

## THE CONCEPT OF MYSTICISM IN ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY

Sahri

*Institut Agama Islam Negeri Pontianak*

Email: sahri@iainptk.ac.id

### ABSTRACT

*Judging from its origin, there is an opinion that Sufism originates from Islam. Some say that Sufism is influenced by the practices of other religions, such as the practices of Christian priesthood and of other religions. This article aims to examine the comparison between the concepts of zuhud (asceticism / detachment) and wahdat al-wujud (the unity of existence) in Islam and the concepts of asceticism and hypostatic union in Christianity. In Christianity there is a clerical structure, but Islam does not recognize or implement it. Islamic Sufis did not transform Sufism from Christianity or other religions because Sufism is related to human instincts. Additionally, the human soul is the same despite different societies and nations. The similarities of the practice of asceticism cannot be sufficiently used as the reason that it stems from Christian asceticism. There are in fact similarities between the concept of wahdat al-wujud and hypostatic union in Christianity. The differences between the two lies in the esoteric and exoteric dimensions. However, according to al-Junaid and al-Ghazali, mahabbat and ma'rifat are the limitations of the maqam of Sufism, a level of maqam where man is still in a state of understanding of his own existence. So, between man and God, there is still distance. In this modern era, there is a need for a re-interpretation of Sufism in which Sufism is not only oriented to be purely transient to be in union with God, but it is a form of fulfilling our obligations as God's caliphs who should improve things for fellow humans and other living beings. In other words, Sufism not only contains a theophanic dimension of transience, but also a profane dimension in which there are of fellow human interests worldwide.*

**Keywords:** Sufism; Concept of Mysticism, Islam, Christianity

### INTRODUCTION

Dialectics related to Sufism (mysticism) will never be obsolete with the times. In addition to being a natural human need (*thabi'iyah*) for peace of mind, the human need for God is inevitable, even for an atheist. Among the things that promise peace of mind is mysticism. The essence of the materials contained within is centered on self-knowledge of the Almighty. Understanding it will free humans from the shackles of worldly interests, leading them to peace.

Substantially, mysticism is an integration between ethical, aesthetic, and esoteric values, which are a perpetual reality from time to time. The concept of mysticism is not the final product of the process of scientific study, because mysticism is not merely a sensory pleasure; it is a gift from the provider of grace. Mysticism/Sufism is not engineered by al-Baghdadi, al-Ghazali, or al-Basri, nor is it a Christian product. Mysticism is a teaching and practice in order to get closer to God, even to unite oneself with God through the *maqam* and *ahwal* techniques. Today, mysticism is facing obstacles and contradictions. Some are of the opinion that mysticism does not originate from Islam, but was influenced from the teachings of other religions, especially Christianity.

With regard to its origin, mysticism is much debated. Some experts argue that mysticism does originate from Islam, because Sufi teachings are in fact based on the *sunnah* of the Prophet Muhammad. Always drawing closer to Allah alone was the doctrine of the early Muslims, even though at that time it was a rule that was not called Sufism, and then evolved into its own scientific discipline when Islam began to develop and progress. There are also experts who claim that Islamic mysticism was initially influenced by other teachings and religions, such as the priestly practice of Christianity, Hindu-Buddhism, etc.<sup>1</sup> Nicholson argued that mysticism in Islam is not purely derived from Islamic teachings, but stems from other religions, especially Christianity. Nicholson identified the lifestyle of Islamic Sufis with the following characteristics: *zuhud* (asceticism), often staying alone in silence, wearing wool attire, doing *dhikr*, etc. According to Nicholson, the pattern has similarities with Christian teachings. In addition, Islamic mysticism is influenced by neoplatonism, because of the contact between Arabs and Greeks, and the teachings of neoplatonism affected some Islamic mysticism thinkers.<sup>2</sup>

However, according to Nasution,<sup>3</sup> The validity of opinions or theories that reveal Islamic mysticism originating or being influenced by other religions cannot be proven, because many texts of the Qur'an and the Hadith teach about the relationship between humans and Allah, as well as ways to approach Him.<sup>4</sup> For example, the Hadith Qudsi by Imam Buhkari states: "Whosoever shows enmity to someone devoted to Me, I shall be at war with him. My servant draws not near to Me with anything more loved by Me than the religious duties I have enjoined upon him, and My servant continues to draw near to Me with supererogatory deeds so that I shall love him. When I love him, I am his hearing with which he hears, his seeing with which he sees, his

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<sup>1</sup> Abdul Qadir 'Isa, *Haqaiq al-Tasawuf...*, 98

<sup>2</sup> R.A. Nicholson, *The Mystic of Islam*, (Canada: World Wisdom, 2002), 9

<sup>3</sup> Harun Nasution, *Filsafat dan Mistisisme dalam Islam*, (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1973), 58

<sup>4</sup> Read QS. Al-Baqarah: 186, 115, dan QS. Qaf: 16.

hand with which he strikes and his foot with which he walks. Were he to ask [something] of Me, I would surely give it to him, and were he to ask Me for refuge, I would surely grant him it.”<sup>5</sup>

Previous studies, which analyzed several theological problems between Islam and Christianity, particularly divinity, revealed that according to the Qur’an, the concept of the Trinity in Christianity is a form of polytheism (Surah 4:171, 9:30, 5:73), which is opposed by this doctrine is the designation of the ontological nature of the Trinity.<sup>6</sup> The trinity here is defined as one substance and three persons, namely believing in one God who reveals Himself in three persons. Believe in God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit.<sup>7</sup> The doctrine of the Trinity is in fact only found in the New Testament<sup>8</sup>. Confirmation of this can be studied in Matthew 28:19, and Corinthians 12:4-6, 13:13. From a Christian perspective, the Trinity is eternal and the three persons work together in re-creation with different tasks.<sup>9</sup> A similar study was also conducted by Sri Dahlia, who emphasized the comparison between Islamic and Christian theology, particularly on the Trinity and the attributes of God. She revealed that the teachings and theological doctrines of both Islamic and Christian traditions have similarities, like in the aspect of God’s attributes. Several schools of theology in Islam have different interpretations of the existence of God’s attributes. There are those who claim to be *qadim*, and those who affirm the Hadith (such as the Mu’tazilah ideology which contrasts with the Asy’ariyah ideology). Similarly, the Christian tradition has teachings that are in line with the Mu’tazilah ideology, particularly regarding the humanness of Jesus.<sup>10</sup> Taftazani emphasizes that Islamic Sufism is not derived from the Christian priesthood system. Even though there are similarities in customs between Islamic Sufis and Christian clergy, it does not mean they are both Islamic. The pattern of life of mysticism is a universal tendency in every religion, as the source of religion is one, although different in formal aspects. So, the similarity between Islamic Sufism and Christian mysticism is logical.<sup>11</sup> In this case, I agree with Taftazani’s argument.

