufun önemli figürlerinin bilgi hakkındaki görüşlerine odaklanılmıştır. Kısaca tasavvufun ne olduğuna değindikten sonra bilgi ve marifet kavramları açıklanmıştır. En son olarak da sûfîlerin bilgi ve bilgiye erişme yolları hakkındaki düşüncelerine yer verilmiştir. Araştırma sonucunda ulaşılan düşünce ilk dönem sûfîlerin, aklı fizik alemi ve şeriatı algılama vasıtası olarak kabul ederken sezgisel bilgiyi hakikat konusunda daha güvenilir görmeleridir. Şeriat ve hakikat ayrımının söz konusu olduğu bu sistemde şeriat için akla, hakikat için ise sezgisel bilgi yolu olan keşf ve ilhama ihtiyaç vardır. Bu düşünceyi savunurken, Gazzâlî, Sühreverdî el-maktûl ve İbnü'l-Arabî gibi sufilerle karşılaştırılınca, ilk dönem sufilerin sistemli bir epistemolojiye sahip olduklarını söylemek biraz güçtür.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İslam Felsefesi, Tasavvuf, Akıl, Bilgi, Marifet.

Introduction

In this article, I will study the pre-Ghazzâlî period Sufis' approaches to knowledge and human reason ('*aql*') with a philosophical perspective. Most of the Islamic philosophy researchers have been in agreement about that Ghazzâlî (d. 505/1111) is a milestone in the Islamic thought. He engaged greatly in rational knowledge and wrote about theology, Islamic jurisprudence, logic, and philosophy. Afterward, he propounded that it is possible to attain the knowledge of reality by following the way of *taşavvuf* only. To explain this way and its reliability, he wrote some books such as *Ihyâ' al-'ulûm al-dîn*, *Mishkât al-anwâr*, and *Iljâm al-'awâm 'an 'ilm al-kalâm*.

In addition to that Ghazzâlî denoted *taşavvuf* to be the way of reality, he harshly criticized philosophy and theology, which are among the rational disciplines.¹ Ghazzâlî, who did not have an object to some rational sciences like mathematic, medicine, and phys-

¹ Especially in his *Tahâfut*, he criticizes philosophy and charges the philosophers with the infidelity in three matters. Abû Hâmid Ghazzâlî, *Tahâfut al-falâsifa*, ed. Sulaimân Duniyâ (Cairo: Dâr al-ma'rifa, 1966), 1st, 13th, and 20th problems; Abû Hâmid Ghazzâlî, *Fayşal al-tafriqa bayn al-Islâm wa al-zandaqa*, ed. Maḥmûd Bayjû (Damascus: s.n., 1992), 56.

ics, encouraged his readers to resort to human reason on some issues. Thus, we may see many sentences from the works of Ghazzālī, where he underlined the significance of human reason.² However, concerning religious subjects, especially ones associated with beliefs, he claimed to have rational knowledge been unreliable, and human reason has limits to attain the knowledge of reality. He divided knowledge into two parts. The first is knowledge of praxis (*‘ilm al-mu‘āmalā*), and the second is knowledge of unveiling (*‘ilm al-mukāshafa*). And then, he gave limited permission to human reason in the first part only.³ As for the second part, because it is the way of the knowledge of reality, there is no place for human reason and rational knowledge at all. After Ghazzālī’s precise statements, his followers have been speaking out loudly the claim that the knowledge of reality is beyond the limits of human reason.

Ghazzālī’s approach to human reason and rational knowledge is a subject of another specific research.⁴ This article focuses on the approach of the Sufis who lived in the pre-Ghazzālī period to human reason and rational knowledge. Those Sufis are the founders and the most important figures of the Sunnī ṭaşawwuf, which is the way that Ghazzālī followed.⁵ Thus, it is very clear that those Sufis were influential on Ghazzālī prominently.⁶ Those Sufis, who lay the foundation of the Sunnī ṭaşawwuf, are the following: Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī (d. 857)⁷, Abū Naşr Sarrāj al-Ṭūsī (d. 988)⁸, Abū Bakr al-

² For the human reason and its noble nature, see Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazzālī, *Iḥyā’ al-‘ulūm al-dīn*, 4 vol. (Beirut: Dār al-ma‘rifa, 1982), 1:83.

³ Ghazzālī, *Iḥyā’*, 1:14, 3:388, 4:103, 137.

⁴ For us to understand the approach of Ghazzālī to the human reason correctly, we should elaborate on his works about theology, jurisprudence, philosophy, and ṭaşawwuf holistically. But, since ṭaşawwuf is the last station of Ghazzālī, as a Sufi, his approach to the human reason is particularly significant as well. In this respect, for the matter of the reason and rationality in *Iḥyā’*, see Emrah Kaya, “İḥyā’u ‘ulūmi’d-dīn’de Akıl ve Aklilik,” *Bilimname*, 36 (2018): 135–164.

⁵ Ḥāris el-Muḥāsibī, *er-Riāye: Nefs Muhasebesinin Temelleri*, trans. Şahin Filiz - Hülya Küçük, 4th ed. (Istanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 2011), 9, 14; Ebubekir Muhammed b. İshak Kelâbâzî, *Doğuş Devrinde Tasavvuf: Ta’arruf*, trans. Süleyman Uludağ, 5th ed. (Istanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2016), 18; Abdülkerim Kuşeyrî, *Tasavvuf İlmine Dair: Kuşeyri Risalesi*, trans. Süleyman Uludağ, 9th ed. (Istanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2017), 22-24.

⁶ Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī, *al-‘Aql wa fahm al-Qur’ân*, ed. Hussain Quwwatî (Beirut: Dār al-fikr, 1971), 103-105.

⁷ Muḥāsibī, *er-Riāye*, 20-21, 32; Muḥāsibī, *al-‘Aql*, 36-38, 68, 155; Ali b. Osman el-Jüllâbî Hücvirî, *Hakikat Bilgisi: Keşfu’l-mahcûb*, trans. Süleyman Uludağ (Istanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2016), 34; ‘Alî b. ‘Uthmân al-Jullâbî al-Hujwiri, *The Kashf al-*

Kalābādī (d. 990)⁹, Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 998), Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī (d. 1021), ‘Alī b. ‘Uthmān al-Jullābī al-Hujwīrī (d. 1072)¹⁰, and ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Qushayrī (d. 1074).¹¹ In this article, I will study the subject of knowledge and human reason using the main ideas of those Sufis.

This article encompasses the resources of the Sunnī taṣawwuf of the pre-Ghazzālī period. It does not include the thoughts of Ghazzālī. Also, it excludes the Ishrāqī thought, on which Ghazzālī’s teaching was effectual in its improvement. As for the value of this study, it focuses on those primary resources of the Sunnī taṣawwuf holistically. It will provide an opportunity to researchers, who study for Ghazzālī, Suhrawardī al-maqtūl (d. 1191), and Ibn al-‘Arabī (d. 1240), to have access to the background of their thoughts regarding taṣawwuf.

I will divide this article into three main parts. In the first part, I will explain what taṣawwuf was in the sight of those Sufis, and what they thought of taṣawwuf. The second part correlates with the subject of knowledge including the terms *‘ilm* and *ma‘rifā*. In the third one, I will concentrate on the epistemologies, i.e., the way of knowledge, of those Sufis.

1. Definition of Taṣawwuf

Taṣawwuf, as one of the Islamic sciences, is a discipline that purposes a moral improvement and maturity of human beings. The foundation of taṣawwuf is based on the lifestyle of the Prophet Muhammad and his close companions (*ṣaḥāba*). Some Muslims after the Prophet had kept continuing this lifestyle, which is asceticism (*zuhd*) and piety (*taqwā*), for two centuries. In the third and fourth centuries after the Prophet, some Muslims had added some other thoughts and teachings to this lifestyle so that, taṣawwuf came out.

Maḥjūb: The Oldest Persian Treatise on Sufism, trans. Reynold A. Nicholson (Leiden: Brill, 1911), 108.

⁸ Ebū Nasr Serrāc, *el-Lūma’: İslam Tasavvufu*, trans. Hasan Kamil Yılmaz (Istanbul: Erkam Yayınları, 2016), XXXV-XLIII.

⁹ Kelābāzī, *Ta’arruf*, 12, 15, 20, 24.

