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Theology, Mysticism, and the Transformation of Science and Knowledge in Islamic Civilization in the Abbasid Era

Alif Rohmad, Zainuddin Fanani

Universitas Al-Qolam Malang, Universitas Al-Qolam Malang
Email: alifrohmad20@alqolam.ac.id, zainuddinfanani@alqolam.ac.id

Abstract

The Abbasid era marked the peak of scientific development in Islamic civilization, characterized by the integration of theology, mysticism, and philosophy. This journal analyzes the close relationship between scientific rationality and religious spirituality, which gave rise to a new intellectual tradition that combined Greek thought with Islamic values. Philosophers such as Al-Kindi, Al-Farabi, and Ibn Sina contributed to aligning Greek philosophy with Islamic teachings, while theologians and Sufis like Al-Ghazali emphasized the importance of the spiritual dimension in science. This article discusses how the synthesis between rationalism and mysticism in the Abbasid era not only expanded the horizons of theological and philosophical thought but also influenced the development of science within a theological context. The research finds that although there was tension between rationalism and mysticism, both played an integral role in facilitating the transformation of science during that period. By examining the impact of this duality on the development of science, the journal asserts that the Abbasid period was the culmination of Islamic scientific history, which had a significant impact on the intellectual world until the modern era.

Keywords: Theology, Mysticism, Philosophy, Science, Abbasids, Rationalism, Sufism, Transformation of Knowledge

Abstrak

Era Bani Abbasiyah menandai puncak perkembangan ilmu pengetahuan dalam peradaban Islam, di mana terjadi integrasi antara teologi, mistisisme, dan filsafat. Jurnal ini menganalisis hubungan erat antara rasionalitas ilmiah dan spiritualitas keagamaan yang melahirkan tradisi intelektual baru, menggabungkan pemikiran Yunani dengan nilai-nilai Islam. Filsuf-filsuf seperti Al-Kindi, Al-Farabi, dan Ibn Sina berkontribusi dalam menyelaraskan filsafat Yunani dengan ajaran Islam, sementara teolog dan sufi seperti Al-Ghazali menekankan pentingnya dimensi spiritual dalam ilmu pengetahuan. Artikel ini membahas bagaimana sintesis antara rasionalisme dan mistisisme di era Abbasiyah tidak hanya memperluas cakrawala pemikiran teologis dan filosofis, tetapi juga

mempengaruhi perkembangan sains dalam konteks teologi. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa meskipun terdapat ketegangan antara rasionalisme dan mistisisme, keduanya memainkan peran integral dalam memfasilitasi transformasi ilmu pengetahuan pada masa itu. Dengan mengkaji pengaruh dualitas ini terhadap perkembangan ilmu pengetahuan, jurnal ini menegaskan bahwa periode Abbasiyah merupakan titik kulminasi dalam sejarah keilmuan Islam, yang membawa dampak besar terhadap dunia intelektual hingga era modern.

Kata kunci: Teologi, Mistisisme, Filsafat, Sains, Bani Abbasiyah, Rasionalisme, Tasawuf, Transformasi Ilmu Pengetahuan

Introduction

The history of Islamic thought has a close relationship with the development of science, especially through the influence of mysticism and philosophy rooted in Islamic theology. Islamic theology not only includes normative aspects in terms of religious beliefs and practices but also becomes the basis for understanding the universe and human existence. One manifestation of this relationship is seen in classical Islamic civilization, where mysticism is not seen as something separate from the development of science, but rather as a tool for understanding higher truths.¹ Mysticism, in the Islamic tradition, often identified with Sufism, has played a significant role in shaping the worldview of Muslim scholars. For example, a great figure such as Al-Ghazali used a Sufism approach to reconcile the conflict between philosophical rationalism and deeper spiritual experience. In *Ihya' Ulumuddin*, Al-Ghazali stated that the path to the highest knowledge can be obtained not only

Through reason, but also through deep mystical experience, which he termed *ma'rifat*². In this context, *ma'rifat* is not only a means to understand God, but also a method to understand the universe. The concept of mystical theology as described by Al-Ghazali later influenced the development of science in Islamic civilization. The development of science during the heyday of Islamic civilization was inseparable from the influence of philosophical and mystical thought that coexisted. Scientists such as Ibn Sina and Ibn Arabi contributed not only to philosophy but also to empirical disciplines such as medicine and physics. They saw that a deep understanding of the universe required a balance between reason and spiritual experience.³

Islamic theology, especially in the form of mysticism, views the universe as signs (verses) of God to be contemplated. Muslim philosophers and scientists used this framework to develop their scientific method, in which observation of natural phenomena became one means of drawing closer to God.⁴ Ibn Sina, for example, in his

work *Al-Qanun fi al-Tibb*, compiled a very empirical system of medicine, but at the same time, he considered that human reasoning abilities came from divine powers embedded in the human soul.⁵

On the other hand, Islamic philosophy plays an important role in the integration of theology and science. Philosophy not only serves as a means to solve metaphysical questions but also as a methodological framework for studying natural phenomena.⁶ Figures such as Al-Kindi and Al-Farabi attempted to integrate Greek philosophy with Islamic theological principles. They saw philosophy as a tool to explain the universal principles underlying reality, both in metaphysical and physical contexts. This is reflected in their thinking which places reason as a gift from God that enables humans to understand the laws of nature.⁷ The influence of mystical and philosophical approaches to science is evident in the Abbasid era, especially during the golden age of Islamic science. In this era, science developed rapidly, supported by technological and intellectual advances driven by the influence of mysticism, philosophy, and theology. The House of Wisdom, as an intellectual center, became a gathering place for scientists from various disciplines. They not only studied empirical sciences such as mathematics, astronomy, and medicine but also engaged in deep theological and philosophical discussions.⁸