<sup>5</sup> See in Dewan Redaksi Ensiklopedi Islam, *Ensiklopedia Islam vol. 5*, (Jakarta, PT. Ichtisar Baru Van Hoeve, 1993), 80

<sup>6</sup> F. Schuon, *Memahami Islam*, translated by Anas Mahyuddin (Bandung: Pustaka, 1983), 85

<sup>7</sup> Olaf Schumann, *Pemikiran Keagamaan dalam Tantangan* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 1993), 212

<sup>8</sup> Abujamin Roham, *Pembicaraan Disekitar Bible dan Qur’an dalam Segi Isi dan Riwayat Penulisan*, (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1984), 173

<sup>9</sup> Waryono, “Beberapa Problem Teologis Antara Islam dan Kristen”, *ESENSIA* Vol. XII No. 1 2011, 97-116

<sup>10</sup> Sri Dahlia, “Trinitas dan Sifat Tuhan: Studi Analisis Perbandingan Antara Teologi Kristen dan Teologi Islam” *Jurnal Penelitian*, Vol. 11, No. 2, 2017, 299-330

<sup>11</sup> Abu al-Wafa al-Ghanimi at-Taftazani, *Tasawuf Islam; Telaah Historis dan Perkembangannya*, (Jakarta: Gaya Media Pratama, 2008), 26

Analyzing the aforementioned studies, it seems that none of them have focused on this theme. Therefore, this study aims to present a new element of this research topic – a comparison between the concepts of *zuhud and wahdat al-wujud* in Islam and the concepts of asceticism and hypostatic union in Christianity. This study uses a descriptive method and a comparative analysis, collecting and analyzing data from various valid sources which were connected. Much data was collected using library research. This study ensures authenticity of the data contained in the works of Islamic and Christian thinkers. Islamic thinkers attributed in this study include Abu al-Wafa al-Ghanimi at-Taftazani, Ibn Khaldun, Imam al-Ghazali, Ibn Arabi, Abu Nasr As-Sarraj ath-Thusi, Abu al-Qasim an-Naisabari al-Qusyairi, Muhammad Ghallab, Harun Nasution, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Said Agil Husain al-Munawar, Muhammad Hisham Kabbani, and Abu Bakar Aceh. Meanwhile, the works of Christian thinkers include those by Nicholson, Gershom G Scholem, Frithjof Schuon, Donald Guthrie, William C. Chittick, Olaf Schumann and Bernard McGinn.

### MYSTICISM AS A COMPARATIVE CONTEXT

The terms Sufism is more suitable to be used specifically for Islam, while mysticism is more inclined to non-Muslims, including Christians. Bernard McGinn, Professor of historical theology and Christian history<sup>12</sup> stated that although the main idea and purpose of mysticism may be understood as a special God-human encounter and everything about the process of that encounter in his introduction to the 1991 five-volume work on the history of Christian mysticism, entitled “*The Presence of God*.”<sup>13</sup> By considering the relationship between goals, processes, and effects caused by mysticism, McGinn states that mystical elements in Christianity are part of faith and practice related to self-awareness and one’s reaction to the direct presence of God.<sup>14</sup> In this broad definition, McGinn also agrees with some followers of Catholic theologian Bernard Lonergan (1904-1984) who specifically proposes using “consciousness” rather than “experience” to describe certain situations such as witnessing (vision) and hearing (locution) to supernatural phenomena and conditions of inner pleasure (raptures) that come from the substance of his encounter with God.<sup>15</sup> In addition, partly inspired by the work of Joseph Marechal (1878-1944), a philosopher and expert in the field of psychology,

<sup>12</sup> To date, four volumes of this series of works appear as: *The Origins of Mysticism* (1991), *The Growth of Mysticism* (1994), *The Flowering of Mysticism* (1998), and *The Harvest of Mysticism in Medieval Germany* (2005).

<sup>13</sup> Bernard McGinn, *The Presence of God: a History of Western Christian Mysticism*, (New York: Crossroad, Vol. I, 1991), xvi

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, xvii

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, xvii

McGinn declared “presence” is the main requirement and an urgent matter in understanding mysticism rather than “union” which is but a small part of the many metaphors, models, or symbols that mystics have used in their presentations.<sup>16</sup>

Etymologically, Syekh Hisyam Kabbani<sup>17</sup> explains that tasawuf (Sufism/mysticism) comes from four root words: first, the word *shafa* or *shafwun*, which means clean or holy. In an-Nihayah dictionary, Ibn al-Atsir defines this word as “the best of things, the essence, and the cleanest part”. Second, the word *ahl as-Shuffah* (inhabitants of the veranda), which means those who lived in the veranda of the Prophet’s mosque while he was still alive. Therefore, *tasawuf* is also associated with *ahl shaff* (people in the first row). Third, the word *al-shuff*, which means fleece, because the Sufis living in Kufa used to wear clothes made of fleece. Fourth, the word *Shuffah al-Kaffah* (fine sponge), is associated with the Sufis who are clean with soft hearts. However, al-Qusyairi criticized the idea because some of the meanings did not match the intended meaning regarding Sufis. In his work, he asserted the root of the word Sufi is *al-suf* (wool or cloth with coarse hair), so one is said to be a sufi when it turns out that he is wearing woolly clothing (a robe). There are several views regarding the etymology of sufism, and it is clear that it is not only associated with people wearing woolly clothing. Therefore, some people claim that Sufis are identified with *Ahlusshufah* (friends who like to sleep on the front of the mosque). There are also people who say that the Sufis are people who purify themselves. Many others claim the word Sufi comes from the word *shaf* (line in prayer) which is likened to the hearts of the Sufis who come in the first row in facing God. Some of the definitions that have been stated are not in accordance with what is meant by the word Sufi itself.