¹⁰ Hücvirī, *Keşfu’l-maḥcūb*, 23, 33, 34, 37, 38.

¹¹ Kuşeyrī, *Kuşeyri Risalesi*, 5, 6, 13, 19, 20, 25, 49, 50; Kelābāzī, *Ta’arruf*, 19; Hücvirī, *Keşfu’l-maḥcūb*, 253 (fn:6); Güldane Gündüzöz, *Tasavvuf Tarihinde Nazarî İrfan Geleceği: Tarih, Teori ve Problemler* (Ankara: Fecr Publishing, 2018), 49, 55; Ekrem Demirli, *İslam Düşüncesi Üzerine* (Istanbul: Sufi Kitap, 2016), 21.

Hence, we may say that the concept of *taṣawwuf* includes some specific ideas in addition to the lifestyle based on asceticism and piety.¹²

We may define the concept of asceticism as turning away from worldly pleasures, leaving sins, not valuing the world, eating a little, sleeping less, not talking unless needed, engaging in worship, being patient, having contentment (*riḍā*), and being thankful always.¹³ As seen with this definition, which concentrates on the principles of asceticism, *taṣawwuf* is the way of morality and deeds (*ʿamal*).¹⁴ According to another explanation, *taṣawwuf* is the knowledge of states (*ḥāl*), which is a harvest of the acts.¹⁵ In other words, *taṣawwuf* expects the proximity of humans with God, not with the world.¹⁶

Also, the most distinctive feature of *taṣawwuf* from the other Islamic sciences is the acknowledgment of unveiling (*kashf*) and inspiration (*ilhām*) to be an epistemological tool for attaining the truth. The confirmation of the position of sainthood (*walāya*) is also another feature of *taṣawwuf* distinguishing it from the other Islamic sciences.¹⁷ As related to those concepts, some explanations regard-

¹² Kuṣeyrī, *Kuṣeyri Risalesi*, 95 (fn:1).

¹³ Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī, *al-Muqaddima fī taṣawwuf*, ed. Yūsuf Zaydān (Beirut: Dār al-Jil, 1999), 72; Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, ed. Nūr al-dīn Shurayba (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1986), 488.

¹⁴ Kuṣeyrī, *Kuṣeyri Risalesi*, 57.

¹⁵ Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Iṣḥāq al-Kalābādī, *Kitāb al-taʿarruf li-madḥih ahl al-taṣawwuf* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1994), 58. The concepts of states (*ḥāl*) and stations (*maqām*) occupy a significant place in *taṣawwuf*. While a servant obtains the stations by his/her individual effort, the states are the divine blessing and bestowal. There is no place for individual effort here. But it is a meaning thrown to the heart of servant by God. As for the stations, the first of the stations is repentance (*tawba*), and then they continue as sincere penitence (*ināba*), asceticism (*zuhd*), and submission to God (*tawakkul*). See, Hujwīrī, *Kashf*, 181;

ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Qushayrī, *al-Risāla al-Qushayrī*, ed. Maḥmūd b. Sharīf (Cairo: Muassasa dār al-Shaʿb, 1989), 133; Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj, *al-Lumʿa*, ed. ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd (Baghdād: Dār al-kutub al-ḥadīth, 1970), 43. Also, see Franz Rosenthal, “Ibn ʿArabi between Philosophy and Mysticism: Sufism and Philosophy are Neighbors and Visit Each Other”, *Oriens* 31 (1988): 1–35.

¹⁶ Even though asceticism is one of the most essential principles of *taṣawwuf*, according to Muḥāsibī, some Sufis go to extremes on this matter. Thus, Muḥāsibī criticized and refused those Sufis who in the name of asceticism do the mistakes such as omitting children, disregarding parents, abstaining from earning livelihoods, being imprudent, etc. Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Riʿāya li-ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad ʿAṭā (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-ʿilmiyya, 2009), 97.

¹⁷ Hujwīrī, *Kashf*, 210; Qushayrī, *al-Risāla*, 462; Muḥāsibī, *er-Riʿāya*, 10-12.

ing taşawwuf gain importance in terms of the subject of this article. On the center of those explanations, there are the concepts of the philosophy of taşawwuf and the philosophical taşawwuf.¹⁸ The former points out a lifestyle based on asceticism and piety and aims at a moral improvement of human beings. The latter comes into prominence with the doctrines concerning cosmology, epistemology, and metaphysics.¹⁹ Nevertheless, anyone who follows at least one of these ways of taşawwuf is a Sufi, and he/she is, after the prophets, among the most virtuous and selected servants of God.²⁰

So far, I have outlined the information about taşawwuf. There are further things to say about taşawwuf that has been alive since the period of the Prophet. However, such information is satisfactory in terms of the subject and aim of the work. In the next part, I will focus on the concepts of knowledge (*ilm*) and gnosis (*ma'rifa*), which occupy a paramount place in the teaching of taşawwuf.

2. Knowledge (*ilm*) and Gnosis (*ma'rifa*)

The concepts of knowledge and gnosis are intertwined in the discipline of taşawwuf. To discriminate these concepts from each other is not exactly possible. Hence, we may come across diverse meanings and features of the concepts. Although I try to examine them separately, we should bear in mind that they have no absolute distinction. At first, it is difficult to say that the Sufis' approach to those concepts is systematic. The Sufis usually refer to outward

¹⁸ As different from this kind of classification, there is another distinction between understandings of taşawwuf: *Şahw* and *Sakr*. The way of *şahw* is the way of Junaid al-Baghdādī, Kalābādī, Sarrāj, Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, Qushayrī, Sulamī, Hujwīrī, and Ghazzālī. The way of *sakr* is the way of Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī, Abū Sa'īd Abū al-Khayr, Mawlānā, Attār, Sanaī, and Yunus Emre. Hücvirī, *Keşfu'l-mahcûb*, 54, 253 (fn:6); Hujwīrī, *Kashf*, 184; Kalābādī, *al-Ta'arruf*, 85; Qushayrī, *al-Risāla*, 153; Binyamin Abrahamov, *Ibn al-'Arabī and the Sufis* (Oxford: Anqa Publishing, 2014), 69.

¹⁹ Kuşeyrī, *Kuşeyrī Risalesi*, 24. According to Süleyman Uludağ, Muḥāsibī, Sarrāj, Kalābādī, Hujwīrī and Qushayrī follow the philosophy of taşawwuf, not the philosophical taşawwuf. It is possible to refer to Suhrawardī al-maqtūl and Ibn al-'Arabī as the followers of the philosophical taşawwuf. See Abū al-Alā 'Afīfī, *al-Taşawwuf: al-Thawrat al-rūḥiyya fī al-Islām* (Beirut: Dār al-sha'bi, n.d.), 14; Abrahamov, *Sufis*, 176.

²⁰ Qushayrī, *al-Risāla*, 18. For more detailed information about the term of Sufi see, Hujwīrī, *Kashf*, 34. Moreover, apart from the distinction, i.e. philosophical taşawwuf and philosophy of taşawwuf, according to Hujwīrī, there are the twelve schools of taşawwuf as follows: Muḥāsibiyya, Qaşşāriyya, Ṭayfūriyya, Nūriyya, Junaidiyya, Sahliyya, Ḥakīmiyya, Kharrāziyya, Khafīfiyya, Sayyāriyya, Khallājiyya, and Ḥulmāniyya. Except the last two of them are authentic and reliable schools of taşawwuf. Hujwīrī, *Kashf*, 176-266.

knowledge (*‘ilm al-ẓāhir*) with the term of knowledge. The Sufis use this term sometimes to cover inward knowledge (*‘ilm al-bāṭin*) as well. Therefore, according to most of them, the noblest action is to be a learned person, who has knowledge.²¹

For Hujwīrī, the means of knowledge are the following: hearing, sight, taste, smell, and touch. God has made those sense organs as a door of the heart. So that all kinds of knowledge are attached to one of them.²² Regarding this explanation, we may assume that he means the outward knowledge only. However, as we will see in the lines ahead, there is another kind of knowledge, which comes to human beings without sense perceptions.

