

TRANSFORMATION OF AL-GHAZZALI'S THINKING FROM RATIONAL TO SUPHISTIC TRENDS

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ABSTRACT

Talking about the transformation of Al-Ghazali's thought from rational to Sufistic tendencies is not as easy as al-Ghazali's changing the character of thought, but it requires a very long process. One of the indicators is that in 488 H. (1095 AD) al-Ghazali was in doubt, skeptical of the sciences he was studying. This skeptical state made al-Ghazali undergo quite drastic changes. Not a physical change, but/transformation of his thoughts, which at first tended to be rational and philosophical, in the end he chose the Sufi tendency as the character of his thinking. This article is of a library research nature and uses a historical approach to al-Ghazali's rational-sufistic epistemology with the theory of transformation in al-Ghazali's intellectual history from rational to sufistic in nature with a cross-disciplinary model, namely by combining rational and sufistic into one unified whole. , so that the hope is to emerge "neo Ghazzalian" in the sense of understanding al-Ghazzali's thought as a whole and not partially, so that the results of this paper actually reconstruct al-Gahzzali's thought as a whole by providing fresh knowledge for the development of classical Islamic thought and contemporary.

Keywords: *Transformation of thought, al-Ghazzali, rational, sufistic, neo ghazzalian*

Introduction

In the early history of his thought, al-Ghazali studied theology and logic (*al-'ulum al-'aqliyah*) from his teacher al-Juwaini, a theologian with an Ash'ariyah school of thought. Under the guidance of his teacher, al-Ghazali adopted the main principles of Ash'ariyah theology, such as the principles of the oneness of God (tawhid), the reality of divine attributes that must be distinguished from the essence (dhat) of God, the belief in the eternity of the Qur'an. and

acceptance of the anthropomorphic depiction of God, and other typical topics of Ash'arite theology which al-Ghazali also believed in until the end of his life (Campanini, 2003).

In subsequent developments, al-Ghazali saw that the dangers contained in the science of kalam were greater than the benefits. For al-Ghazali, the kalam experts use complex and misleading premises rather than explaining the problems of kalam clearly. After studying the science of kalam, in an extreme way, al-Ghazali

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concluded that the science of kalam is not able to lead a person to the knowledge of God in essence. His tough attitude in exploring the ultimate truth as the basis for al-Ghazali's reasoning finally made him leave this science even though in fact he still continued to observe the science of kalam in the process of transforming his thoughts (al-Ghazali).

Al-Ghazali's search then anchored in philosophy after not finding satisfaction in logic and logic. In less than two years al-Ghazali has been able to master various philosophical issues. Although al-Ghazali found the freedom of reason in studying philosophy, he concluded that the thoughts of philosophers endangered aqeedah. Al-Ghazali's ability to study and assimilate philosophy in depth with his structural and theoretical strengths made him considered a philosopher. Philosophy seems to give a deep impression (impression) in the transformation of thought. This can be seen from the rationality of philosophy which continues to carry over and indirectly influences the thinking of Sufism as the final choice in the future.

Al-Ghazali produced a work entitled *Maqasid al-Falasifah* to explain the aims of philosophy, then he wrote *Tahafut al-Falasifah* to attack philosophy which according to him led to disbelief because of the view on three things, first on the eternity of nature, secondly on the view that God does not know things particular matters (*juz'iyat*), and the third belief in physical resurrection (*ma'ad*). For al-Ghazali, philosophers from various schools such as the materialists (*al-Dahr*), naturalists (*al-Tabi'i*), and divinity (*al-Ilahi*) are all *kufr* and deviate from the truth because the arguments used are based on assumptions, if only even logical and not contrary to religion as in mathematics and logic they can fall into arrogance. Al-Ghazali attempted to point out the contradictions in philosophy and show that philosophers cannot prove, from a theoretical point of view, religious truths. Al-Ghazali considered dogmatic philosophical thinking as dangerous as the *Ismaili* or *Batiniyah* schools which he also studied.

In this context, al-Ghazali considers Sufism to be the best doctrine and the most correct path compared to philosophy or theology, because according to him knowledge outside of

Sufism is very abstract and superficial while Sufism can lead educated people to positive knowledge about God and nature. That's why al-Ghazali chose Sufism as the last path of his search until the end of his life (al-Taftazani).

Literature Review

In a study, of course there is prior research (prior research) so that it can be taken into consideration in a research. Previous research on al-Ghazali is the work of M. Zurkani Jahja, *Al-Ghazali's Theology: A Methodological Approach*. It is a work that specifically examines al-Ghazali's thoughts from a theological perspective, but what distinguishes this article is that the theological elements synergized with Sufism are not very deep, although it is alluded to in it that Sufism can be used as a method in al-Ghazali's theology, but it needs to be followed up. in order to complete a more comprehensive study of al-Ghazali's thoughts. What distinguishes this research from the author's research is the focus on analyzing the transformation of al-Ghazali's thought by combining rational (philosophy) with Sufism as al-Ghazali's framework of thought.