Al-Qusyairi’s explanation can or cannot be justified. It can be justified because it is impossible for a person wearing clothes made of rough, wrinkled material to be called a Sufi, because even poor people who cannot afford luxurious clothes are very likely to wear rugged clothes. Likewise, in the case of the *Ahlusshufah* (residents of the veranda of the mosque), it is impossible for each of them to be called Sufis, because perhaps among them are people who are merely lingering around. Second, it could not be because it could be people who wear rugged clothes, or also the *Ahlusshufah*, and people who like to isolate themselves are really Sufis, namely those who give up the worldly pleasures in order to seek better life, namely *ma’ rifah ilallah*. Therefore,

<sup>16</sup> The fact that all mystics never represent their mystical experience as union with God is emphasized by other scholars such as Gershom G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, (New York: Schocken Books, 1954), 5

<sup>17</sup> Muhammad Hisyam Kabbani, *Tasawuf dan Ihsan; Antivirus Kebatilan dan Kedzaliman* (Jakarta: published by Serambi, 2007), 24

Shaykh Abdul Qadir al-Jailani argued that sufism comes from the word *as-shafa* which means holy. That is, the Sufi who applies sufism seriously seeks to keep and purify his heart only with Allah. Efforts to purify oneself are not just by wearing rugged clothes, letting his face turn yellowish, blackening the forehead, speaking words of wisdom, or moving fingers with *tasbih* and *tahlil*. It is much broader than that, only achievable through sincerity and honesty in worshiping Allah, with true detachment from worldly desires, by purifying oneself for Allah.<sup>18</sup> However, according to Ibn Khaldun, not all the wearers of coarse woolly clothes are Sufis, because it is only part of the attributes attached to the Sufis.<sup>19</sup>

So, it can be concluded that the word “Sufi” is a term that describes pious people, who are sincerely standing behind Allah Almighty while facing the realities of life in the world. They always detach themselves from the worldly mortal interests, while the main goal is *maʿrifatullah*. Whether or not one is a Sufi cannot be judged by the attributes one wears, but by the sincerity of one’s heart which is called *ʿafʿal alqulub* (activities of the heart) which can only be judged by Allah. Meanwhile, terminologically, *tasawuf* has many interpretations. Al-Junaid al-Baghdadi revealed that *tasawuf* is “cleansing the heart from animal-like traits, showing holy morals, emphasizing the nature of *basyariyah*, staying away from lust, making room for spirituality, holding on to the knowledge of truth, practicing something more important and immortal, giving advice to the people, and keeping promises to Allah.”<sup>20</sup> Imam Junaid al-Baghdadi, quoted by al-Mahdili in his book “al-Madkhal ila Tasawuf”, firmly states that what is meant by sufism is “the truth is what kills you and the truth also brings you to life.”<sup>21</sup>

Abu Qasim Abdul Karim al-Qusyairi has different perspectives than the aforementioned. He argued that “sufism is practicing the guidance of the Qur’an and Sunnah, striving to control lust, avoiding heresy, staying away from worldly desires, and avoiding making worship less important.”<sup>22</sup> Abu Yazid al-Bustami maintained that “sufism includes three elements, namely: *kha* (getting rid of despicable character), *ha* (adorning oneself with commendable character), and *jim* (getting closer to Allah).”<sup>23</sup> Abu Bakr al-Kattani quoted by al-Ghazali in *Ihya ʿUlumuddin*, asserts that “sufism is character; whoever equips you with character, he provides you with sufism. As for the worshipers,

<sup>18</sup> Muhammad Sholikhin, *17 Jalan Menggapai Mahkota Sufi, Syaikh Abdul Qadir al-Jailani*, (Jakarta: published by Mutiara Media, 2000), 83

<sup>19</sup> See Ibn Khaldun, *Al-Mukaddimah*, (Beirut: Darul Fikr, tt), 370-371

<sup>20</sup> Dewan Redaksi Ensiklopedi Islam, *Ensiklopedia Islam...*, 73

<sup>21</sup> Al-Mahdili, *al-Madkhal il al-Tasawufi...*, 79

<sup>22</sup> Dewan Redaksi Ensiklopedi Islam, *Ensiklopedia Islam...*, 73

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 73

their souls accept to do good deeds, because they purify themselves with the light of Islam. Meanwhile, those with pure souls accept to do good deeds because they purify themselves with the light of faith.”<sup>24</sup> Based on several descriptions of sufism terminology, it can be concluded that sufism is purifying the heart from everything that interferes with the self towards God, attempting to eliminate the influence of human origin, removing the character of weakness as a human being, avoiding all inclination to lust, drawing closer to the sacred nature based on knowledge of nature, using useful goods, giving advice that leads to virtue, and keeping promises to Allah.

In the midst of the different expert interpretations of sufism, Abu al-Wafa al-Ganimi at-Taftazani notes the characteristics of sufism in general. According to him, sufism has five characteristics: moral elevation, absolute essence instead of transience, direct intuitive knowledge, tranquility and happiness, and symbolic expression.<sup>25</sup> According to Sahib al-Samahah, sufism in Islam is not derived from any ideology or culture, including the teachings of Hermes and neo-platonism, although objectively, Arab-Islamic civilization has never denied the *al-tathir* (influence of) and *al-taaththur*. (influenced by) other parties. However, when Islamic mysticism is thought to be synonymous with the teachings of Kabbalah (Jews), hesychasm (Orthodox Christianity), and charismatics (Protestantism) or religious syncretism, then this can be regarded as “blasphemy” against the sanctity of Islamic teachings, because the theological basis between religions is very different.<sup>26</sup> In the view of Sahib al-Samahah, the existence of sufism began long before the birth of humans. Sahib al-Samahah quoted the verse of the Qur’an which reads: “Verily, Allah has chosen (purified) Adam, Noah, the family of Abraham and the family of ‘Imran over all people (in their respective times).”<sup>27</sup> This concept is what Ibn ‘Arab called *wahdah al-adyan*, or unity of religions, (Islam as the center point of all the Abrahamic religions). It is undeniable that all Abrahamic religions were initially *hanif* religions and could be called Islamic. However, these religions have since merged into the form of Islam brought by the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h). This notion does not mean that Islam does not recognize and respect other religions. Thus, sufism becomes the essence of Islamic teachings, widely embodied in Islam: faith, and *ihsan*; or *shari’ah*, *tareqat*, and *hakikat*; or *ibadah*, *ubudiyah*, and *ubudah*. The three teachings are holistic and cannot be separated. The incorrect assumption is that Islam is limited to carrying out the five pillars of Islam. Therefore, the practice of

<sup>24</sup> Al-Ghazali, *Ihya’ ‘Ulumuddin*, (Semarang: Maktabah Usaha Keluarga, tt), 376

<sup>25</sup> at-Taftazani, *Tasawuf Islam...*, 4-5

<sup>26</sup> Lihat Husni Hidayat, “Tajalliyât Sufistik: Dialektika Nilai-Nilai Religius-Humanistik”, in *Teosofi: Jurnal Tasawuf dan Pemikiran Islam*, Vol. 2 No. 2 December 2012, 223

<sup>27</sup> See QS. Ali Imron: 33

the five pillars of Islam must be refined as a comprehensive religious building through perfecting faith and *ihsan*. On the other hand, although *ihsan* is the highest stage in religion, Islam and faith are inseparable.