In previous research, Muhammad Habib found that theology and mysticism provided alternative perspectives on the progress achieved by the Abbasid caliphs. The progress of the Abbasid Dynasty was also supported by the development of science and technology. On the other hand, theology and mysticism functioned as strong supports for the caliphs. Thoughts from outside Islam had a significant influence on the direction of Muslim thought in the Abbasid Era. As a result, Islamic teachings were not entirely pure as they were applied during the time of the Prophet, his companions, and his *tabi'in*. This caused increasingly intense conflict, especially in terms of mysticism which became a heated debate. As a result, many Sufis lost their lives to defend their teachings.⁹

In addition, Sahjad found that mysticism is an inner struggle to seek light and knowledge through enlightenment. Although very personal and not scientifically accountable, mysticism in Plotinus' hands comes alive with philosophical nuances, easy to explain and adapt as an object of philosophical study.¹⁰ The legacy of Neoplatonism still exists, influencing some Muslims who are involved in Sufism. This shows the freedom of thought of the people and the diversity of Islamic thought. Mystical understanding in Islam should not be suppressed or clashed with the understanding of *fiqh*. Delving into Islamic

mysticism influenced by Neoplatonism shows a strong relationship between Sharia and Sufism regarding worship so that the two do not need to be opposed because they both perfect the essence of monotheism and worship.

Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with a library research method that aims to analyze the relationship between mystical theology, philosophy, and science in the Islamic tradition. The qualitative approach was chosen because the topic of this study is conceptual and philosophical, which requires an in-depth understanding of classical texts, mystical doctrines, and the works of Muslim scientists and philosophers. This method allows researchers to explore the meaning, symbolism, and interpretation of theological and scientific concepts in Islam, as well as how these two disciplines influence each other in the history of Islamic civilization.

Results and Discussion

Theology and Mysticism in Islamic Tradition

Theology in Islam, known as *Ilm al-Kalam*, developed as an attempt to explain, defend, and strengthen the Islamic faith against various intellectual and sectarian attacks. *Ilm al-Kalam*, which means "the

science of words," emerged in response to the challenges faced by Muslims in defending their faith against various philosophical and theological arguments that arose from within and outside the Muslim community. One important aspect of Islamic theology is the relationship between mysticism and the search for transcendental meaning in religion.¹¹ Islamic mysticism, embodied in Sufism, has long played a significant role in the spiritual life of Muslims. Sufism is a spiritual path that emphasizes direct experience with God through practices such as prayer, meditation, and *zuhud* (abstinence from worldly pleasures)¹². Great figures in the history of Sufism such as Al-Ghazali and Ibn Arabi have combined orthodox theology with mystical experience, resulting in a deeper form of religious understanding.

Al-Ghazali, for example, viewed mysticism as the primary means to attain truth. In his famous work, *Ihya' Ulumu'ddin* (The Revival of the Religious Sciences), Al-Ghazali asserted that mystical knowledge is superior to rational knowledge because it involves union with God.¹³ This thought marked a major shift in Islamic theology from the rationalistic approach previously driven by early Islamic philosophy. Al-Ghazali effectively combined mystical experience with orthodox theology, creating a new approach to knowledge that was not only rational but also intuitive. Al-Ghazali

argued that knowledge gained through mystical experience provides a deeper understanding of divine reality than knowledge gained through logical reasoning alone.¹⁴.

Meanwhile, Ibn Arabi, one of the greatest mystics in Islamic history, introduced the concept of Wahdat al-Wujud (Unity of Being), which holds that all existence originates from and is a manifestation of God.¹⁵ Ibn Arabi's thought influenced not only the mystical tradition in Islam but also the intellectual worldview associated with the pursuit of scientific knowledge. According to Ibn Arabi, understanding the universe cannot be separated from understanding God, because the universe is a reflection of divine power. The concept of Wahdat al-Wujud emphasizes that everything in the universe is part of a single reality that originates from God, and thus, every aspect of life has a profound spiritual meaning.¹⁶ Ibn Arabi's thinking provides a theological framework that allows Muslims to see the physical world as a means to understand and draw closer to God.

In this context, Sufism became not only a personal spiritual path but also a source of inspiration for the development of Islamic theology and philosophy. Al-Ghazali and Ibn Arabi are two prime examples of how mysticism can be integrated with

orthodox theology to create a more comprehensive understanding of Islam.¹⁷ Through their works, they demonstrated that mystical experience and rational reasoning could complement each other, providing Muslims with richer tools for exploring and understanding their beliefs. Islamic theology thus became not only an intellectual defense against external attacks but also a means of deepening spiritual experience and understanding of divine reality. This mystical approach had direct implications for the development of science in Islamic civilization. Mysticism offered an alternative epistemological approach that encouraged Muslim scholars to seek truth not only through empirical observation but also through spiritual contemplation. In this context, mystical theology in Islam became an important foundation in the pursuit of knowledge, allowing for the integration of spiritual experience with the scientific method.

Philosophy and Science

Islamic philosophy played an important role in the development of science, especially through its efforts to integrate ancient Greek thought with Islamic teachings. One of the early figures who played this role was Al-Kindi, known as the "first Arab philosopher". Al-Kindi attempted to combine the teachings of Aristotelian and Neoplatonic philosophy

with Islamic theological concepts. According to Al-Kindi, human reason is a gift from God that enables humans to understand the laws of nature and achieve scientific truth.¹⁸ This thought shows how Islamic philosophy provided a methodological basis for the development of science in the Muslim world. Islamic philosophy, which flourished between the 8th and 14th centuries, was a blend of the traditions of ancient Greek philosophy, especially Aristotelian and Neoplatonic, with Islamic teachings. This process began with the translation of Greek philosophical works into Arabic, which was then followed by interpretation and adaptation to the context of Islamic theology.¹⁹ Al-Kindi, who lived in the 9th century, was one of the main figures in this process. He is known as the "first Arab philosopher" for his contribution to introducing and developing Greek philosophy in the Islamic world.