The Sufis categorized knowledge in various ways. According to one of these classifications, knowledge comprises three kinds. They are the knowledge of the Qur’ān, the knowledge of Sunnah, and the knowledge of the realities of faith.²³ For another classification as well, knowledge consists of three kinds. They are the knowledge from God (*al-‘ilm minallāh*), the knowledge with God (*al-‘ilm ma‘allāh*), and the knowledge of God (*al-‘ilm billāh*). The first one is to know the divine attributes. The next one is to know the religious commandments and prohibitions (*sharī‘a*). As for the last one, it is gnosis (*ma‘rifa*), which is, as a divine bestowal, the knowledge of the spiritual states and stations.²⁴

db | 1409

Besides these, we also know another classification. It points to a distinction among certain knowledge (*‘ilm al-yaqīn*), certain sight (*‘ayn al-yaqīn*), and certain truth (*ḥaqq al-yaqīn*). The first of them, belonging to the people of reason (*‘aql*), is to know the religious commandments and prohibitions. The next one, belonging to the people of unveiling, is to know the state of dying. The last one, belonging to gnostics (*aṣḥāb al-ma‘ārif*), is to have the real knowledge concerning God that will be unveiled in the Hereafter.²⁵

²¹ Kalābādihī, *al-Ta‘arruf*, 34.

²² Hujwīrī, *Kashf*, 393.

²³ Abū Naṣr Sarrāj, *Kitāb al-Luma‘ fi’l-taṣawwuf*, ed. ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd (Baghdād: Dār al-kutub al-ḥadīth, 1970), 8.

²⁴ Hujwīrī, *Kashf*, 16; Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 215.

²⁵ Hujwīrī, *Kashf*, 381-382; Qushayrī, *al-Risāla*, 171. In fact, in the Arabic text, Qushayrī uses the term “aṣḥāb al-‘ulūm” for the second group of people. However, Uludağ prefers to explain it as “people of unveiling” in parenthesis. See, Kuşeyrî, *Kuşeyri Risalesi*, 179.

As for the aim of knowledge, it is to fulfill the religious provisions accurately. There are some sciences mandatory to know. Abū Ṭālib quotes the hadīth, “Seeking knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim” and asks which knowledge the prophet meant here. And then, he responds as follows: knowledge of the heart, knowledge of gnosis, knowledge distinguishing lawful and unlawful things, knowledge needed to serve God, knowledge concerning the evils and delusions of the self (*nafs*), and knowledge of the oneness. Learning knowledge apart from these is not mandatory but recommended because the most beneficial one is knowledge of the religious provisions.²⁶ Moreover, according to Hujwīrī, to learn sciences such as astronomy, medicine, and mathematic is mandatory in proportion as their relation to religion. Otherwise, these are not mandatory sciences; they may even be considered useless.²⁷

Regarding the concept of gnosis (*ma'rifa*), the most extensive definition is that gnosis is a servant's highest recognition of God. This kind of recognition happens with the heart only. According to Hujwīrī, in the sight of scholars (*'ulamā*), gnosis is the sound knowledge of God, while for Sufis, gnosis is the sound state (*ḥāl*) about God.²⁸

Furthermore, for some Sufis like Abū Sa'īd Kharrāz, gnosis is two kinds. One of them is a bestowal by God (*wahbī*), while the other is a result of individual effort (*kasbī*). However, according to Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, gnosis is God's grace toward some servants, and it is not possible to have it with an individual effort. From the books of *taṣawwuf*, we know that gnosis, as a mystical experience, is a kind of knowledge based on divine revelation and inspiration. There is no place for human reason, sense perceptions, and plain texts (*naṣṣ*) in that knowledge or recognition.²⁹

²⁶ Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb fī mu'āmalat al-maḥbūb*, ed. Maḥmūd Ibrāhīm Muḥammad al-Riḍwānī, 4 vol. (Cairo: Maktabatī dār al-turāth, 2001), 1:363-365; Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 301.

²⁷ Hujwīrī, *Kashf*, 11, 269; Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Bayān al-farq bayn al-ṣadr wa al-qalb wa al-fu'ād wa al-lubb*, ed. Aḥmad 'Abd al-Raḥīm al-Sāyih (Cairo: Markaz al-kitāb li'n-nashr, 1998), 35.

²⁸ Hujwīrī, *Kashf*, 267; Sulamī, *al-Muqaddima*, 30-31.

²⁹ Sarrāj, *al-Lum'a*, 56; Tirmidhī, *al-Farq*, 22; Kalābādhī, *al-Ta'arruf*, 37; Süleyman Ateş, *Cüneyd-i Bağdādî: Hayatı, Eserleri ve Mektupları* (Istanbul: Sönmez Neşriyat, 1970), 100.

As a functional explanation, we could say that knowledge is a guide that makes a servant arrive in God. As for gnosis, it is a recognition pointing out God directly. Knowledge provides information, while gnosis conduces for the servant to attain divine realities. Knowledge is possible with education, while gnosis is possible with mystical experiences. Also, knowledge comes through created beings, while gnosis comes from God. Therefore, a division between scholar (‘*ālim*) and gnostic (‘*arīf*) is expectable inherently. According to Sufis, the former is one who memorizes expressions only, while the latter is one who grasps the meaning and reality of something.³⁰

When it comes to taṣawwuf, it is clear that gnosis is in a more notable position than knowledge. Hence, it is necessary to give more detailed information about gnosis. As aforementioned, gnosis is possible with mystical experiences and comes to the heart. At this point, the term *khawāṭır* (incoming thoughts to the heart) plays an important role. According to Abū Ṭālib, incoming thoughts to the heart are six kinds. They may stem from the self (*naḥs*), Satan (*shayṭān*), soul (*rūḥ*), angel (*malak*), the human reason (‘*aql*), and the Certainty (*yaqīn*). The first and second kinds are evil, while the third and fourth kinds are good. The human reason, which is in the middle of them, distinguishes good and evil from each other. As for the last one, it is the divine bestowal and blessing thrown to the hearts of some selected friends of God.³¹

Besides Abū Ṭālib’s categorization, some Sufis also make different categorizations. For instance, according to Muḥāsibī, *khawāṭır* (incoming thoughts) are inviters calling the hearts to good or evil. For him, *khawāṭır* comes either from God, or the self, which commands evil, or Satan, who gives whispers to the hearts. As for Kalābādhī, he propounds that *khawāṭır* comes either from God, or angels, or Satan, or the self. Likewise, Qushayrī also emphasizes that *khawāṭır* is an address coming to the hearts and happens in four kinds. According to Qushayrī, *khawāṭır* that comes from angels are an inspiration (*ilhām*), *khawāṭır* that comes from the self are

³⁰ Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 230; Hujwīrī, *Kashf*, 382. Also, according to Uludağ, the source of gnosis is the heart, soul, inspiration, and unveiling. Hücvirī, *Keşfu’l-mahcûb*, 331 (fn.2).

³¹ Makkī, *Qūt al-qulûb*, 1:324-325, 343; M. Mustafa Çakmaklıoğlu, *İbn Arabî’de Marifetin İfadesi* (Istanbul: İnsan Publishing, 2011), 515-517.

the reports of the self (*hawājis*), and *khawāṭir* that come from Satan are whispers (*wiswās*). If *khawāṭir* comes from God, it is *khawāṭir* of the Real (*al-Ḥaqq*), and no servant can oppose it.³²

The concept of *khawāṭir* includes the concepts of inspiration and unveiling as well. Sufis and researchers use both of them synonymously in general. Inspiration and unveiling, as the divine bestowal, have a tremendous significance in the epistemology of *taṣawwuf*. Inspiration is used mostly for good thoughts occurred in the hearts and it is for the heart to hear God. The occurrence of this hearing depends on the disappearance of the negligence from the heart. In this way, God engraves the essence of the truth on the hearts of His friends. As for the unveiling, it is to disclose something that is hidden to the general people. For the friends of God, who are in the state of the unveiling, there is no need to contemplate on proofs of the truth because God has removed all veils between His friends and the Unseen (*ghayb*).³³

Yet another concept to express the gnostic knowledge is the concept of the Certainty (*yaqīn*). Sufis define this concept to be a light (*nūr*) generated by God in the hearts. Hence, it is a divine bestowal. A servant by this light perceives the realities and has a grasp of states about the Hereafter.³⁴ According to Sahl b. Abdullah, the Certainty is in direct proportion to the increase of faith and is the opposite to doubt.³⁵ For Abū Ṭālib, in each heart there are three

³² Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri'āya*, 92-93; Qushayrī, *al-Risāla*, 169-171; Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 308; Kalābādhī, *al-Ta'arruf*, 62.