Furthermore, the work of Mahfudz Masduki *Spirituality and Rationality of al-Ghazali*. This paper describes al-Ghazali's attitudes and views on theology, *ta'limiyyah*, philosophy, and Sufism. Masduki's writing uses descriptive analysis in analyzing al-Ghazali's views regarding philosophy, *tasawuf* and some of the thoughts of theology that developed in his time, however this research does not focus on the transformation of thought and the factors behind it as will be done in this study.

Next is the work of Mahmud Hamdi Zaquq *al-Ghazali The Sufi The Philosopher: A Comparison of Philosophical Methods between Al-Ghazali and Descartes*. This study uses a comparative approach to the thinking of figures between al-Ghazali and Descartes, so that rational tendencies dominate. This work is very important because it can be used as supporting material for this research in describing al-Ghazali's framework and rational tendencies. However, what distinguishes this research is that the discussion on Sufism is not well explained, so from here the author is interested in following up this paper by combining

philosophy with Sufism as the epistemology of al-Ghazali's thought in a comprehensive manner.

To obtain data about the history and transformation of al-Ghazali's thought from rational to Sufistic tendencies, the author examines and analyzes selected primary books (in relation to this research) written by al-Ghazali, which are further identified as primary references in this research, namely: the field of Philosophy and Kalam (theology) *Maqasid al-Falasifah* (The Goals of Philosophers), *Tahafut al-Falasifah* (Confusion of Philosophers), *Al-Munqidh min al-Zalal* (Deliverer from Misguidance), *Al-Maqasid fi al-Asma fi Ma'ani Asma'illah al-Husna* (Meanings of the Beautiful Names of Allah), *Al-Qistas al-Mustaqim* (The Way To Overcome Disputes of Opinion), *Hujjaj al-Haq* (The Right Argument), *Mahkum al-Nadhar* (Methodology), *Mi'yar al-Ilm* (Science Scales) and others.

From some of Imam al-Ghazali's primary works above, at least they become material for the author's research in studying the transformation of al-Ghazali's thought from rational tendencies (a philosopher) to Sufism (becoming a Sufi). Therefore, this research is important in order to examine the course of history and the transformation process of al-Ghazali's thought.

Methods

This article will discuss the transformation of al-Ghazali's thought as the focus of his study. The term transformation is indeed better known in sociological studies which is interpreted as social change. This meaning is based on the fact that social life is not static, but always changes dynamically or transformation occurs. Sociologists interpret social change by analogy with organisms and the growth of organisms. It is in this sense of change that the term "transformation" is used as a pattern and form of the phenomenon of change in al-Ghazali's thought (Narwoko & Suyanto, 2006).

Sufism can also be interpreted as religious mystical ethics, namely efforts to save the fate of an individual or a servant in the afterlife, and the highest concern is meeting God. One of these Sufistic thoughts is by means of *mahabbah* (love) to God. Al-Ghazali himself stated

that the happiest beings in the hereafter are those who have the strongest love for Allah and the moment of meeting Him. It was from here that his critics accused al-Ghazali's writings of increasing the popularity of mysticism in Islam and causing mass attacks on rational philosophy and science, so that al-Ghazali was accused of being the person most responsible for the decline of scientific thought and rational philosophy in the world. Islam. The practice or activity of following the path of Sufism (mysticism) is usually understood by uncovering or opening the curtains of the unseen world (*kasyf al-hijab*) which are very numerous. This revelation will reach its culmination one day, that is, one will feel the *tajalli* (presence) of the Most Beautiful and Perfect God (Freely, 2011).

Results and Discussion

Rational Thinking Tendencies

By the 11th century, Sunni theologians had realized that they could not defend their positions in arguments against philosophers. Around 1090 AD a brilliant young theologian, Al-Ghazali succeeded in mastering the arguments developed in the philosophy of Arab Neo-Platonism. This he achieved by reading and studying their own texts without the help of a teacher. He then wrote a very clear and objective account of their views. After that, he composed a powerful refutation of these views. After Al-Ghazali, Aristotelian logic was accepted by more rational theologians as one of the tools of their methodology, but Greek science waned and did not develop much.

According to Al-Ghazali, there are six fields of philosophy, namely mathematics, logic, physics, politics, ethics, and metaphysics. However, Al-Ghazali is of the opinion that his relation to religious knowledge is still close even though there are some philosophies that conflict with religion, so Al-Ghazali filters what is good and what is bad through the study of *tasawuf* (Watt, 1995).