### THE CONCEPT OF *ZUHUD* (ASCETICISM)

In Christianity, the practice of seclusion from society has been carried out by many monks since the beginning of the birth of Christianity. In Islamic history, sufism begins with *zuhud* (ascetic) life by the companions, *tabi'een*, *tabi'u al-tabi'een*, etc. Ascetic behavior is considered an attempt to isolate oneself from the glittering world. This is thought to have much in common with the behavior of monks, of which Christian teachings advise to abstain from indulgence and isolating oneself in the monasteries. This is compared to the lamps at night (in the Arabian Desert) illuminating the way for passing caravans, their tents being a haven for travelers who are starving. Therefore, the similarity of ascetic behavior<sup>28</sup> is thought to be influenced by these Christian monks.<sup>29</sup> Scientists who agree with this notion include Goldzhiher. He classified mysticism into two parts. First, asceticism (*zuhud*), according to him, despite being influenced by Christian clergy patterns, is more rooted in Islamic teachings. Second, sufism in a broad sense such as *ma'rifah*, *hal*, *wijdan*, and *dzauq*, is influenced by Hindu teachings and Neoplatonism.<sup>30</sup> Other scientists such as Von Kreamer, Asin Pacsios, O'leary noted something similar. Von Kreamer said that ascetic life in Islam has been influenced by Christian teachings that existed before the arrival of Islam in Syria and Sinai. According to him, the ascetic life of Muslims is inspired by the life of Christian priests.<sup>31</sup>

According to at-Taftazani, those who say that sufism originates from Christianity utilize several arguments. First, the Arab community and Christians have interacted since the time of Jahiliya. Second, there are similarities in the life patterns of the Sufis regarding the application of the teachings and practices of *riyadhah* (training the soul) and *khalwat* (seclusion) with the patterns of life of Christian monks, as well as their appearance.<sup>32</sup> Meanwhile, according to Abu al-'Ala al-Afifi, there are four factors behind the emergence of *zuhud*

<sup>28</sup> Every Sufi is an ascetic, but not all ascetics are Sufis. Some people think that Sufism is only synonymous with *zuhud* (asceticism). Ibn Sina emphasizes the differences between Sufis, *zuhud*, and *abid*, namely: (1) People who stay away from worldly pleasures are called *zahid*, (2) People who engage in *mahdhah* worship are called *'abid*, (3) People who focus themselves and their minds for his Lord and draw closer to Him until the Light of al-Haq rises is called *al-arif* or *al-sufi*. Abdul Halim, *Tasawuf di Dunia Islam*, (Bandung: CV. Pustaka Setia, 2002), 24

<sup>29</sup> Harun Nasution, *Falsafat dan Mistisisme dalam Islam*, (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1973), 58

<sup>30</sup> Muhammad Ghallab, *At-Tashawwuf al-Muqarin*, (Mesir: Maktabah al-Nahdah, tt), 42

<sup>31</sup> At-Taftazani, *Tasawuf Islam...*, 28

<sup>32</sup> At-Taftazani, *Tasawuf Islam...*, 6



(which is considered the origin of sufism) in Islam, namely: (1) the teachings of Islam itself; (2) Islamic spiritual revolution against the social order and the ruling regime; (3) monasticism in Christianity; and (4) the revolution against the experts Islamic jurisdiction (*fiqh*) and the *kalam*.<sup>33</sup> Taftazani refuted the opinion that there is a Christian influence by saying that the similarity of the practice of *zuhud*, for example, is not enough to be a reason that sufism originates from Christianity. Nicholson stated that the sources of sufism could not have come from values outside of Islam. He also thought that even though Christianity influenced Islam, it was not a source for Islam, because the asceticism they were arguing about was none other than Islam itself.<sup>34</sup> To conclude the discussion on the origins of sufism, it is interesting to reveal Taftazani's statement by making a reasonable hypothesis that Islamic Sufis have not only transformed sufism from Christianity or other religions. That's all because sufism is related to human instincts.<sup>35</sup> The similarity between Islamic mysticism and that of other religions does not necessarily indicate that Islamic mysticism is derived from other religions. What is correct is that Islamic mysticism comes from Islam itself, because Sufis have knowledge in the form of intuition and direct testimony, not from reason or argument.<sup>36</sup> The same thing was also expressed by Nicholson, as quoted by Taftazani, who initially argued that sufism is not purely from Islam. Furthermore, he revised his own opinion by saying that every thought claimed to be foreign in Islam and born in foreign cultures outside of Islam, is actually born of asceticism and sufism that emerged in Islam.<sup>37</sup>

A more detailed explanation was also revealed by Massignon who divided four sources of terms in sufism: (1) the Qur'an and this is the most important; (2) Islamic Arabic sciences, such as Hadith, *fiqh*, *nahwu*, etc.; (3) the terms of the early *kalam* scholars; and (4) the scientific language formed from other languages such as Greek, Persian, etc. that became the language of science and philosophy in the sixth century Eastern civilization.<sup>38</sup> These are some of the different views on the existence of sufism. It is interesting to compare the views of scholars who attempted to find positive explanations about the nature of sufism. Ibn al-Jauzi and Ibn Khaldun classify the pattern of spirituality in Islam into two aspects, namely: *tasawuf* (sufism) and *zuhud* (asceticism). Although these two terms did not exist in the era of the Prophet Muhammad and are not explicitly mentioned in the Qur'an, except for *zuhud* which is

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 69-70

<sup>34</sup> At-Taftazani, *Tasawuf Islam...*, 29

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 36

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 36

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 37

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 38

mentioned in Surah Yusuf verse 20.<sup>39</sup> Nasution revealed that the pattern of living to isolate oneself and stay away from worldly pursuits is also found in Christian teachings. Many Arabic literatures tell about the lives of the monks who exiled themselves in the desert. Their lamps guide the passing travelers, their camps are a refuge for the lost, and their generosity is food for the hungry.<sup>40</sup>