³³ Makki, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 1:256, 356; Sarrāj, *al-Lum'a*, 412, 422; Qushayrī, *al-Risāla*, 159; Şahin Filiz, *İslam Felsefesinde Mistik Bilginin Yeri*, 2nd ed. (Istanbul: Say Publishing, 2014), 219. Having said that the unveiling and inspiration are synonymous, Uludağ has emphasized that they are real. Nevertheless, he criticizes some Sufis, who rest exaggeratedly on these methods of knowing. To him, it caused Muslims not to give sufficient attention to rational and experimental sciences. So much, some Muslim communities in history could not establish ties with real life. However, Uludağ does not give a concrete answer to the question: which unveiling and inspiration would the people follow? Even though most of Sufis say that people should follow the unveiling and inspiration that are compatible with the religious law (*sharī'a*), we will discuss this problem in the pages ahead, it is not an adequate answer. Since the unveiling and inspiration are the superrational ways of knowledge, we cannot test their accuracy by resorting to the religious law, which works in the scope of human reason. Kuşeyrī, *Kuşeyri Risalesi*, 321 (fn.139).

³⁴ Ali Tenik, *Tasavvufî Bilgi* (Istanbul: Litera Publishing, 2017), 45-59.

³⁵ There is also another term *wajd* (ecstasy) used synonymously with the inspiration and unveiling. It is possible with a divine blessing only and eliminates all doubts. Sarrāj,

meanings; the Certainty cannot depart from them. With the weakening of those three meanings, the Certainty also weakens because they are in the place of the Certainty. Those three meanings are faith, knowledge, and the human reason. The shining of the light of the Certainty depends on those meanings. To him, the heart is like a lamp, human reason is similar to a candle, knowledge is similar to oil, and the wick is similar to faith.³⁶

So far, I have given descriptive information about the concepts of knowledge and gnosis by basing on the resources of the earlier Sufis. In the next part, I will touch on the reasons for a hierarchy observed between both of them and the ways of acquiring rational knowledge and gnosis. However, before moving to the next part, I would like to attract attention to a point. I said that gnosis is a divine bestowal. Even though most Sufis define it as removing veils over realities, having a grasp of the situations in the Hereafter, and knowledge regarding the divine mysteries, some statements found in their books propel us to a query.

For example, Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī in his *Qūt al-qulūb* quoted a word of ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib. ‘Alī said, “We do not have any hidden knowledge given by the messenger of God except the Qur’ān. But God gives His servants a comprehension (*fahm*) to understand His book.” Besides, having cited the verse that “He [God] gives wisdom to whom He wills”, Abū Ṭālib said, wisdom is comprehension (*fahm*) and grasp (*fiṭnah*). As for Sulamī, he quoted from Abū Muḥammad al-Murta‘ish as having said, “whisper impels a servant to a daze, while inspiration conduces to the increase of comprehension (*fahm*) and grasp (*bayān*).”³⁷ In this case, what does a servant obtain from the inspiration and unveiling? Is it a kind of knowledge (*‘ilm*) or comprehension (*fahm*) he attains? This point deserves to elaborate because there is no place for doubt or mistake in the gno-

al-Lum‘a, 375-376; Kalābādhī, *al-Ta‘arruf*, 82. For another interpretation, see Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 1:412, 3:1317.

³⁶ On the other hand, Abū Ṭālib says there are three degrees of certainty. The first one is the degree of witnessing (*mushāhada*) and belongs to men of truth (*ṣiddīq*). The next one is the degree of surrendering (*istislām*) and verification (*taṣdīq*) and belongs to the general believers and virtuous men (*abrār*). As for the last one, it is the degree of conjecture (*ẓann*) and belongs to theologians resorting to human reason in religion. Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 139; Qushayrī, *al-Risāla*, 318-319; Sarrāj, *al-Lum‘a*, 102; Kalābādhī, *al-Ta‘arruf*, 73; Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 1:328, 381.

³⁷ Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 1:334, 413; Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 350.

sis, which, as a divine bestowal, is a pure and complete knowledge. In addition, the servant is not an executer (*fā'il*) in this kind of acquisition. As for comprehension, the servant can make a mistake on his comprehension because the servant is an executor here. Eventually, since this questioning is a subject of yet another research, I leave this here.

3. Human Reason and Heart as Two Ways of Knowledge

Sufis acknowledge two main ways to acquire knowledge. The first is the human reason, and the second is the intuition that involves the revelation, inspiration, unveiling, dream, and vision. In this part of the article, I will examine how Sufis benefitted from those ways. At first, I will provide their definitions and then reveal their functions and scopes.

According to Muḥāsibī, the concept of reason (*'aql*) has one meaning in reality. It is an instinct (*gharīza*) whereby people learn, sustain their worldly life, and separate beneficial things from harmful ones. Besides, this concept has two subsidiary meanings as well. The first one is the comprehension (*fahm*), which helps people to understand everything heard and seen about their worldly and religious life. The second one is insight (*baṣīra*) and gnosis (*ma'rifa*), which comes from God as a divine bestowal. Through this insight, people can have a grasp of the value of the beneficial and harmful things about the Hereafter.³⁸

As for the concept of the heart, I should emphasize its significant function in the acquisition of knowledge, rather than providing a specific definition. Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī examines the terms the chest (*ṣadr*), the heart (*qalb*), the heart of the heart (*fu'ād*), and the kernel (*lubb*). And then he propounds that the heart as the most comprehensive name includes all of them. The heart as the spring of the foundations of the truth is the place of the light of faith. To him, the chest is the outermost; the heart is in the middle of the chest. The heart of the heart (*fu'ād*) is in the middle of the heart, and the kernel as the innermost thing is in the middle of them. The

³⁸ Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī, "Kitābu mā'iya al-'aql wa ma'nāhu wa ikhtilāfu al-nāsi fihi," in *al-'Aql wa fahm al-Qur'an*, ed. Hussain Quwwatī (Beirut: Dār al-fikr, 1971), 201, 210-213; Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī, "al-Qaṣd wa al-rujū' ilallāh," in *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad 'Atā (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-'ilmiyya, 1986), 251-253; Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 1:272; Tirmidhī, *al-Farq*, 57.

kernel supported by God and given only to believers is the human reason (*'aql*) at the same time.³⁹ We may reach two conclusions from these statements. First, the kernel is not the same with what we mean by the human reason that gives rational knowledge with the help of consideration and inference. The second, even though Sufis do not always apply the heart and reason systematically, they point to their relations in some way. For example, according to Muḥāsibī, human reason is a light of the insight located by God in the heart. It is neither a matter nor a sense, but a light distinguishing good and harmful thing. For Abū Ṭālib as well, the human reason is an instinct located in the heart. In addition, according to him, the human reason in the heart is like the sense of sight in the eye.⁴⁰

In respect of the function of the human reason, Muḥāsibī describes the human reason as the spring of wisdom, the light of eyes, and the fortress of knowledge. People can present proofs for the knowledge of the Unseen (*'ilm al-ghuyūb*), can predestine something before it happens, and can be aware of its results in advance.⁴¹ At the same time, we may see from Sulamī's *Ṭabaqāt*, the first Sufis connect the human reason to religiosity and morality. According to most of them, a sane person is careful in keeping the limits of God, keeps away himself from false beliefs, obeys the Prophet, fears and remembers God, gives thanks to Him, contemplates the Qur'ān, and follows the religion. In other words, every sane person should walk on the path of religion, knowledge, and obedience.⁴²

The most remarkable point in the Sufis' approaches to the human reason is that they consider it to be a mechanism controlling the self (*nafs*). Almost all Sufis give a place broadly for this subject. As knowledge is in question, this point is tremendously important to understand the role and limits of human reason. Muḥāsibī, espe-

³⁹ Tirmidhī, *al-Farq*, 20, 55-58.

⁴⁰ Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 3:1317, 1:343; Muḥāsibī, "Kitābu mā'īya al-'aql", 204. For additional examples about the relationship between the heart and the human reason, see Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 1:261, 2:660; Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 384, 408; Hujwīrī, *Kashf*, 144.