After long dabbling in philosophy, Al-Ghazali finally reached the point of saturation and finally he denied that the philosophers include three groups. First, materialist (*dahriyyûn*), second, naturalist (*tab'iyyûn*), and theist (*ilâhiyyûn*). The materialist group (*dahriyyûn*) are atheists who deny the existence of God,

believe in the eternity of nature and the creation of nature by itself. The naturalist group (tabî'iyûn) are those who know about the creation of the universe and its contents, but they still deny the power of Allah and the existence of the last day such as heaven, hell, and so on, so that Al-Ghazali views them as not being religious. While the last group of theists (ilâhiyûn) they are Greek philosophers such as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. Even though this group harbors materialist and naturalist groups, according to Al-Ghazali, this group still retains remnants of disbelief and ideas of heresy. Then Al-Ghazali sharply criticized Muslim philosophers such as Ibn Sina and al-Farabi who were considered the successors of Aristotle to the Islamic world (Nasution, 2001).

In the field of philosophy, Ghazali believes that the mathematical and exact science approaches are correct. However, he made use of Aristotelian logic and Neoplatonic procedures, using both to expose weaknesses and gaps in Neoplatonic philosophy and to remove the negative influences of Aristotelianism and excessive rationalism. In contrast to some other Islamic philosophers, for example, Farabi, he describes the inability of reason to perceive the absolute and the infinite. Reason is unable to transform all that is finite and limited into a relative observation.

Likewise, some Islamic philosophers argue that the universe is limited in space but unlimited in time. Ghazali argues that the infinity of time has a correlation with the infinity of space. With the clarity and force of his argument, he succeeded in striking a balance between religion and reason, and identifying his realms as infinity and finitude.

Besides the influence of philosophers, of course there is also an internal impact of the influence of philosophy on al-Ghazali. One example of al-Ghazali compiling books that contain criticism of philosophy, such as the book *At Tahafut* which exposes the ugliness of philosophy and even the fatalities of philosophers here al-Ghazali wrote. Even though there are several things related to principles that must be followed, al-Ghazali still admits them. Al-Ghazali has also researched the book of Ikhwanush Safa and the books of Ibn Sina which are very well known, so that Ibn Taimiyah said that

al-Ghazali in his words was heavily influenced by philosophy from the works of Ibn Sina in the book *Asy Syifa'*, *Risale Ikhwanish Shafa* and the work of Abu Hayan At Tauhidi.

Related to al-Ghazali's epistemology of thought, he in his book *al-munqidh min al-Dhalal* wants to find the true truth, meaning that which is truly believed to be true. This means that not all reason can solve problems, but reason is also useful in the process of reaching the ultimate truth. However, during the day, al-Ghazali's thought experienced turbulence because he saw that schools that used reason as a source of knowledge, in fact produced conflicting views, which were difficult to resolve with reason, so al-Ghazali reflected on his thoughts through *al-'Ilm al-yaqin* through the heart (*dzaug*) (Nasution, 2001).

However, al-Ghazali did not necessarily reject the philosophers, but Al-Ghazali still accepted rationalism and philosophical sciences, so that al-Ghazali's style of thought still smelled philosophical and rational up to his Sufistic studies.

Al-Ghazzali's Sufistic Thought Tendencies

In this research, there is a need for a kind of categorization of al-Ghazali's thinking which is rational, as can be seen from some of these works. Including when he was in his academic anxiety, he continued to study in finding the true truth through *tasawuf* thinking by seeking the Sufi path. Apart from being a philosopher and Muslim intellectual in his era, he was also known as a very productive writer. This is evident from the many books—or manuscripts—written covering various segments of knowledge, namely: philosophy, *kalam*, Islamic law (*fiqh*), morality and politeness, and autobiography. Most of his works were written in Arabic, but some were written in Farsi (Poerwantana et al, 1994).

A few years later, he quit university life and lived a worldly life, then sought ascetic life. This is a time of mystical transformation for Al-Ghazali. Then, he began his duties as a teacher again, but then left again. A life of solitude, concentrated on contemplation and writing he undertook, which resulted in some monumental works. Ghazali's main works are in the fields of religion, philosophy, and Sufism. So, some of al-

Ghazali's later works focused more on studies of theology, monotheism and tasawuf and morality (Masduki, 2005).

In the field of tasawuf (mysticism), al-Ghazali is more on cleaning up excessive Sufi approaches and strengthening orthodox religious authority. However, he still emphasized the importance of authentic Sufism, which he maintained was the path to ultimate truth. Many of the responses from Western scholars about al-Ghazali gave high appreciation such as W. Wontgomery Watt, Philip K. Hitti, including among Muslims such as Muhammad Al-Bahi, Lutfi Jum'ah, Abu al-Hasan al-Nadwi and many more. Western scholars and other Muslim scholars. In essence, al-Ghazali experienced an extraordinary transformation and a powerful process (Masduki, 2005).