Among the ascetic teachings originating from Christianity are: (1) self-sufficient attitude, because Prophet Jesus was a self-sufficient person, and the Bible was delivered to the poor as in Matthew's Gospel: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are those who are hunger for they shall be filled."; (2) The attitude of *tawakkal* (reliance on God), because the priests have practiced it in their life history as it is said in the Bible: "Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?"; (3) The purpose of the Christian priest is similar to that of the *murshid* in the Islamic *tariqat*, except that the priest has the authority to erase sins, while the *murshid* does not; and (4) Refrain from marrying. Marriage is considered a barrier and can even distract from God, because for a Sufi forgetting God for a moment is a sin.<sup>41</sup> This is different from the concept of *zuhud* in Islam which has a broader meaning. *Zuhud* is divided into three levels: first (lowest), abstaining from worldly indulgence in order to avoid punishment in the afterlife; second, staying away from this world by weighing the rewards in the afterlife; the third (highest) isolates the world not out of fear or out of hope, but out of love for Allah.<sup>42</sup>

When Imam Al-Junaid was asked about *zuhud*, he said, "*Zuhud* is considering the world as small and removing its scars from the heart".<sup>43</sup> Abu Sulaiman Ad-Darani said, "*zuhud* means leaving what keeps you busy from Allah".<sup>44</sup> Ibn al-Qayyim said, "The wise people have agreed that *zuhud* is removing the heart from the world, and bringing it to the hereafter".<sup>45</sup> According to Ibn al-Qayyim, the Qur'an is filled with suggestions for detachment from the world, the humiliation of the world with all its shortcomings, its end and the immediacy of its destruction; and contains suggestions for longing for the

<sup>39</sup> Ibrahim, Muhammad Zaki, *Abjadiyyah al-Tashawwuf al-Islam*, (translation) Abdul Syukur and Rivai Usman, Tasawuf Salafi, (Jakarta: Hikmah, 2002), 29

<sup>40</sup> Harun Nasution, *Falsafat dan Mistisisme dalam Islam...*, 63

<sup>41</sup> Jamil, M., *Cakrawala Tasawuf*, (Ciputat: Gaung Persada Press, 2004), 89

<sup>42</sup> See Rosihon Anwar, *Akhlak tasawuf*, (Bandung: Pustaka Setia, 2010), 200

<sup>43</sup> Muhammad bin Abi Bakar Ayyub al-Zar'i Abu 'Abdillah, *Madarij al-Salikin*, Jilid 2, (Beirut, Dar al-Kitab al-'Ilmiyyah, 1973), 11

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 11

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 12

hereafter, news of its glory and eternity.<sup>46</sup> There are three signs of *zuhud* that must exist in a person's mind, namely: (1) not to be excited with what one possesses and not to be sad with what one has lost; (2) It is the same on the side of the one who criticizes and the one who abuses him. The former is a sign of detachment from wealth while the latter a sign of detachment from position; and (3) He should be with Allah and his heart should be dominated by the grace of obedience. For the heart cannot be completely free from love; love of the world or love of God. These two forms of love in the heart are like water and air in a glass. When you put water in a glass, the air comes out. The two cannot be one. Everyone who is 'familiar' with Allah will surely be busy with Him and will not be busy with anything other than Him.<sup>47</sup>

### THE CONCEPT OF WAHDAT AL-WUJUD

Regarding the concept of *wahdat al-wujud* (*the unity of existence*), in the theology of the New Testament, it begins with a belief, namely God exists that He created humans and continues to care for them.<sup>48</sup> In John 4:24 it is stated that "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth". The teachings of Christian theology are indeed very close to the term "union of the spirit of God and the spirit of man." Therefore, for later we know the term Trinity in Christianity. The concept of God's relationship with man in Christianity is that man was created in God's likeness, therefore man is His image and praise. The similarity between man and God is in His holiness and righteousness, even though this is actually spiritual. Knowledge of God appears in the revelation of His word through the holy spirit, then in the reality of belief and obedience. Christian belief is rooted in sanctifying the personal meaning of Jesus who is seen as Christ the savior. Obedience to Christ's call is faith; in faith it is God's justice and His grace that can be known. Faith is the determination of human action through the essence of the church (religion) taught by Jesus Christ through the "*Human God*" approach.<sup>49</sup>

Man's relationship with God's creatureliness is expressed only through the wholeness of Christ's message. With the position of human God as a being in the kingdom of God, and the position of God as king, humans must obey and submit to His commands. Obedience to God is an absolute condition for man's repentance to Him. It can happen only if a servant traverses the path of God and desires to identify himself with God. The relationship between man

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. See QS. Al-Hadid 57:20-23, Ali 'Imran 3 : 14, Asy-Syuuraa 42: 20, An Nisaa' 4: 77

<sup>47</sup> Said Hawwa, *Mensucikan Jiwa (Konsep Tazkiyatun Nafs Terpadu: Intisari Ihya 'Ulumuddin al-Ghazali)*, (Jakarta: Robbani Press, 1998), 329

<sup>48</sup> Donald Guthrie, *Teologi Perjanjian Baru I*, (terj.) Lisda T Gamadhi, (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1995), 43

<sup>49</sup> Ajat Sudrajat, *Tafsir Inklusif Makna Islam*, (Yogyakarta: AK Group Yogya, 2004), 128

and God with the most climax of sacrifice is found in the personality of Jesus. Jesus sacrificed himself for the salvation of many people through atonement for sins. During his life, Jesus founded religion on the principle of love. This principle is used as the basis for reinterpreting the laws of the Law (Mark 12:31; 2:23-28; 7:1-23, Matthew 22:40; 23:23; 5:17-58, and Luke 10:25- 37). The most basic is found in Mark 12:31, namely: "Jesus answered: The chief commandment is; Hear, O Israel, our Lord Allah, the Lord is One. Love the Lord, your God, with all your heart and with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength. And the second is; love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other law that is more important than these two laws."<sup>50</sup> This is the essence of Christian religiosity, monotheistic values, and the pattern of relations between humans and God. It is also between humans themselves which is also similar to Islam. So, the meeting point of these three religions is an understanding of the meaning of al-Islam itself which means submission, obedience and complete surrender to God.<sup>51</sup>

In Christianity, there is the concept of Hypostatic union. It is the term used to describe how God the Son, Jesus Christ, took on the form of a human, while a perfect God at the same. Jesus is forever God,<sup>52</sup> but when incarnated, Jesus took a human body and became human.<sup>53</sup> The combination of the human nature with the divine nature becomes Jesus, man-God. This is the hypostatic union, Jesus Christ as one Person-Perfect God and perfect man. The two natures of Jesus, his humanity and divinity, cannot be separated from each other. Jesus is forever man-God; perfect God and perfect human; two distinct natures in one Person. The humanity and divinity of Jesus do not mix, but unite without losing their unique identity. Sometimes Jesus functions with human limitations,<sup>54</sup> but at other times by the power of his divinity.<sup>55</sup> This doctrine of hypostatic union is an attempt to explain how Jesus is both God and man at the same time. However, this doctrine is certainly not fully understood by humans. It is impossible for a finite and sinful human being to fully understand the workings of God. In short, hypostatic union teaches that Jesus is both God and a perfect human, that there is no mixing or subtraction of any of these natures. He is a unified Person, forever.