⁴¹ Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī, "Kitābu fahm al-Qur'ān wa ma'ānīhi", in *al-'Aql wa fahm al-Qur'ān*, ed. Hussain Quwwatī (Beirut: Dār al-fikr, 1971), 266.

⁴² Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī, *Risāla al-mustarshidīn*, ed. 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghudda (Beirut: Dār al-Islām, 1974), 126; Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 138, 189, 219, 272, 364, 416, 433; Qushayrī, *al-Risāla*, 510, 623; Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-nufūs*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad 'Atā (Beirut: Muassasa al-kutub al-thaqāfiya, 1991), 37, 39, 124.

cially in his work entitled *al-Ri'āya*, stresses the relationship between human reason and the self. To him, the human reason prevents the excessiveness of the self, keeps away human beings from Hell, eliminates the whispers of Satan, and it has to keep the self under control. A sane person should be pious because it is the essential goal of human reason. Otherwise, the passion (*hawā*) located in the self manages human beings and entices them away from the right way. Junaid also agrees with the statements of Muḥāsibī in this respect.⁴³

As for Hujwīrī, who gives more details on this point, he claims that the soul that does not have the faculty of the reason is imperfect. Moreover, Hujwīrī matches the soul with the human reason and matches the passion with the self. To him, as long as a person resists his self, he reinforces the soul and the reason, which are the place of the Divine mysteries. According to another Sufi, the fasting of human reason is the resistance to the desires of the self.⁴⁴

Besides, there is a controversial function of human reason. It is the question of whether the human reason can know about God. Muḥāsibī, who has various statements on this point, propounds that it is possible to understand the Qur'ān and to know God through human reason. To him, what the sun is to the eye, knowledge is to the human reason. Submission to God is possible with knowledge only. Thus, the supreme ascetic (*zāhid*) is one who is sane, and the excellent sanity as well is to know about God. Furthermore, as Qushayrī quoted from a Sufi, the human reason is a faculty creating proofs regarding God.⁴⁵ Consequently, Sufis affirm the human reason to be a good means to some extent. According to some of them, if God wants to do good to a person, He endows him a sound reason whereby he reaches goodness, which is faith and oneness of God (*tawḥīd*).⁴⁶

⁴³ Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri'āya*, 43, 58, 67, 249, 250; Muḥāsibī, “al-Qaṣd”, 229; Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb*, 104; Muḥāsibī, *al-'Aql*, 78; Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 121; Ateş, *Cüneyd-i Bağdâdî*, 15; Sarrāj, *al-Lum'a*, 180.

⁴⁴ Hujwīrī, *Kashf*, 200, 207; Qushayrī, *al-Risāla*, 112.

⁴⁵ Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri'āya*, 189; Muḥāsibī, “al-Qaṣd”, 247; Muḥāsibī, *Risāla*, 98; Muḥāsibī, “Kitābu fahm al-Qur'ān”, 318; Ateş, *Cüneyd-i Bağdâdî*, 141; Qushayrī, *al-Risāla*, 26.

⁴⁶ Muḥāsibī, *Risāla*, 93, 166; Muḥāsibī, “Kitābu fahm al-Qur'ān”, 322; Hujwīrī, *Kashf*, 207.

On the other hand, Sufis often stress that the human reason is not capable of knowing about God. Even though I mentioned above the statements of some Sufis like Muḥāsibī, Qushayrī, and Hujwīrī, the same Sufis have opposing ideas in this matter. There is no clarity in this subject at all. According to some Sufis, every idea concerning God in our minds is wrong. Whatever we imagine about God is far from Him. God is entirely beyond the scope of human reason because its responsibility is only to know created things. However, according to the other remarks, His quiddity (*māhiyya*) and attributes are unknown. Apart from this, human reason can know God's existence and oneness.⁴⁷ When we know the existence and oneness of God without comprehending His attributes, do we think we know Him adequately? Is it possible to worship Him without knowing exactly? According to most Sufis, people can know God through revelation and inspiration only. However, this case requires more comments.

Further, they have more serious and negative evaluations against the human reason.⁴⁸ Confusingly, even Muḥāsibī, who has many positive ideas about the human reason, has some critiques. For instance, according to him, there is nothing more severe charge and more harmful than the human reason toward the Sunnah. When a servant desires to go into the way of the Sunnah with his reason and comprehension (*fahm*), the reason contests him.⁴⁹

Muḥāsibī is not alone in this kind of approach. According to Abū Ṭālib, the word *zukhruf* in the Qur'ān is a mutual name for the worldly ornaments and for the ornate speeches whereby the human reason deludes people. Abū Ṭālib claims that whoever attempts to

⁴⁷ Muḥāsibī, “al-Qaṣd”, 286; Sarrāj, *al-Lum'a*, 58; Sulamī, *al-Muqaddima*, 32; Kalābādī, *al-Ta'arruf*, 37, 39, 105; Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 202, 384; Hujwīrī, *Kashf*, 268-270; Qushayrī, *al-Risāla*, 17, 38, 495, 497; Muḥāsibī, “Kitābu mā'iya al-'aql”, 220. As for Abū Ṭālib, he defends that the oneness and attributes of God cannot be comprehended by the human reason because it is prone to neglect and deny the attributes. Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 3:1179, 1185, 1187; Bedriye Reis, “Kuṣeyrī'nin Letāifü'l-İṣṣârâtı Bağlamında Kalbin İdraki”, *İnsan ve Toplum Bilimleri Araştırmaları Dergisi* 8/1 (2019), 539.

⁴⁸ For critiques made by Sufis against using human reason, see Süleyman Uludağ, *İslam Düşüncesinin Yapısı: Selef, Kelâm, Tasavvuf, Felsefe* (Istanbul: Dergâh Publishing, 2018), 131-151.

⁴⁹ The editor of the book warns readers about this expression of Muḥāsibī. For him, in the thought of Muḥāsibī, the human reason is very noble faculty human beings can have. The wrong thing is to use this faculty out of the intended purpose. Muḥāsibī, *Ādâb*, 50; Muḥāsibī, *er-Riâye*, 96.

attain the knowledge of the divine attributes by the human reason rather than the light of Certainty, he does ascribe partners to God. In addition, according to Abū Ṭālib, God erases the oneness of God from the heart of believers who tries to understand everything through his reason.⁵⁰

Sufis claim that the human reason has been incapable of understanding some of the thoughts that come to the heart. Besides the knowledge regarding God, knowledge concerning the nature of revelation, the essence of the soul, mystical states, the ascension of the Prophet, and miracles of the friends (*awliyā*) exceed the limits of the human reason. According to Abū Ṭālib, to claim to have faith through a rational effort is to deny the blessing of faith because faith also is beyond human reason.⁵¹ Those kinds of evaluations about the human reason underlie a well-known distinction between religious law (*sharī'a*) and the reality (*ḥaqīqa*). The former is in the range of human reason, while the knowledge concerning the latter is possible with divine inspirations and unveilings.

1418 | db

According to Hujwīrī, the knowledge of reality (*ḥaqīqa*) has three principles: Knowledge of the oneness of God, knowledge of His attributes, and knowledge of His acts and wisdom. The knowledge of the religious law (*sharī'a*) also has three principles: The Qur'ān, the Sunnah, and the consensus (*ijmā'*) of Muslims.⁵² The former is what Abū Ṭālib describes as knowledge of the inward knowledge (*'ilm al-bāṭin*) that is known by the heart only. As remembered, the outward knowledge (*'ilm al-ẓāhir*) is in the scope of human reason. According to Abū Ṭālib, there is no relation between human reason and the knowledge of Certainty. It is because the human reason concentrates on corporeal beings that constitute the outward knowledge.⁵³ As for Kalābādhi, he places the knowledge of reality in the highest degree that humans can attain. Some people may reach this knowledge, which belongs to selected Sufis, after grasping the knowledge of the oneness, knowledge of the religious provisions, and knowledge of the discipline of the self (*naḥs*).⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 1:460, 3:1184, 1187; Ateş, *Cüneyd-i Bağdâdî*, 9; Sulamî, *Ṭabaqāt*, 262.