Al-Kindi attempted to combine the teachings of Aristotelian and Neoplatonic philosophy with Islamic theological concepts. Aristotelianism, with its focus on logic and empirical observation, provided important methodological tools for the development of science. Meanwhile, Neoplatonism, with its emphasis on the hierarchy of existence and emanation from the One, provided a metaphysical framework that could be adapted to the Islamic concept of divinity. Al-Kindi

combined these two traditions with Islamic theology to create a unique and comprehensive synthesis.²⁰ According to Al-Kindi, human reason is a gift from God that enables humans to understand the laws of nature and attain scientific truth. He believed that human reason, as part of God's creation, can grasp truth through observation and reasoning.²¹ This concept is very important because it provides a philosophical foundation for the development of science in the Muslim world. Al-Kindi emphasized that scientific knowledge does not contradict religious beliefs, but rather strengthens human understanding of the universe and God. The thoughts of Al-Kindi and other Islamic philosophers made significant contributions to the development of science in the Muslim world. They not only translated and interpreted the works of Greek philosophy, but also developed new methods in various fields of science, including mathematics, astronomy, medicine, and chemistry. For example, Al-Kindi himself made important contributions in the fields of mathematics and cryptography, as well as writing on various other scientific topics.

In addition to Al-Kindi, another figure who played an important role in the development of Islamic philosophy was Al-Farabi. In his works, Al-Farabi stated that philosophy and religion are not contradictory, but rather complementary.

He argued that philosophy provides a rational framework for understanding revelation, while revelation provides a higher truth that cannot always be achieved through reason alone.²². Al-Farabi also developed a political theory that combined Islamic principles with Greek political ideas, which ultimately influenced the socio-political structure of Islamic civilization. Al-Farabi, known as the "Second Master" after Aristotle, was one of the most influential Muslim philosophers in the history of Islamic philosophy. He was born in 872 CE in Farab, a city in Turkistan (now Kazakhstan), and died in 950 CE. Al-Farabi is known for his efforts to integrate Greek philosophy, especially Aristotelian, with Islamic teachings. One of his most famous works is "al-Madinah al-Fadilah" (The Book of the Virtuous City), which discusses the ideal state and the relationship between philosophy and religion.²³.



Figure 1. Page from a 17th-century manuscript of al-farabi's commentary on Aristotle's metaphysics

In his works, Al-Farabi stated that philosophy and religion are not contradictory, but rather complementary. He argued that philosophy provides a rational framework for understanding revelation, while revelation provides higher truths that cannot always be attained through reason alone. Al-Farabi believed that truths attained through reason and truths attained through revelation are ultimately the same, only attained through different paths.²⁴. Philosophy, he said, is a tool to understand and interpret revelation rationally and logically. Al-Farabi also developed a political theory that combined Islamic principles with Greek political ideas. In "al-Madinah al-Fadilah", he described an ideal state led by a wise and just leader, who is referred to as an "imam" or "philosopher king"²⁵. This leader must have a deep knowledge of philosophy and religion, as well as the ability to lead justly and wisely. Al-Farabi's political theory is greatly influenced by Plato's concept of the "Republic", where the ideal state is led by philosophers who know the highest truth. Al-Farabi's political theory not only influenced philosophical and theological thought in Islamic civilization but also made significant contributions to the development of socio-political structures. The concept of an ideal state led by a wise and just leader has inspired many thinkers and political leaders in Islamic history.²⁶. Al-Farabi's ideas

also influenced the development of political philosophy in the Western world, especially through the works of Ibn Rushd (Averroes) and the Scholastic thinkers in Europe.

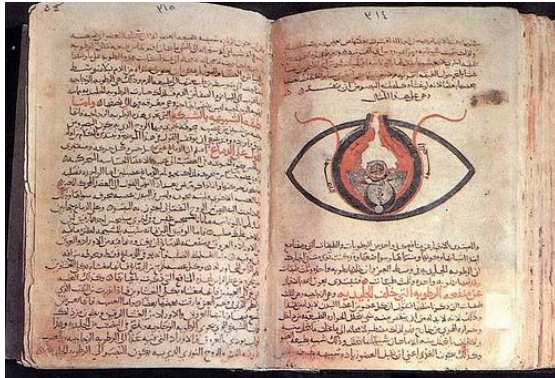


Figure 2. Ibn Sina's book *al-Qanun fi al-Tibb*

Ibn Sina, known as Avicenna in the West, is one of the most influential figures in Islamic intellectual history. His extraordinary contributions to various fields of knowledge, especially medicine and philosophy, have had a profound and lasting impact. His most famous work, "*Al-Qanun fi al-Tibb*" or "*The Canon of Medicine*", is a medical encyclopedia that has been the standard in the medical world for centuries. It not only compiled the medical knowledge available at the time but also developed an empirical methodology that emphasized the importance of observation and experimentation in the practice of medicine. In addition to his contributions to medicine, Ibn Sina is also known for his work in philosophy. One of his main ideas was the concept of a hierarchy of existence, which connects the physical world with the metaphysical world. According to Ibn Sina,

the universe is a hierarchy of beings governed by laws that can be understood through reason, but at the highest level can only be understood through mystical intuition.²⁷ This idea reflects the unique integration of philosophy, science, and mysticism in the Islamic intellectual tradition.

Ibn Sina's ideas about emanation, the emanation of being from God, became one of the foundations for the development of philosophy and science in the Islamic world. This emanation describes how the universe and everything in it originates from a single divine source, and how each level of being is connected to a higher level through the process of emanation. This concept not only provided a philosophical framework for understanding the universe but also provided a deep theological basis for Muslim scientists and philosophers to explore the universe as part of their spiritual quest. In metaphysics, Ibn Sina developed the ideas of essence and existence, which distinguish between what exists potentially and what exists actually.²⁸ This idea influenced many philosophers and theologians after him, including thinkers in the Christian and Jewish worlds. In theology, Ibn Sina also made significant contributions by developing rational arguments for the existence of God and divine attributes, which came to be known

as the “argument from possibility” or “argument from contingency.”