Whereas in Islam there is the concept of *wahdat al-wujud* (unity of existence), starting from the basic assumption which states that the essence of existence is substantially one (*jawhariha*) and is counted in terms of attribution and

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 133

<sup>51</sup> See QS. Ali Imran: 83, 85

<sup>52</sup> See John 8:58; 10:30

<sup>53</sup> See John1:14

<sup>54</sup> See John 4:6; 19:28

<sup>55</sup> See John11:43; Matthew 14:18-21

identity (*al-sifat wa al-asma*).<sup>56</sup> In this case, it must be distinguished between *wujud* (existence) as a pure ontological attribute and *maujud* (existent being) as existing or existing objects. *Wujud* is also called “ens”, which is the metaphysical act of existence, which is full of mysterious veils and *mawjud* as “esto”, or something that exists.<sup>57</sup> The former ‘existence’ is transcendent, while the latter becomes immanent. Therefore, the doctrine of Ibn ‘Arabi is called *wahdat al-wujud*, not *wahdat al-mawjud*. According to this notion, there is only one existence, God, and nothing else. The things that seem to exist are merely manifestations or theophany (*tajally*) of God’s existence. It is at this point that the pantheistic nature of the doctrine of *wahdat al-wujud* is questioned. In this case, pantheism is meant in the sense that God has an immanent cause; does the unity of existence then make God immanent? In fact, this notion is understood in two ways; some are of the view that Ibn ‘Arabi’s *wahdat al-wujud* style is indeed pantheistic and some say otherwise. Nevertheless, the concept of sufism which was later raised by al-Junaid al-Bagdadi and al-Ghazali is a criticism that challenges the radicalism and liberalism of sufism that had been developed by Ibn ‘Arabi, Abu Yazid al-Bustami, and Husain ibn Mansur al-Hallaj. The radicalism and liberalism of their sufism denied the concrete reality of man himself in the concepts of *maqam* (levels), *fana* (destruction), and *baqa* (eternity),<sup>58</sup> *ittihad* (unity), dan *hulul* (incarnation).<sup>59</sup>

The process of spiritual awareness maturation, according to these academics, begins with the elimination of human concrete consciousness (*fana*) to reach eternal metaphysical consciousness (*baqa*), and then to a higher level, unity (*ittihad*). There is no longer any existence except the existence of God, because God has already taken the incarnated (*hulul*) place in humans after their human nature disappears. This concept is known as *wahdat al-wujud* and eventually led to the killing of al-Hallaj with the death penalty, and al-Bustami was considered a madman whom people abandoned. Al-Junaid and al-Ghazali’s criticism of the concept attempted to realign the concept of sufism by remaining grounded in the concrete reality of man himself. They limited the *maqam* of sufism only to *mahabbah* and *marifah*,<sup>60</sup> a stage of *maqam* that places humans in their own concrete consciousness. According to al-Junaid, the highest consciousness is to accept suffering (*mulim*) or favors (*ladzdzah*). Thus, there is still a distance between man and God.

<sup>56</sup> Ibn ‘Arabi, *Fusush al-Hikam*, Vol. 1 (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-‘Arabi, t.t.), 24.

<sup>57</sup> Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Knowledge and The Sacred* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1989), 124

<sup>58</sup> Abu al-Qasim an-Naisabari Al-Qusyairi, *Ar-Risalat al-Qusyairiyah*, (terj.) M. Lukman Hakim, *Risalatul Qusyairiyah: Induk Ilmu Tasawuf*. (Surabaya: Risalah Gusti, 1999), 67

<sup>59</sup> Abu Nashr As-Sarraj Ath-Thusi. *Al-Luma’*. (Cairo: Dar Kitab Al-Haditsah, 1960), 541

<sup>60</sup> Nasr, Seyyed Hossein. *Living Sufism*. (London: Paperbacks, 1980), 65

Again, the subject of *wahdat al-wujud* in religions, including Christianity, is interpreted as a doctrine of Ibn Arabi in the unity of being or unity of transcendence which is also known as pantheism.<sup>61</sup> With his concept of *wahdat al-wujud*, Ibn Arabi is considered a figure who believes in religious pluralism, where there is unity of religions. In this view, Ibn Arabi allegedly rejected the external rituals and dogmatic forms of each religion.<sup>62</sup> This was not much different from the form of the *wahdat al-wujud* approach, but this time it became more specific to the esoteric-exoteric dialectic, because Ibn Arabi seemed to be more inclined to look at the 'deep' and 'universal' esoteric dimensions than rituals or dogmas that are in the exoteric dimensions.<sup>63</sup> Ibn Arabi's view was misrepresented by William C. Chittick, because he misinterpreted Ibn Arabi's poetry in *al-Futuh al-Makiyyah* chapter 339, noting Chittick said there is no limit to the universality of the Abrahamic religions that came before Islam. Chittick said that Muslims guaranteed the freedom of other religions based on surah QS. al-Shaff: 6, QS. al-Anbiya: 25, QS. al-Nisa: 171, and QS. Thaha: 123-124.<sup>64</sup> Thus there should be no self-claim on the universality of the prophethood of Muhammad. Chittick wrote: "*It is true that many Muslims believe that the universality of guidance pertains only to pre Qur'anic times, but others disagree; there is no 'orthodox' interpretation here that Muslims must accept.*"<sup>65</sup> Chittick also wrote, "*Even Ibnu 'Arabi who was not afraid to attack the limitations of the juridical and theological mentalities, often defends a literal reading of the People of the Book, without suggesting that by 'Christian' or 'Jews' the Qur'an means anyone other than the contemporary practitioners of those religions.*"<sup>66</sup>

In fact, Chittick was inspired by Ibn Arabi's poems. But did Ibn Arabi approve it? No, in fact, the explanation has been summarized in the book which turns