⁵¹ Tirmidhî, *al-Farq*, 72-73; Sarrāj, *al-Lum'a*, 383; Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 2:583; Hujwīrī, *Kashf*, 261; Qushayrî, *al-Risāla*, 504.

⁵² Hujwīrī, *Kashf*, 14.

⁵³ Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 1:326, 337, 423.

⁵⁴ Kalābādhi, *al-Ta'arruf*, 58.

Selected people, who know about God, follow the Sunnah and the knowledge of Certainty. Ignorant people trust their reason only. According to Junaid, for someone attaining the reality of the oneness (*tawḥīd*), rational knowledge and thoughts are nothing more than whispers that need to be dismissed. To him, the human reason is just a coordinator to fulfill the necessities of servanthood.⁵⁵

Hujwīrī asserts that the human reason will be bewildered helplessly as long as it seeks the truth. As for Sarrāj, he considers the human reason to be a helpful device to help the truth by decaying the rational arguments and false ideas put forth by non-Muslims. Nevertheless, he also emphasizes the superiority of the knowledge of reality. Since the knowledge of reality is the culmination of all sciences, whoever has this knowledge may also know syllogism (*qiyās*), consideration (*naẓar*). But, scholars, who know syllogism and consideration, may not know the reality.⁵⁶ Moreover, just as delusions of the self are veils over the hearts of common people (*‘awām*), rational pleasures are veils over the hearts of selected people (*khawāṣ*). Since human reason is the mirror of the world, it reflects the world only.⁵⁷

We learn from those statements that Sufis accept the divine inspiration rather than the rational efforts to have a grasp of reality. They acknowledge the superiority of intuitional ways upon rational methods. Since Sufis experience particular spiritual states and stations, they can conceive complex problems that scholars and jurists cannot. According to them, while all sciences have a limit, gnosis has no end at all because it comes from God as a bestowal.⁵⁸ Thus, they consider themselves to be the most qualified authorities after the prophets to understand the divine speech and to decree about religious issues. Their chests are open, hearts are bright (*ḍiyā’*), so their knowledge about God is very sound. Gnosis that they have is

⁵⁵ Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 1:480; Ateş, *Cüneyd-i Bağdâdî*, 149.

⁵⁶ Hujwīrī, *Kashf*, 270; Sarrāj, *al-Lum‘a*, 26, 149, 457.

⁵⁷ Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 2:1140, 3:1186. As related to this point, Hujwīrī says that gnosis should depend on religious law (*sharī‘a*), prophethood (*nubuwwa*), and Divine guidance. However, in the previous pages, I explicated that gnosis, as the knowledge of reality, is different from the religious law. It is because the former is a divine bestowal, while the latter is to reach knowledge by using human reason from the Qur‘ān and the Sunnah. Hujwīrī, *Kashf*, 271.

⁵⁸ Sarrāj, *al-Lum‘a*, 32, 37, 107, 287.

not something to understand by human reason and to reveal by writing in books.⁵⁹

So far, I have explained taṣawwuf, knowledge, gnosis, and the significance of inspiration to attain the knowledge of reality. Meantime, I used the term “selected” occasionally for some Sufis. Before I complete this article, I should briefly touch on some features of intuitional knowledge and that of those selected Sufis because this step is complementary to the subject.

As said at the beginning, the primary principle of taṣawwuf is to discipline the self. It is a discipline regarding cleansing the mirror of the heart and preparing the heart to acquire the reflections of divine inspirations. According to Muḥāsibī, it is the obligation to cut down all interest in the world. So, the heart can get rid of negligence and acquires the knowledge of the Unseen.⁶⁰ Having cited a well-known hadīth narration about the friends of God, Muḥāsibī claims to have those people hold the knowledge of unveiling.⁶¹ Those Sufis who are selected receive their knowledge from God directly. God teaches them what they do not know.

As for Abū Ṭālib, also he says, a servant can attain true knowledge through piety and Certainty. When the servant pursues the way of servanthood, God bestows him true knowledge. In this respect, Abū Ṭālib emphasizes the verse “ask the people of the message if you do not know” (al-Anbiyā’ 21/7). To him, the people of the message are those who take knowledge from God. Their knowledge does not depend on books and teachers but depends on their sincere acts. They speak with the divine inspiration that is the way of true and beneficial knowledge. Abū Ṭālib also refers to the verse “And will provide for him from where he does not expect” (al-Ṭalāq 65/3) and says that this godsend is knowledge provided by God as a gift. Moreover, he quoted from Abū Yazīd al-Biṣṭāmī, who claims that a real savant is not a person memorizing and then for-

⁵⁹ Kalābādihī, *al-Ta’arruf*, 8; Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 1:310, 2:1001.

⁶⁰ Muḥāsibī, “al-Qaṣd”, 306-313; Muḥāsibī, “Kitābu fahm al-Qur’ān”, 312. On the other hand, it is possible to see some expressions in Muḥāsibī stating that actions do not cause a person to attain knowledge of the Unseen. However, we may understand this approach in a different way. He maybe wants to say that knowledge of the Unseen is not a mandatory result of actions but is the harvest of actions. Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharḥ al-ma’rifa wa badhl al-naṣīḥa*, ed. Majdī Fathī al-Sayyid (Ṭanṭā: Dār al-ṣaḥāba lil-turāth, 1993), 201; Sarrāj, *al-Lum’a*, 389.

⁶¹ *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, “Kitāb al-riqāq”, hadīth no:91.

getting the book of God, yet is one who gets knowledge from God whenever he wants without any studying and memorizing. Besides this sentence, Abū Ṭālib tells affirmatively about a Sufi who answers questions by consulting with angels.⁶²

Kalābādhī's approach also is in this way. He claims that God has create pure, good, and elite people among the ummah of the Prophet and taken away their selves from the world. Since they are sincere in their endeavors, they have the knowledge acquired with an individual effort. Additionally, since they are sincere in their religious acts, they are the recipients of divine inspirations. According to Kalābādhī, some Sufis like Muḥāsibī have both the knowledge acquired and the knowledge bestowed. Furthermore, Kalābādhī mentions two kinds of Sufis. The first one is *murīd*, who deals with ascetic discipline (*riyāḍa*) before attaining inspirational knowledge. The second one is *murād*, who attains inspirational knowledge before dealing with ascetic discipline. The former demands God, while God demands and chooses the latter.⁶³

These statements force us to touch on the relationship between the divine selection and being the recipient of the divine inspirations. After the prophets, God sends His friends to people to follow them. This kind of friendship depends on God's will and choice only. Whomever God does not will, cannot be a friend of Him. According to Abū Ṭālib, God's love for His friends is before their love for God.⁶⁴

This kind of privileged status of the friends provides them a chance to have special knowledge. For instance, Junaid propounds that a real and faithful disciple does not need books and ideas of scholars. It is because whomever God chooses is under divine supervision. In the books of ṭaṣawwuf, it is possible to find many narratives on Junaid and his intuitional knowledge. For example, although Junaid was not keen to address the people, he began to preach because he saw in the dream the Prophet requesting him to preach. Moreover, according to Qushayrī, Junaid was talking to angels in his dreams. The angels asked some questions to Junaid,

⁶² Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 1:336, 341-342, 375; Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 32, 439.

⁶³ Kalābādhī, *al-Ta'arruf*, 3, 12, 107; Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 2:1048.