Ibn Rushd, known in the West as Averroes, is one of the most influential figures in the history of Islamic philosophy. Born in Cordoba, Andalusia, in 1126 CE, Ibn Rushd was a philosopher, jurist, and physician who played a major role in developing the rationalist tradition in Islamic philosophy. His most famous work, *Tahafut al-Tahafut* (The Errors of the Critics), is a response to Al-Ghazali's criticism of philosophy in *Tahafut al-Falasifah* (The Errors of the Philosophers). In *Tahafut al-Tahafut*, Ibn Rushd defends philosophical rationalism from Al-Ghazali's criticism by asserting that philosophy is not in conflict with religion, but is rather a way to understand reality more deeply. Ibn Rushd argued that reason and revelation are two paths that lead to the same truth and that they can complement each other.²⁹ He emphasized the importance of using reason in understanding religious texts, and argued that rational interpretation of these texts was both legitimate and necessary.

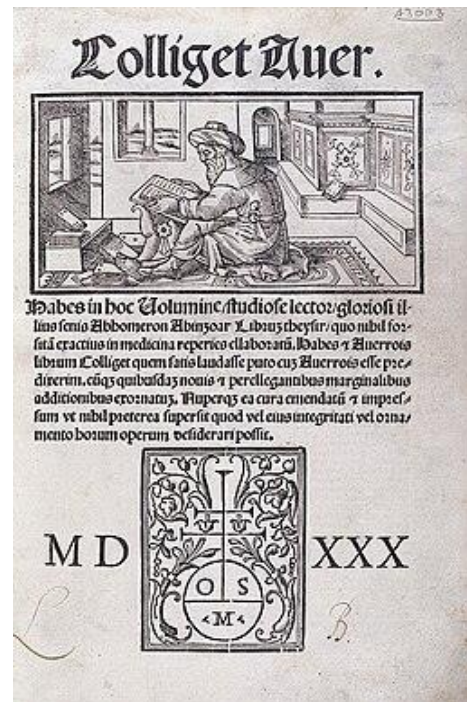


Figure 3. Leaflet from the Latin translation of Ibn Rushd's book *Al-Kulliyah fit-Thibb*

Ibn Rushd's views on the relationship between philosophy and religion influenced intellectual thought in the Muslim world and Europe, especially in the Middle Ages. In the Muslim world, Ibn Rushd's views helped maintain the tradition of rationalism and philosophy, despite pressure from more conservative scholars. In Europe, his works were translated into Latin and became very influential among Christian thinkers, especially at the Universities of Paris and Padua.³⁰ Christian thinkers influenced by Ibn Rushd, known as Averroes, developed what is called “Latin Averroism,” which emphasized the importance of reason in understanding religious texts and promoted the use of philosophy in theology. Ibn Rushd also strengthened the relationship between

philosophy and science. He argued that philosophy is a science that encompasses all branches of knowledge, including natural science, mathematics, and metaphysics. In his view, philosophy is the most effective tool for understanding the world and reality.³¹ Ibn Rushd emphasized the importance of observation and experimentation in science, and he was a renowned physician. His works on medicine, such as "Al-Kulliyat fi al-Tibb" (Colleges in Medicine), also contributed significantly to the development of medicine. In addition to his contributions to philosophy and science, Ibn Rushd was also known as a prominent jurist. He served as a judge in Seville and Cordoba, and his works on law, such as "Bidayat al-Mujtahid" (Beginnings of the Mujtahid), are among the most important works on Islamic law. In this work, Ibn Rushd examines the various schools of law in Islam and attempts to unify them in a rational and coherent framework.

The Abbasid Era as the Golden Era of Islamic Science

The Abbasid era is often considered the golden age of Islamic civilization, during which science flourished in a variety of disciplines, including mathematics, astronomy, medicine, and philosophy. One of the key factors driving the development of science during this period was the

establishment of the House of Wisdom in Baghdad, which became a center for translation and scientific research. The House of Wisdom allowed Muslim scholars to access classical Greek and Persian works, which they then adapted and developed according to the theological framework of Islam.³² One of the leading figures in this era was Al-Khawarizmi, who is known as the father of algebra. His work *Kitab al-Jabr wal-Muqabala* became the basis for the development of modern mathematics. Al-Khawarizmi not only developed new mathematical concepts, but also applied systematic scientific methods in his research.³³ This method was later adopted by other scientists, who used the principles of mathematics and logic to develop other scientific disciplines, such as astronomy and physics.

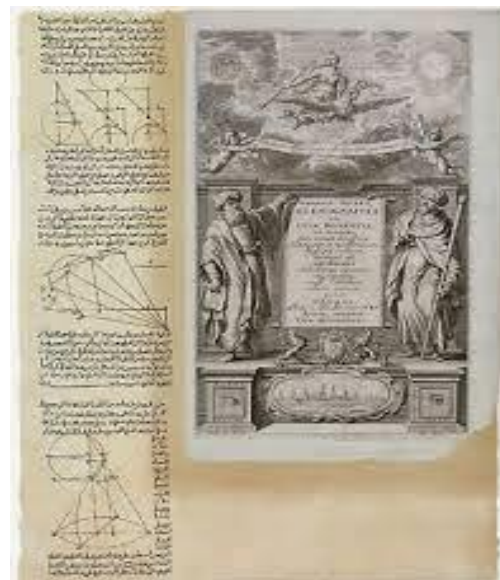


Figure 4. Ibn al-Haytham (on the left) and Galileo appear on the frontispiece of *Selenographia*, a 1647 description of the moon by Johannes Hevelius (courtesy of Harvard College Library)

In the field of astronomy, Al-Battani and Al-Farghani made significant contributions by compiling very accurate astronomical tables, which were later used by European astronomers in the Middle Ages. Their works show that Muslim scientists in the Abbasid era did not only rely on empirical observations but also had a deep understanding of the relationship between the universe and theological principles.³⁴ The universe was seen as a reflection of divine order, and as such, understanding the universe became an integral part of the spiritual quest. In addition, the Abbasid era was also known for developments in the field of medicine, with figures such as Ibn Sina and Al-Razi making major contributions. Al-Razi, in his work *Al-Hawi*, developed a system of medical diagnosis and treatment that combined empirical methods with a holistic approach to human health. Al-Razi also introduced the concept of the medical laboratory, where he conducted experiments to test various medical theories. This approach shows that Muslim scientists of the time had a very advanced scientific outlook, which included observation, experimentation, and verification.³⁵