Ghazali's influence is deep and long-lasting. He is one of the greatest Islamic religious experts. His theological doctrines penetrated Europe, influencing both Judaism and Christianity and some of his arguments appear to have been used by Thomas Aquinas to establish the authority of orthodox Christianity in the West. So strong was his argument in favor of religion, that he was accused of being the cause of the decline of philosophy, and among the Spanish Muslims, Ibn Rushd (Averros) wrote a rebuttal to his work *Tuhafut al-Falasifa*.

Of course, al-Ghazali did not necessarily change to become a Sufi, because he still experienced theological anxiety, so he became very much a Sufi. At least, it can be seen from the patterns of rational and Sufi thought from his *Tahafut al-Falasifah*. There are twenty statements about the transformation of thinking from rational to sufistic al-Ghazali. First, cancel the opinion of rational philosophers who say that nature is eternal. Second, Cancel the opinion that says that this mind is eternal. Third, emphasize that God is the creator of this universe. Fourth, Allah is the supreme creator, while the rationalist group still has a weak tendency of faith. Fifth, make it clear that there is no dualism of God. Sixth, clarify that God has the nature of *Asma' alhusna*. Seventh, emphasize that God is divided into *al-jins* and *al-fashl*. Eighth, clarify that God has *mahiyah* (essence). Ninth, make it clear that Allah knows best. Tenth, emphasize that God is eternal. Eleventh,

that Allah knows everything. Twelfth, emphasizes the weakness of the opinion of rational philosophers in proving that Allah only knows His essence.

Thirteenth, confirming by canceling the opinion of the rationalists that God does not know the *juz'iyat*. Fourteenth, denies that planets are God's creation, not animals that move at will (in the statement of the rationalists). Fifteenth, refute and discard the paradigm of what the rationalist group calls the driving goals of the planets. Sixteenth, canceling the opinion of the rationalists that the planets know all that is *juz'iyat*, in fact they don't. Seventeenth, rejecting the opinion that it is impossible for something to happen outside the laws of nature. Eighteenth, clarifies the opinion of the rationalists, that the human spirit is a substance that stands alone and does not have a body. Nineteenth, reinforces the opinion that states the impossibility of the death (disappearance) of the human soul. And, the twentieth rejects the opinion that the body will not be resurrected and only the spirit will receive pleasure in heaven and pain in hell.

Aristotle had disproved the thoughts of previous philosophers (Materialists and Naturalists), but he himself could not free himself from the futility of disbelief and heroism.

Therefore, according to al-Ghazali, if nature is said to be *qadim* (having no beginning or never existed) then it is impossible to imagine that nature was created by God. So, the understanding of the *qadim* of nature leads to the conclusion that nature exists by itself. It was not created by God and this means that it is contrary to the teachings of the Koran which clearly states that it is God who created all nature (the heavens, the earth and everything in it). For al-Ghazali, nature must not be *qadim* and this means that initially God existed, while nature did not exist, then God created nature, then nature existed beside God.

Conclusion

The point of transformation of his thinking which tended to be rational began at the age of 19-28. Al-Ghazali traveled to Naisyapur, where he studied law, theology and philosophy. It was under the guidance of al-Juwaini that Al-Ghaz-

ali really mastered fiqh, ushul fiqh, interpretation, theology, logic, and studied philosophy with sharp analysis, especially his criticism of Greek philosophers such as Plato, Socrates and Aristotle who considered Ibn Sina, Al-Farabi, and Al-Kindi as carriers of philosophy to the Islamic world. However, on the other hand Al-Ghazali is more democratic and does not reject rationality in the philosophical sciences.

After struggling for some time in his philosophical thoughts and scientific appreciation, finally Al-Ghazali's rational thinking gradually began to fade when his search for true truth did not satisfy his thoughts, and even carried him away until he fell ill. In short, through a long process, he tends to choose the Sufi way as the basis for his final thoughts, but his philosophical influence still lingers, so that Al-Ghazali's style of thought is better known as Sufism-philosophical and is known as a Sufi-Sunni thinker as in *Ihlyā' Ulum al-Din* and other works are not much different.

Al-Ghazali's thought does not eliminate rational values, especially in the study of Sufism by trying to balance rationality and spirituality. This is the characteristic and is the result of this research that al-Ghazali's Sufistic way of thinking still does not eliminate the moments of rationality until the end of his life that is able to

balance between rationality (al-ma'qūl) and irrationality (wa al-lā ma'qūl). in the tradition of thought which is characterized in the treasure of Islamic thought (al-Fikr al-Islāmī).

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