⁶⁴ Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 1-2; Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 1:315, 337, 2:1048; Kalābādhī, *al-Ta'arruf*, 30, 50; Hujwiri, *Kashf*, 212; Qushayrī, *al-Risāla*, 440.

and then he answered them. And then, the angels confirmed his answers. In another narrative, a Sufi asked a question to Junaid. He answered in a way that this Sufi liked very much. The Sufi requested Junaid to repeat the answer to note it down. Upon this, Junaid replied, “If the answer were mine, I would repeat it for you to note it down.”⁶⁵

Such narratives in the books are not about Junaid only. Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī claims not to have written any word in his books by thinking. Ibrāhīm b. Adham speaks with Khidr and learns divine names from the Prophet David. Kalābādhī writes his book entitled *Baḥr al-fawā'id*, which is a commentary on hadīths, by abiding a directive of the Prophet seen in the dream. Kalābādhī wakes up, and then he finds next to him a sheet of paper, a pen, and some hadīth texts. So, Kalābādhī's book elaborates on those hadīths. Furthermore, an important Sufi, Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. 'Alī Kattānī meets with the Prophet Muhammad twice a week regularly in dreams and attempts to know from the Prophet the answers to his questions.⁶⁶ Besides those narratives, Qushayrī learns in a dream a kind of medical treatment from the Prophet to cure his sick son. As for Muḥāsibī, whenever he is about to eat food, which is dubious according to religion, God warns him by creating a unique sense in his finger. So, Muḥāsibī understands at that moment that the food is not completely lawful (*ḥalāl*) and gives up eating.⁶⁷

With all those narratives, we understand that Sufis are under divine control and supervision. Not only of their actions but also their knowledge is compatible with religion and divine approval. At that, Junaid's words can be more meaningful. He says that he does not consider any information to be valuable and accurate more than our knowledge.⁶⁸ As Hujwīrī underlines, *taṣawwuf*, as a whole, is based on the concept of friendship (*walāya*), and all Sufi sheikhs have been in agreement on this point. Also, friendship is in question always together with the intuitional knowledge bestowed by God.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 430; Qushayrī, *al-Risāla*, 353, 613-615; Ateş, *Cüneyd-i Bağdādî*, 11, 17.

⁶⁶ Qushayrī, *al-Risāla*, 43, 92; Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 31; Hujwīrī, *Kashf*, 142; Kelābāzī, *Ta'arruf*, 28; Kalābādhī, *al-Ta'arruf*, 119; Mustafa Kara, *Tasavvuf ve Tarikatlar Tarihi*, 14th ed. (Istanbul: Dergâh Publishing, 2017), 61.

⁶⁷ Kuşeyrî, *Kuşeyri Risalesi*, 18, Sarrāj, *al-Lum'a*, 70.

⁶⁸ Sarrāj, *al-Lum'a*, 239, 507.

⁶⁹ Hujwīrī, *Kashf*, 210; Qushayrī, *al-Risāla*, 437.

Since Sarrāj considers Sufis privileged, he claims that those who oppose taṣawwuf are the outward scholars, who know well neither the Qur'ān nor the hadīths of the Prophet.⁷⁰ As for Abū Ṭālib, he points out the conjecture to be the lowest one from the three degrees of Certainty. This lowest one belongs to rationalist scholars. To him, faiths of some people whose fates are wicked, depend on rational proofs.⁷¹ As said above, also Hujwīrī emphasizes a hierarchy dividing gnostic, who are aware of meaning and reality, from scholars, who memorize expressions only. Most Sufis pro- pound that the outward scholars will never know the reality.⁷²

The fact that Sufis acknowledge a rigid separation between the world and religion is the main factor underlying all of their thoughts. For example, even to Muḥāsibī, who is one appreciating human reason most among Sufis, many scientific types of research making easy our life and making us conscious about God's art, de- viate us from our responsibility. This responsibility is only to disci- pline the self and to abide by religion.⁷³

Conclusion

db | 1423

In this article, I attempted to exhibit the approaches of the pre- Ghazzālī period Sufis to the concepts of rational knowledge, gnosis, the human reason, and intuitional knowledge. Those Sufis are sig- nificant figures in the history of Islamic thought. It is because not only they laid the foundation of Sufi teaching, but also Ghazzālī, as a milestone of the Islamic thought, benefitted from them remarka- bly.

Having exhibited all those expressions and thoughts, it can be said that the epistemology of the early Sufis is not steady. They use the terms the human reason, the heart, the kernel, and the chest inconsistently. Also, there is no standard usage of the terms gnosis, especially knowledge. However, when their statements are studied in-depth, we may see that they use the term human reason in two contexts. When they use human reason to compare with passion, they favor the former versus passion. When they use it to compare with the heart and intuitional knowledge, they favor the heart une-

⁷⁰ Sarrāj, *al-Lum'a*, 33, 150.

⁷¹ Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 1:372, 382, 390, 2:621.

⁷² Hujwīrī, *Kashf*, 382; Kuşeyrī, *Kuşeyri Risalesi*, 24; Qushayrī, *al-Risāla*, 618.

⁷³ Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb*, 79-80.

quivocally. They accept the hierarchy of the supervisors over human beings as follows: intuition, human reason, and passion. According to most Sufis, the human reason is an apparatus to clean the heart that the knowledge of reality comes rather than an apparatus to attain reality. Therefore, they suggest that a person cannot attain the knowledge of reality with books and scholars.

As a result of this kind of claim, they criticize the outward scholars such as theologians, jurists, and all who depend on human reason. To them, human reason is useful to abide by religious commandments and prohibitions only. Whoever wants to have a grasp of reality should follow the way of *taṣawwuf* by disciplining the self.

References

- Abrahamov, Binyamin. *Ibn al-‘Arabī and the Sufis*. Oxford: Anqa Publishing, 2014.
- ‘Afifi, Abū al-Alā. *al-Taṣawwuf: al-Thawrat al-rūḥiyya fī al-Islām*. Beirut: Dār al-sha‘bi, n.d.
- Ateş, Süleyman. *Cüneyd-i Bağdâdi: Hayatı, Eserleri ve Mektupları*. Istanbul: Sönmez Neşriyat, 1970.
- Çakmaklıoğlu, Mustafa M. *İbn Arabî’de Marifetin İfadesi*. Istanbul: İnsan Publishing, 2011.
- Demirli, Ekrem. *İslam Düşüncesi Üzerine*. Istanbul: Sufi Kitap, 2016.
- Filiz, Şahin. *İslam Felsefesinde Mistik Bilginin Yeri*. 2nd ed. Istanbul: Say Yayınları, 2014.
- Ghazzālī, Abū Ḥāmid. *Fayṣal al-tafrīqa bayn al-Islām wa al-zandaqa*. Ed. Maḥmūd Bayjū. Damascus, s.n., 1992.
- Ghazzālī, Abū Ḥāmid. *İḥyā’ al-‘ulūm al-Dīn*. 4 Volume. Beirut: Dār al-ma‘rifa, 1982.
- Ghazzālī, Abū Ḥāmid. *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*. Ed. Sulaimān Dunyā. Cairo: Dār al-ma‘rifa, 1966.
- Gündüzöz, Güldane. *Tasavvuf Tarihinde Nazarî İrfan Geleneği: Tarih, Teori ve Problemler*. Ankara: Fecr Publishing, 2018.
- Hücvirî, Ali b. Osman el-Jüllâbî. *Hakikat Bilgisi: Keşfu’l-Mahcûb*. Trans. Süleyman Uludağ. Istanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2016.
- Hujwiri, ‘Ali b. ‘Uthmān al-Jullābî. *The Kashf Al-Maḥjûb: The Oldest Persian Treatise on Sufism*. Trans. Reynold A. Nicholson. Leiden: Brill, 1911.
- Kalābādhi, Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Ishāq. *Kitāb al-ta‘arruf li-madhhab ahl al-taṣawwuf*. Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1994.
- Kara, Mustafa. *Tasavvuf ve Tarikatlar Tarihi*. 14th ed. Istanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2017.
- Kaya, Emrah. “İhyā’u ‘ulūmi’-d-Dīn’de Akıl ve Aklilik.” *Bilimname*. 36 (2018): 135–164. <http://dx.doi.org/10.28949/bilimname.434059>.
- Kelābâzî, Ebubekir Muhammed b. İshak. *Doğuş Devrinde Tasavvuf: Ta‘arruf*. Trans. Süleyman Uludağ. 5th ed. Istanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2016.
- Kuşeyrî, Abdülkerim. *Tasavvuf İlmine Dair: Kuşeyri Risalesi*. Trans. Süleyman Uludağ. 9th ed. Istanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2017.
- Makkî, Abū Ṭālib. *Qūt al-qulūb fī mu‘āmalat al-maḥbûb*. Ed. Maḥmūd İbrāhīm Muḥammad al-Riḍwānî. 4 Volume. Cairo: Maktabati dār al-turāth, 2001.
- Muḥāsibî, Hārith. *Ādāb al-nufūs*. Ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad ‘Aṭā. Beirut: Muassasa al-kutub al-thaqāfiya, 1991.