Theory of Knowledge in Islam: Makrifat and Reason

In Islam, knowledge (*ilm*) has a very important position, both in the context of

religion and science. Knowledge is considered one of the main attributes of God and is the main means for humans to understand the world and their relationship with the Creator. One of the fundamental aspects of the theory of knowledge in Islam is the concept of *ma'rifat*, which refers to intuitive or direct knowledge obtained through mystical experience. In the mystical view, *ma'rifat* is the highest knowledge that surpasses rational or empirical knowledge, because it is directly related to transcendental reality. The concept of *ma'rifat* was widely developed by Sufi figures such as Al-Ghazali and Ibn Arabi. Al-Ghazali, in his monumental work "*Ihya' Ulumuddin*" (Reviving the Religious Sciences), describes how mystical knowledge (*makrifat*) can overcome the limitations of reason. According to him, reason is indeed able to understand the laws of nature and the phenomena of the physical world, but to understand the highest truth, one must go beyond reason and experience the divine reality directly. Al-Ghazali distinguishes between rational knowledge obtained through observation and reasoning, and mystical knowledge obtained through union with God.³⁶ This mystical knowledge, according to Al-Ghazali, is the main means to understand reality holistically and comprehensively.

Al-Ghazali emphasized the importance of mystical experience in

achieving an understanding of God and the universe. He argued that mystical knowledge cannot be acquired through rational or empirical methods alone but through spiritual practice and strict self-discipline.³⁷. In Al-Ghazali's view, mystical experience is a path to a deeper understanding of divine reality and man's relationship with God. On the other hand, reason (aql) remains recognized as an important instrument in Islamic philosophy. Reason is seen as a divine gift that enables humans to understand natural phenomena through observation and rational reasoning. This theory of reason was developed by Muslim philosophers such as Ibn Sina (Avicenna) and Al-Farabi, who viewed that scientific knowledge can be achieved through rational and empirical methods.

Ibn Sina, for example, combined the Aristotelian concept of active reason with the Islamic concept of divine emanation, resulting in a theory of knowledge that combined rational and metaphysical elements. In Ibn Sina's view, active reason is the source of knowledge that enables humans to understand reality through intellectual processes. Divine emanation, on the other hand, explains how knowledge and existence flow from God to the universe through a series of hierarchies of beings.³⁸. The combination of these two concepts created a philosophical framework that allowed for a more comprehensive

understanding of the universe and its relationship to God. Al-Farabi, known as the "Second Teacher" after Aristotle, also developed a theory of reason and knowledge. He argued that reason is the primary means to attaining the highest happiness, which is achieved through understanding truth and reality. Al-Farabi emphasized the importance of education and intellectual development as a means to achieving happiness and a deeper understanding of the universe.³⁹. In this context, the theory of knowledge in Islam is dualistic, where ma'rifat and reason are not seen as two contradictory things, but as two different but complementary paths to achieving truth. Reason is used to understand observable natural phenomena, while ma'rifat is used to understand transcendental realities that go beyond empirical observation.

Mysticism and Islamic Epistemology

One of the greatest contributions of the Islamic mystical tradition to epistemology is the idea that true knowledge is not only rational but also intuitive and transcendental. Islamic mysticism, embodied in Sufism, offers a unique epistemological framework, in which knowledge is not only gained through empirical observation and logical reasoning but also direct experience with God. This framework enriches the understanding of how humans can attain a

deeper and more holistic knowledge of reality. This theory of mystical epistemology is heavily influenced by the thought of Ibn Arabi, who developed the concept of *Wahdat al-Wujud* (Unity of Being). According to this concept, all beings are seen as manifestations of God. Ibn Arabi argued that true knowledge is knowledge of God and his manifestations in the universe. To attain this knowledge, one must go beyond rational knowledge and enter the mystical dimension through contemplation and spiritual experience.⁴⁰ In Ibn Arabi's view, mystical experience is a path to a deeper understanding of divine reality and the relationship between man and God.

Ibn Arabi's view has major implications for the development of science in the Islamic tradition. Within the framework of mystical epistemology, the universe is seen as a reflection of divine order, and therefore, understanding the universe becomes part of understanding God.⁴¹ Muslim scientists, such as Al-Biruni and Ibn Sina, used this epistemological framework to develop a scientific method that relied not only on empirical observation but also considered the metaphysical relationship between natural phenomena and divine reality. Al-Biruni, for example, was a Muslim scientist and philosopher known for his work in astronomy, mathematics, and geography. He used a rigorous scientific approach but also

recognized the importance of metaphysical dimensions in understanding the universe. Al-Biruni argued that knowledge of the universe must be balanced with an understanding of the divine reality that underlies it.⁴² In his works, Al-Biruni often combined empirical observation with philosophical and spiritual reflection, creating a holistic approach to understanding the universe.

Ibn Sina, known as Avicenna in the West, also used an epistemological framework influenced by Islamic mysticism in the development of his scientific method. In his work, Ibn Sina combined the Aristotelian concept of active reason with the Islamic concept of divine emanation. According to Ibn Sina, active reason is the source of knowledge that enables humans to understand reality through intellectual processes. Divine emanation, on the other hand, explains how knowledge and existence flow from God to the universe through a series of hierarchies of beings.⁴³ The combination of these two concepts created a philosophical framework that allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of the universe and its relationship to God. In addition, Ibn Sina also developed an empirical methodology in medicine, which became the standard for centuries. In his work "*Al-Qanun fi al-Tibb*" (The Canon of Medicine), Ibn Sina emphasized the importance of observation

and experimentation in medical practice. However, he also recognized the importance of the spiritual dimension in understanding health and disease. According to Ibn Sina, physical and spiritual health are two interrelated aspects and must be understood holistically.