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61 Despite the fact that the parallelization of the concept of pantheism with *wahdat al-wujud* found many contradictions between scholars, including Seyyed Hossein Nasr himself, *wahdat al-Manifest* is believed to be a substantial continuity between God and nature, so that if it is read critically, it will be understood that *Wahdat al-wujud* can be a fundamental difference between the identification of the ontological essence of divinity and the continuity of the substance and identity of God. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Three Muslims Sages*, (Lahore: Suhail Academy, 1999), 105. In Ibn Arabi's own work, the term *wahdat al-wujud* is not even found. Quoting Syamsuddin Arif, the term *wahdat al-wujud* was first introduced, most likely by Sadruddin al-Qunawi, a student and stepson of Ibn Arabi. This concept was then continuously popularized by later writers such as Ibnu Sab'in (w. 646 H/ 1248 M) and Afifudin al-Tilmisani. In conclusion, *wahdat al-wujud* is just a fragment of interpretation that is not objective and actually written in the name of Ibn Arabi. Syamsuddin Arif, *Orientalisme & Diabolisme Pemikiran*, (Depok: Gema Insani Press, 2008), 267

<sup>62</sup> Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Three Muslims Sages...*, 116

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 117

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 117

<sup>65</sup> William C. Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds: Ibnu al-'Arabi and the Problem of the Religious Diversity*, (New York, State University of New York Press: 1994), 124

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 125

out to be used by Sophia Perennis followers.<sup>67</sup> In that work, Ibn Arabi explained the relationship of other religions with Islam. He stated that the Abrahamic religions that were revealed before the message of Prophet Muhammad must be believed to be true in their respective historical contexts.<sup>68</sup> Even in volume 3 chapter 36, Ibn Arabi explains if Jesus descended now, he would not lead us, but would follow the sunnah of Prophet Muhammad. So, Ibn Arabi is not a 'pluralist'. It turns out that Ibn Arabi still agrees that Jews and Christians who convert to Islam are not considered as apostates, because their teachings purely oblige to follow the teachings of Prophet Muhammad.<sup>69</sup> Those are some examples that can still be investigated further regarding the manipulation of Ibn Arabi's thoughts, not only limited to the legitimacy of Perennial Philosophy<sup>70</sup>, but also other concepts of religious pluralism.<sup>71</sup> Thus, it appears that the concept of the Trinity in Christianity means that there are three eternal persons in the essence of the One God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These three persons are known as the three personalities of God. In Christianity, this belief should not be called polytheism, but a model of monotheism, because the second and third persons are part of God the Father. In other words, the three are in oneness or oneness in three. Meanwhile, the concept of *wahdat al-wujud* in Islam signifies that Allah used to be in His absolute solitude. Then, He thought of Himself so that His names and attributes appeared, then He created the universe. So, the whole universe contains Allah, so that Allah is the only real existence and the universe is only His shadow. Based on this opinion, a Sufi can get out of the aspect of a creature and can unify with Allah.

## CRITICISM AND RE-INTERPRETATION OF SUFISM

In the name of Sufism, many of the scholars, who are generally Sunni, reject the doctrine of *wahdat al-wujud* and the attainment of spiritual experiences that are in line with this doctrine such as *al-ittihad* and *al-hulul* because they do not understand it. The scholars who claim to defend Sufism denounce the sect

<sup>67</sup> According to al-Taftazani, there are two great works written by Ibn Arabi; *Al-Futuhat al-Makiyyah* and *Fusush al-Hikam*, al-Taftazani, *Tasawwuf al-Islami...*, 200. These two works are in fact closely related to the Perennial Philosophy's point of view with Sufism. The first is *Fusush al-Hikam* with the concept of *wahdat al-wujud* and *Al-Futuhat al-Makiyyah* with the concept of transcendent unity of religions.

<sup>68</sup> Muhyiddin ibn Arabi, *Al-Futuhat al-Makiyyah*, Jilid 6, (Beirut: Dar Sadir), 301-302

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., Vol. 7, 149

<sup>70</sup> One of the famous Perennial Philosophy figures is Frithjof Schuon who gives a view on the unity of religions in the transcendent realm. Perennial philosophy believes in the existence of a universal eternal unity that relies on the esoteric dimensions of religions. This esoteric dimension is conceptually different from the esoteric dimension, where the esoteric dimension is an inner spiritual dimension; the esoteric dimension is the external dimension of religions in the form of rituals, or other secondary branches of religions. For more details, read Frithjof Schuon, *The Transcendent Unity of Religion*, (Illinois: Theosophical Publishing House, 1984)

<sup>71</sup> Syamsuddin Arif, *Orientalisme dan Diabolisme Pemikiran...*, 262

which teaches the teachings of *Wahdat al-wujud* and belieg it deviates from Islam. They divide Sufism into two types: “Sunni Sufism” and “philosophical Sufism.” The first type of Sufism is Sufism considered to adhere to the Qur’an and the Sunnah. This type of Sufism, often called “*akhlaqi* Sufism” or “*amali* Sufism,” fences itself off with the Qur’an and the Sunnah while staying away from deviations that lead to heresy and disbelief. The second type of Sufism is said to not adhere to the Qur’an and the Sunnah. This type of Sufism incorporates into its teachings the philosophical elements from outside Islam, such as: Christianity, Greek, Persina, and expresses its teachings by using philosophical terms and special symbols that are difficult to understand by many people.

Sunni Sufism, as it is usually recognized by many scholars, reached its peak of perfection in al-Ghazali. He is considered a hero who contributed to the building of Sunni Sufism. He is considered successful in reconciling Sufism and orthodoxy, or between Sufism and Shari’a, so that Sufism can be accepted by Shari’a experts. The assessment that al-Ghazali was a supporter of Sunni Sufism and not a supporter of philosophical Sufism is incorrect. Al-Ghazali personally adhered to very radical esoteric and philosophical views as revealed in the *Mishkat al-Anwar*, which was intended for a limited circle of his students.<sup>72</sup> The Sufism that he personally professes is philosophical Sufism, or specifically called “theosophical Sufism.” It is not surprising that people accuse al-Ghazali of being two-faced while outwardly teaching moderate Sufism which is seen as Sunni Sufism, while personally adhering to philosophical Sufism. The classification of Sufism into these two types, Sunni Sufism and philosophical Sufism, needs to be addressed with a critical note. This classification views Sufism derived from the Quran and the Sunnah is only Sunni Sufism. According to this classification, philosophical Sufism which reached its peak in Ibn Arabi is considered Sufism that deviates from the Qur’an and the Sunnah, brings *bid’ah* and heresy, because it is incompatible with Islam. Obviously, the supporters of philosophical Sufism reject the accusation that their Sufism is deviant. They view philosophical Sufism still being in line with the Qur’an and the Sunnah. The accusation arises because of a misunderstanding or inability to understand this type of Sufism. Even William C. Chittick and Michel Chodkiewicz, honestly argued that all of Ibn Arabi’s works were, in fact, none other than interpretations of the Qur’an. Ibn Arabi mentioned that the highest saints of Allah are *ahl al-qur’an* and *ahl al-haqq*. This classification is at the same time a reflection of the dislike of Sunni scholars for philosophy. This distaste has killed, or at least hindered the development of philosophy in the Islamic world.