- Muḥāsibī, Hārith. “al-Qaṣd wa al-rujū’ ilallāh”, in *al-Waṣāyā*. Ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad ‘Aṭā. 219–328. Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-‘ilmiyya, 1986.
- Muḥāsibī, Hārith. *al-Ri’āya li-ḥuqūq Allāh*. Ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad ‘Aṭā. Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-‘ilmiyya, 2009.
- Muḥāsibī, Hārith. *al-‘Aql wa fahm al-Qur’ān*. Ed. Hussain Quwwatī. Beirut: Dār al-fikr, 1971.
- Muḥāsibī, Hārith. “Kitābu fahm al-Qur’ān wa ma’ānihi”, in *al-‘Aql wa fahm al-Qur’ān*. Ed. Hussain Quwwatī. 261–502. Beirut: Dār al-fikr, 1971.
- Muḥāsibī, Hārith. “Kitābu mā’iyya al-‘aql wa ma’ nāhu wa ikhtilāfu al-nāsi fihi”, in *al-‘Aql wa fahm al-Qur’ān*. Ed. Hussain Quwwatī. 193–260. Beirut: Dār al-fikr, 1971.
- Muḥāsibī, Hārith. *Risāla al-mustarshidīn*. Ed. ‘Abd al-Fattāh Abū Ghudda. Beirut: Dār al-Islām, 1974.
- Muḥāsibī, Hārith. *Sharḥ al-ma’rifā wa badhl al-naṣiḥa*. Ed. Majdī Fathī al-Sayyid. Taṭāṭ: Dār al-ṣaḥāba lil-turāth, 1993.
- Muḥāsibī, Hārith. *er-Ri’āye: Neḥs Muhasebesinin Temelleri*. Trans. Şahin Filiz - Hülya Küçük. 4th ed. Istanbul: İnsan Publishing, 2011.
- Qushayrī, ‘Abd al-Karīm. *al-Risāla al-Qushayrī*. Ed. Maḥmūd b. Sharīf. Cairo: Muassasa dār al-Sha’b, 1989.
- Reis, Bedriye. “Kuṣeyrī’nin Letāifü’l-İṣārātu Bağlamında Kalbin İdraki”. *İnsan ve Toplum Bilimleri Araştırmaları Dergisi* 8/1 (2019). 537-558.
- Rosenthal, Franz. “Ibn ‘Arabī between Philosophy and Mysticism: Sufism and Philosophy are Neighbors and Visit Each Other”. *Oriens*. 31 (1988): 1–35.
<https://doi.org/doi:10.2307/1580724>.
- Sarrāj, Abū Naṣr. *Kitāb al-Luma’ fi’l-taṣawwuf*. Ed. ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd. Baghdād: Dār al-kutub al-ḥadīth, 1970.
- Serrāc, Ebū Nasr. *El-Lūma’: İslam Tasavvufu*. Trans. Hasan Kamil Yılmaz. Istanbul: Erkam Publishing, 2016.
- Sulamī, Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān. *al-Muqaddima fi taṣawwuf*. Ed. Yūsuf Zaydān. Beirut: Dār al-Jil, 1999.
- Sulamī, Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān. *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*. Ed. Nūr al-Dīn Shurayba. Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānījī, 1986.
- Tenik, Ali. *Tasavvufi Bilgi*. Istanbul: Litera Publishing, 2017.
- Tirmidhī, Ḥakīm. *Bayān al-farq bayn al-ṣadr wa al-qalb wa al-fu’ād wa al-lubb*. Ed. Aḥmad ‘Abd al-Raḥīm al-Sayih. Cairo: Markaz al-kitāb li’n-nashr, 1998.
- Uludağ, Süleyman. *İslam Düşüncesinin Yapısı: Selef, Kelām, Tasavvuf, Felsefe*. 12th edition. Istanbul: Dergāh Publishing, 2018.

Knowledge in the Main Sources of the Philosophy of Sufism in the Pre-Ghazzālī Period

Emrah KAYA*

Extended Abstract

This article aims to elaborate on the pre-Ghazzālī period Sufis' approaches to the concept of knowledge. The article consists of three main sections. At the beginning, we will focus on description of *taṣawwuf*. And then, the concepts of knowledge and gnosis will be described. At the last section, the ideas of the Sufis on knowledge and its ways will be examined.

In this article, I will study the pre-Ghazzālī period Sufis' approaches to knowledge and human reason (*'aql*) with a philosophical perspective. Most of the Islamic philosophy researchers have been in agreement about that Ghazzālī (d. 505/1111) is a milestone in the Islamic thought. He engaged greatly in rational knowledge and wrote about theology, Islamic jurisprudence, logic, and philosophy. Afterward, he propounded that it is possible to attain the knowledge of reality by following the way of *taṣawwuf* only. To explain this way and its reliability, he wrote some books such as *Iḥyā' al-'ulūm al-dīn*, *Mishkāt al-anwār*, and *Iljām al-'awām 'an 'ilm al-kalām*. This article focuses on the approach of the Sufis such as Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī (d. 857), Abū Naṣr Sarrāj al-Ṭūsī (d. 988), Abū Bakr al-Kalābādī (d. 990), Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 998), Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī (d. 1021), 'Alī b. 'Uthmān al-Jullābī al-Hujwīrī (d. 1072), and 'Abd al-Karīm al-Qushayrī who lived in the pre-Ghazzālī period to human reason and rational knowledge. Those Sufis are the founders and the most important figures of the Sunnī *taṣawwuf*, which is the way that Ghazzālī followed.

In general, we may describe *taṣawwuf* as one of the Islamic sciences and a discipline that purposes a moral improvement and maturity of human beings. The foundation of *taṣawwuf* is based on the lifestyle of the Prophet Muhammad and his close companions (*ṣaḥāba*). Some Muslims after the Prophet had kept continuing this lifestyle, which is asceticism (*zuhd*) and piety (*taqwā*), for two centuries. In the third and fourth centuries after the Prophet, some Muslims had added some other thoughts and teachings to this lifestyle so that, *taṣawwuf* came out. Hence, we may say that the concept of *taṣawwuf* includes some specific ideas in addition to the lifestyle based on asceticism and piety.

As for the concepts of knowledge and gnosis, we should say first that these concepts are intertwined in the discipline of *taṣawwuf*. Even though the Sufis used these concepts interchangeably, it is clear that gnosis is in a more notable posi-

* Assistant Professor, Sakarya University Faculty of Theology, Department of Islamic Philosophy, emrahkaya@sakarya.edu.tr, Orcid Id: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8889-5587>

tion than knowledge. It is because while a person can acquire knowledge by his reason, gnosis is possible with mystical experiences and comes to the heart.

As understood from those information, it can be said that the Sufis acknowledge two main ways to acquire knowledge. The first is the human reason, and the second is the intuition that involves the revelation, inspiration, unveiling, dream, and vision. The most remarkable point in the Sufis' approaches to the human reason is that they consider it to be a mechanism controlling the self (*nafs*). Almost all Sufis give a place broadly for this subject. The human reason prevents the excessiveness of the self, keeps away human beings from Hell, eliminates the whispers of Satan, and it has to keep the self under control. On the other hand, Sufis often stress that the human reason is not capable of knowing about God. Sufis claim that the human reason has been incapable of understanding some of the thoughts that come to the heart. Besides the knowledge regarding God, knowledge concerning the nature of revelation, the essence of the soul, mystical states, the ascension of the Prophet, and miracles of the friends (*awliyā'*) exceed the limits of the human reason. We learn from those statements that Sufis accept the divine inspiration rather than the rational efforts to have a grasp of reality. They acknowledge the superiority of intuitional ways upon rational methods. According to them, while all sciences have a limit, gnosis has no end at all because it comes from God as a bestowal. They consider themselves to be the most qualified authorities after the prophets to understand the divine speech and to decree about religious issues. Their chests are open, hearts are bright (*dīyā'*), so their knowledge about God is very sound. Gnosis that they have is not something to understand by human reason and to reveal by writing in books.

I conclude at the end of the research that the Sufis restrict human reason (*'aql*) into the worldly life while giving the intuitional knowledge priority. Also, they separate the reality (*ḥaqīqa*) from religious law (*sharī'a*). For the former, intuitional knowledge is a necessity, while the human reason is useful and responsible for the latter.

Keywords: Islamic Philosophy, Sufism, Human Reason, Knowledge, Gnosis.