Transformation of Science in Islamic Tradition

The development of science in Islamic civilization cannot be separated from the influence of mystical theology and philosophy. One of the main factors that drove the transformation of science in the Islamic tradition was the synthesis between empirical methods and metaphysical approaches. Muslim scientists not only relied on empirical observations to understand natural phenomena but also used theological and philosophical principles to interpret the results of their observations.⁴⁴ This approach created a unique and comprehensive epistemological framework, which allowed for a more holistic and profound development of science. This transformation is evident in the development of various disciplines such as medicine, astronomy, mathematics, and physics during the golden age of Islam. Al-Biruni, for example, in his work on astronomy, used very precise observational methods to measure the movements of the stars and planets. However, he also

combined the results of his observations with a theological view of the order of the universe, which was considered a manifestation of divine laws. This approach allowed Al-Biruni to develop more holistic and comprehensive theories about the universe. Al-Biruni was a Muslim scientist and philosopher who was famous for his work in astronomy, mathematics, and geography. In his work, Al-Biruni often combined empirical observation with philosophical and spiritual reflection.

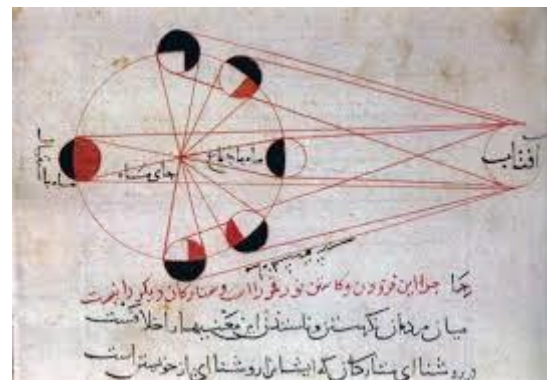


Figure 5. Illustration of a Lunar Eclipse Made by Al-Biruni

For example, in his work "Al-Qanun al-Mas'udi" (The Mas'udi Canon), Al-Biruni used a very precise observational method to measure the movements of the stars and planets. However, he also combined the results of his observations with theological views on the order of the universe, which was considered a manifestation of divine laws.⁴⁵ This approach enabled Al-Biruni to develop more holistic and comprehensive theories about the universe.

In the field of medicine, Ibn Sina (Avicenna) and Al-Razi (Rhazes) used a

highly developed empirical approach but maintained a holistic view of human health. They not only saw the human body as an object of scientific study, but also considered the relationship between the body, soul, and the universe in diagnosis and treatment. This approach allowed them to develop a system of medicine that was not only empirically effective but also in line with the ethical and spiritual teachings of Islam. Ibn Sina, in his work "Al-Qanun fi al-Tibb" (The Canon of Medicine), combined empirical methods with philosophical and theological approaches. He emphasized the importance of observation and experimentation in medical practice but also recognized the importance of the spiritual dimension in understanding health and disease. According to Ibn Sina, physical and spiritual health are two interrelated aspects that must be understood holistically. His work became the standard in the medical world for centuries and influenced the development of medicine in Europe and the Islamic world. Al-Razi, on the other hand, is known for his work in medicine and chemistry. In his work "Al-Hawi" (The Comprehensive Book), Al-Razi used a highly developed empirical approach to diagnose and treat various diseases.⁴⁶. However, he also considered the relationship between body, soul, and universe in diagnosis and treatment. Al-Razi argued that human health is not only

influenced by physical factors, but also by psychological and spiritual factors. This approach allowed Al-Razi to develop a more holistic and effective system of medicine.



Figure 6. Initial Form of Al-Khwarizmi's Discovery of Numbers According to the Number of Angles

In addition, in the fields of mathematics and physics, Muslim scientists also used an approach that combined empirical methods with theological and philosophical principles. For example, Al-Khwarizmi, known as the "Father of Algebra", developed very sophisticated mathematical methods to solve practical problems.⁴⁷. However, he also considered the relationship between mathematics and divine reality in his work. Al-Khwarizmi argued that mathematics is a tool that allows humans to understand the order and harmony of the universe, which reflects the wisdom and power of God. The synthesis of empirical methods and metaphysical approaches in the Islamic scientific tradition created a unique and comprehensive epistemological framework. This approach not only influenced the development of science in the Islamic tradition but also inspired thinkers and scientists around the world to develop a more holistic approach

to understanding reality. By combining rational, empirical, and intuitive knowledge, this epistemology enriches human understanding of the universe and its relationship to God.

Interaction of Islamic Mysticism and Philosophy: Influence on Islamic Epistemology

The theology of Islamic mysticism, especially in Sufi thought, has contributed significantly to the formation of epistemology in the Islamic intellectual tradition. Islamic mysticism, which focuses on the attainment of spiritual knowledge through *ma'rifat* (intuitive or esoteric knowledge), has a close relationship with Islamic philosophy in terms of the search for higher truths. Mystical concepts such as *wahdat al-wujud* (the unity of being) popularized by Ibn Arabi provide a deep philosophical basis for the idea that reality is one, and all existence is a manifestation of God. In the context of Islamic epistemology, mysticism offers a different approach compared to the philosophical rationality developed by figures such as Ibn Sina (Avicenna) and Al-Farabi. While classical Muslim philosophers emphasized logic and reason as the main instruments for understanding reality, the Sufis argued that reason alone is not enough. The highest knowledge can only be achieved through

direct spiritual experience with God, which is beyond the rational capacity of humans.⁴⁸.