<sup>72</sup> See Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, *Misykat al-Anwar*, (Cairo: al-Dar al-Qawmiyyah, 1964)



Another criticism of Sufism is the tendency to commercialize the implementation of Sufism studies and practices. In the past, Sufism was criticized because it was considered to ignore worldly life and material pleasures. Now Sufism is criticized because it is misused to seek business-economic benefits. In the past, the Sufism that was criticized was ascetic Sufism, while now the Sufism that is being criticized is Business Sufism. In fact, Sufism does not forbid business for Sufis. Even business is a respectable job to earn a living. Many of the Sufis and members of the *tareqat* conduct business activities. It is clear that business Sufism is not the same as the business of Sufis and members of Sufi *tareqat*. The business conducted by Sufis and members of the *tareqat* is an honorable act as long as it is carried out in accordance with the Shari'a and is intended for worship and spiritual improvement. In the perspective of Sufism, the most urgent thing is to restore the sanctity of religious studies and its implications on life.<sup>73</sup> For this reason, I assert it is necessary to re-interpret Sufism in which in the modern age Sufism is not only purely transcendence-oriented to unite with God, but also the fulfillment of our responsibilities as God's caliphs who must improve fellow humans and other creatures. In other words, Sufism does not only contain a theophanic dimension of mortality, but also a profane dimension in which there are worldwide interests of fellow human beings.

Efforts to develop spiritual values should not only survive the negative influences of modernization, but also be able to affect and provide direction for the formation of a creative and dynamic religious community life. Therefore, efforts are needed. First, to develop an anticipatory attitude as an implementation of the principle of *almuhafazah 'ala al-qadim al-shalih wa al-akhzu bi al-jadid al-ashlah* (maintaining the old good and adopting the new which is good). Second, foster a creative attitude in accordance with the principle of *iqamat al-maslahah* (building welfare). Third, combining *amali* Sufism and philosophical Sufism so that there is a balance (*tawazun*) between the practiced values and an understanding of these values. Fourth, combining monotheism, Shari'ah, and Sufism as a unit that cannot be separated so that understanding of religious issues can be fully achieved. Fifth, bringing into practice the meanings contained in the teachings of Sufism and providing precise understanding of terms that can cause misunderstandings such as *zuhud*, *hubb al-dunya* (love of the world), etc., and making new interpretations. Thus, in the future when talking about Sufis, it will no longer imply traditional people, but there are "rich Sufis and Sufis who wear a tie".<sup>74</sup> Re-interpretation and contextualization of the spiritual values of Sufism will be more significant

<sup>73</sup> al-Ghazali, *Ihya' Ulum al-Din, Juz I...*, 9-10

<sup>74</sup> "Rich Sufis and Sufis wearing a tie" is the term used by Said Agil Husain al-Munawar, *al-Qur'an Membangun Tradisi Kesalehan Hakiki*, (Ciputat pers, Jakarta, 2002), 356

if they are conducted at an applicable level in people's lives. The concept of sincerity and love, for example, will be meaningful if these Sufistic values are practiced in all aspects of social life, in the domains of politics, economy, culture, etc. Corruption, collusion, and nepotism, horizontal conflicts, disputes among the nation's offspring, as well as various other social ills will naturally decrease if this concept is socialized from an early age. How beautiful it is for the *ummah* to start a job with sincerity, and to establish relationships between fellow humans with a sense of love as the Qur'an and the Hadith recommend loving each other. However, it would be more reasonable if the application of Sufistic values in modern life was strengthened with systematic institutionalization and movement.

One thing that should be emphasized here is that Sufism in Islam is not derived from or influenced by other religions, especially Christianity. Even though there are similarities in the practices between Islamic Sufis and Christian monks, it does not mean that Islam adopted them. In the Islamic texts themselves, many implicitly teach about Sufism. The concept of asceticism in Christianity is different from *zuhud* in Islam. Asceticism in Christianity teaches more about self-sufficiency and reliance on God; the purpose of the priest resembles the *murshid* in the Islamic *tareqat*, but the priest has the authority to erase sins, while the *murshid* does not; and Christian monks refrain from marrying. Meanwhile, *zuhud* in Islam has a broader meaning, namely: staying away from worldly pursuit in order to avoid the punishment in the hereafter; stay away from worldly indulgence by considering the rewards of the hereafter; and isolating oneself not because of fear or because of hope, but because of love for Allah. Similarly are the teachings of hypostatic union in Christianity and *wahdat al-wujud* in Islam. In the teachings of Hypostatic Union (Trinity), God's relationship with humans (humans being created in the equality of God) are strongly opposed in Islamic teachings. Jesus is forever man-God as two distinct natures in one Person. The humanity and divinity of Jesus do not mix, but unite without losing their unique identity. However, from a Christian point of view, this belief should not be called polytheism. Meanwhile, *Wahdat al-wujud* in Islam teaches that Allah is one and absolute. Allah is the only real existence and the universe is only His shadow. So a Sufi can even get out of the aspect of creatureliness and can unite with God.

## CONCLUSION

Sufism is a conscious activity that aims to create a direct relationship with God, which leads a person to get close or even unite with Him. Sufism is the essence of the Islamic faith, which is often extended to include Islam, faith, and

*ihsan*; or often referred to as *shari'ah*, *tareqat*, and *hakiqat*; or called '*ibadah*,' *ubudiyah*, and '*ubudah*'. In Islam there is no clerical system as in Christianity. Islamic Sufis did not transform Sufism from Christianity or other religions because Sufism is related to human instincts. In addition, the human soul is one despite different societies and nations. The similarities of the practice of *zuhud* do not serve as the reason that Sufism is rooted in Christianity. The concept of *wahdat al-wujud* or transcendent unity in Christianity also has similarities with Islam. The differences between the two lie in the esoteric and exoteric dimensions. However, al-Junaid and al-Ghazali limited the *maqam* of Sufism to only *mahabbah* and *marifah*, a stage of *maqam* that still places humans in their own concrete consciousness. Thus, there is still a distance between man and God. In this modern era, there is a need for a re-interpretation of Sufism, in which Sufism is not only purely oriented towards transcendence to unite with God, but also the fulfillment of our responsibilities as God's caliphs who must improve fellow humans and other creatures. In other words, Sufism not only contains a theophanic dimension of mortality, but also a profane dimension in which there are worldwide interests of fellow human beings.

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