The main contribution of mysticism to Islamic epistemology lies in its emphasis on the inner dimension of knowledge. For example, Al-Ghazali in *Ihya' Ulumuddin* explains that true knowledge can only be obtained through the *qalb* (heart), not only through the mind or senses. A heart that is pure from worldly desires can grasp the divine truth hidden behind the physical world. This is different from the philosophical approach that emphasizes logical analysis and empirical observation. Therefore, mysticism offers a complementary epistemological foundation to philosophy and science in Islam, where the search for truth is not only limited by rationality but also expanded through spirituality and direct experience with God. Ibn Arabi, one of the leading Sufi figures, developed the concept of *wahdat al-wujud* (the unity of being), which states that all beings are manifestations of God. According to Ibn Arabi, this single reality can only be understood through mystical experience and intuitive knowledge. This concept provides a deep philosophical basis for the idea that reality is one and that all existence is a manifestation of God. In Ibn Arabi's view, true knowledge is knowledge of God and his manifestations in the universe.⁴⁹. To attain this knowledge, one must go beyond rational knowledge and

enter the mystical dimension through contemplation and spiritual experience.

Al-Ghazali, in his work *Ihya' Ulumuddin*, emphasizes the importance of inner knowledge obtained through the qalb (heart). According to Al-Ghazali, a heart that is free from worldly desires can grasp the divine truth hidden behind the physical world. He distinguishes between rational knowledge obtained through observation and reasoning, and mystical knowledge obtained through union with God. This mystical knowledge, according to Al-Ghazali, is the primary means to understand reality holistically and comprehensively.⁵⁰

This mystical approach not only enriched the understanding of reality but also provided a complementary epistemological foundation for philosophy and science in Islam. By combining rational, empirical, and intuitive knowledge, mystical epistemology broadened the horizon of human understanding of the universe and its relationship to God. This approach enabled Muslim scientists and philosophers to develop a scientific method that relied not only on empirical observation but also considered the metaphysical relationship between natural phenomena and divine reality. The contribution of mysticism to Islamic epistemology is significant. Mysticism offers a different approach compared to philosophical rationality,

emphasizing the importance of direct spiritual experience in achieving the highest knowledge.⁵¹ By combining rational, empirical, and intuitive knowledge, mystical epistemology enriches human understanding of reality and its relationship to God. This approach has not only influenced the development of science in the Islamic tradition but has also inspired thinkers and scientists around the world to develop a more holistic approach to understanding reality.

Mysticism as a Driver of Scientific Transformation in Islam

Islamic mysticism not only influenced theology but also played a significant role in the transformation of science in the Islamic world. Here, the concept of *ilmu laduni*—knowledge directly given by God to His servants without any intermediary—had major implications for the way Sufis understood and developed science. Sufis such as Ibn Arabi and Jalaluddin Rumi believed that true knowledge was the result of revelation and mystical experience, not merely speculation or rational observation. Sufis also integrated their mystical ideas into the natural sciences. For example, in medicine, healing was often associated with the balance of the spiritual and the physical. Mystical knowledge of the nature of the spirit and the interaction of the elements in the body was considered

essential to understanding disease and its cure.⁵². Ibn Sina, a renowned philosopher and physician, also applied philosophical and mystical thinking in his medicine, especially in understanding the relationship between the soul and the body. In his work, “Al-Qanun fi al-Tibb” (The Canon of Medicine), he combined the principles of Greek philosophy and the metaphysical concepts of mysticism to formulate holistic medical theories.

Ibn Sina argued that physical and spiritual health are two interrelated aspects that must be understood holistically. In his view, the human body is influenced not only by physical factors but also by psychological and spiritual factors. This approach enabled Ibn Sina to develop a system of medicine that was not only empirically effective but also in line with Islamic ethical and spiritual teachings. His work became the standard in the medical world for centuries and influenced the development of medicine in Europe and the Islamic world. The influence of mysticism is also seen in the development of Islamic astronomy and cosmology. Sufis often saw the universe as a reflection of God, where cosmic phenomena were understood as divine signs (ayat). For example, Al-Sijzi, a Muslim astronomer, developed a theory of the rotation of the earth that was based on empirical observations but also connected it to the mystical doctrine of the unity of

God's creation.⁵³. Al-Sijzi argued that the universe is a manifestation of God's wisdom and power and that understanding the universe is part of understanding God. In addition to Al-Sijzi, Al-Biruni also combined empirical observation with theological views in his work on astronomy. In his work "Al-Qanun al-Mas'udi" (The Mas'udi Canon), Al-Biruni used very careful observation methods to measure the movements of the stars and planets. However, he also combined the results of his observations with theological views on the order of the universe, which was considered a manifestation of divine laws. This approach allowed Al-Biruni to develop more holistic and comprehensive theories about the universe.

Islamic mysticism does not hinder the development of science but rather offers an alternative perspective that enriches scientific knowledge in the Islamic world. By combining rational, empirical, and intuitive knowledge, mystical epistemology broadens the horizon of human understanding of the universe and its relationship to God.⁵⁴. This approach enabled Muslim scientists and philosophers to develop a scientific method that relied not only on empirical observation but also on the metaphysical relationship between natural phenomena and divine reality. In mathematics and physics, Muslim scientists also used an approach that combined

empirical methods with theological and philosophical principles. For example, Al-Khwarizmi, known as the "Father of Algebra," developed highly sophisticated mathematical methods to solve practical problems. However, he also considered the relationship between mathematics and divine reality in his work. Al-Khwarizmi argued that mathematics is a tool that allows humans to understand the order and harmony of the universe, which reflects the wisdom and power of God. The contribution of mysticism to Islamic epistemology is significant. Mysticism offers a different approach compared to philosophical rationality, emphasizing the importance of direct spiritual experience in achieving higher knowledge. By combining rational, empirical, and intuitive knowledge, mystical epistemology enriches human understanding of reality and its relationship with God.⁵⁵. This approach not only influenced the development of science in the Islamic tradition but also inspired thinkers and scientists around the world to develop a more holistic approach to understanding reality.

Integration of Philosophy and Mysticism in the Development of Science

One of the most important findings of this study is how Islamic philosophy and mysticism complement each other in the

development of science. Islamic philosophy, which is often considered the domain of rationality and logic, turns out to be inseparable from a deep mystical dimension. In the Islamic tradition, philosophy and mysticism are not opposing entities, but rather two sides of the same coin, which enrich each other in achieving a more holistic understanding of reality. Ibn Sina and Al-Farabi, two great figures in Islamic philosophy, explicitly combine mystical elements in their theories of cosmology and metaphysics. Ibn Sina, for example, in his work *Kitab al-Najat* states that the achievement of the highest happiness and the highest knowledge can only be obtained through union with the Active Intellect (*al-'aql al-fa'al*) which is an emanation of God. This concept shows that rational philosophy and mysticism are not contradictory but rather synergize in achieving a higher truth. This union with the Active Intellect is not merely the result of intellectual speculation but involves a mystical experience that connects the individual with transcendental reality.⁵⁶. Al-Farabi also showed how scientific knowledge can be transformed through mysticism. In his theory of happiness (*al-sa'adah*), Al-Farabi states that the highest happiness is achieved when one attains knowledge of the Divine, which is obtained through intellectual union with the divine intellect. This process is not mere rational speculation but involves a mystical

experience that connects the individual with transcendental reality.⁵⁷. Al-Farabi describes happiness as the attainment of intellectual and spiritual perfection, which can only be achieved through union with the divine mind.

The integration of philosophy and mysticism is also seen in the concept of hikmah (wisdom), which is often used by Muslim scientists and theologians to describe knowledge that is not only scientific but also spiritual. Hikmah goes beyond the boundaries of empirical knowledge and involves a deeper understanding of the cosmic meaning and ultimate purpose of human life.⁵⁸. This concept of wisdom suggests that true knowledge comes not only from rational observation and analysis but also from deep spiritual experience and intuition.

Al-Ghazali in *Tahafut al-Falasifah* criticized philosophers for relying too much on reason without considering the spiritual dimension.⁵⁹. However, he still recognized the importance of wisdom in understanding higher realities. Al-Ghazali emphasized that true knowledge must encompass both rational and spiritual aspects and that the two must complement each other to achieve a comprehensive understanding of reality. In this context, Islamic philosophy and mysticism serve not only as tools for understanding the physical world but also as

paths to attaining the highest happiness and knowledge. The integration of these two disciplines creates a rich and multidimensional framework that allows Muslim scientists and theologians to explore the depths of reality and the meaning of life.⁶⁰. Thus, Islamic philosophy and mysticism not only enrich our understanding of the world but also provide profound spiritual guidance for those seeking the ultimate truth.

Implications of Islamic Mysticism for the Scientific Method

The results of this study also show that Islamic mysticism has significant implications for the scientific method in the Islamic tradition. One of the most prominent examples is the use of intuition and inspiration in the process of scientific discovery. Sufis believe that knowledge can be obtained through divine inspiration, which is often associated with meditation and self-purification practices. This is in contrast to the modern scientific approach which emphasizes more on observation and experimental methods. In the Islamic tradition, intuition and inspiration are considered valid methods for gaining knowledge, especially in areas related to metaphysics and cosmology.⁶¹. Sufis such as Ibn Arabi taught that knowledge gained through mystical experience could complement knowledge gained through

reason and observation. Ibn Arabi, in his famous work “Fusus al-Hikam”, emphasized the importance of direct experience with God as the highest source of knowledge⁶². According to him, knowledge gained through intuition and inspiration is not only valid but also essential to understanding deeper realities. This shows that in the context of Islam, the scientific method is not limited to rationality, but also includes a deeper spiritual dimension.⁶³.

Muslim scientists such as Al-Biruni and Ibn Sina also demonstrated how intuition could play a vital role in the scientific process. Al-Biruni, known for his work in astronomy and geography, used empirical observation to gather data, but he also recognized the importance of intuition in understanding deeper cosmological principles. In his *Kitab al-Hind*, Al-Biruni describes how knowledge gained through intuition can provide insights that cannot be achieved through observation alone. Ibn Sina, in his *Kitab al-Najat*, also emphasized the importance of intuition in the scientific process. He argued that the highest knowledge can be achieved through union with the Active Intellect (al-‘aql al-fa’al), which is an emanation of God. This process involves mystical experiences that connect the individual to a transcendental reality, providing insights that go beyond the limits of empirical knowledge.

In the Islamic tradition, the scientific method is not only empirical but also involves mystical and intuitive approaches in the search for knowledge. This creates a rich and multidimensional framework that allows Muslim scientists and theologians to explore the depths of reality and the meaning of life.⁶⁴. Thus, Islamic philosophy and mysticism not only enrich our understanding of the world but also provide profound spiritual guidance for those seeking the ultimate truth. In the Islamic tradition, the scientific method is not limited to the rational and empirical approach but also includes spiritual and intuitive dimensions. The integration of philosophy and mysticism in the Islamic scientific tradition creates a comprehensive and holistic framework, allowing scientists and theologians to explore the depths of reality and the meaning of life. Thus, the Islamic scientific tradition not only enriches our understanding of the world but also provides profound spiritual guidance for those seeking the ultimate truth.⁶⁵.

Conclusion

The interaction between mystical theology, philosophy, and science during the golden age of Islamic civilization, especially the Abbasid era, contributed significantly to the development of epistemology and scientific methodology in the Islamic tradition. The synthesis of rationalism and

spirituality carried out by figures such as Al-Kindi, Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, and Al-Ghazali not only broadened the scientific horizon but also enabled the integration of empirical and mystical aspects in science. The results of this study underline that concepts such as makrifat (intuitive knowledge) and wahdat al-wujud (unity of being) are important foundations for a more holistic scientific approach. This approach opens up space for an understanding that sees science as a comprehensive effort to recognize signs of divinity in the universe, not solely through rational reason, but also spiritual experience. Therefore, the transformation of science in the Islamic tradition can be understood as an effort to achieve a balance between rationality and spirituality, which not only impacted intellectual thought at that time but also provided relevant theoretical contributions to contemporary scientific discourse.

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