

Understanding 'God as Reality': An Approach Using Islamic Philosophy and Sufism

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Understanding 'God as Reality': An Approach Using Islamic Philosophy and Sufism

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Understanding God as Reality: Analysis of the Ontological Approach in the Tradition of Islamic Philosophy and Sufism

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Abstract

In contrast to the West, which considers God as a myth and negates values about reality and truth, the Muslim philosophers and Sufis base their knowledge on the concept of God that has been established in Islam. This article describes the approach of the Sufis and the Muslim philosophers regarding God as reality and truth. By using the descriptive analysis method, this study draws conclusions based on various arguments: *first*, there is a meeting point between the two, especially in terms of 'al-Haqq' as one of the 'Names' (*asmā*) of Allah which also means 'reality' and 'truth' which are linguistically unified. Therefore, everything that is called 'reality' has to do with the existence of God which provides wisdom behind all reality as God's creation. Because God created reality with a 'true' purpose. *Second*, despite the fundamental differences in various worldviews, the West has never assumed that God is Reality in itself because its worldview has negated the Diversity of metaphysical reality. This is also affirmed, only at the metaphysical level as 'speculative science' or 'noumena' in Kant's account. *Third*, different from the West in Islam, there are various treasures of intellectual property discussions about God as Reality. Although there are many schools in understanding God as Reality, the Muslims have almost the same opinion because they affirm revelation as the only authoritative source of explanation for the concept of God.

Keywords: Reality, Truth, Muslim philosophers, Sufism, al-Haqq, Worldview, Epistemology

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Introduction

The discourse on reality received a lot of attention lately. Because right now, the reality is not understood as it should be. It is because Western thought is dominated by secular and liberal worldviews.¹ That rejects all spiritual elements,² and all forms of metaphysical realities are being questioned.³ According to Peter Ramus, modern means: superiority and progression are authentic whereas the opposite means are primitive.⁴ Thus, Western epistemology views that the object of science is limited to physical reality, and ignores the metaphysical one.⁵ As a consequence, authority and intuition are reduced to merely reason and sensory

¹For more comprehensive literature of Modernism and Postmodernism see the discussion; Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi, "Liberalisasi Pemikiran Islam: Gerakan Bersama Missionaris, Orientalis Dan Kolonialis (Liberalization of Islamic Thought: Study on Missionary, Orientalist, and Colonialist Movements)," *TSAQAFAH* 5, no. 1 (2009): 1, <https://doi.org/10.21111/tsaqafah.v5i1.145>; Usmanul Khakim et al., "God and Worldview According to Al-Attas and Wall," *TSAQAFAH* 16, no. 2 (2020).

²According Alparslan Acikgenc; religion is the only one that is opposed to the evil. Therefore, eliminating all forms of spiritual contained in the religion of human beings, it seems as letting crime, and all worldly crises occurred. See Alparslan Acikgenc, "An Evaluation of Violence from Islam's Perspective," *Alternatives: Turkish Journal Of International Relations*, 2015, <https://doi.org/10.21599/atjir.10072>.

³Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism* (Kuala Lumpur: ABIM, 1978), 15-17; Wan Daud describe these situations as removal of spiritual meanings from key terms and concepts in Islamic worldview and simultaneously from Muslim thought. See also; Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, "Islamization of Contemporary Knowledge: A Brief Comparison Between Al-Attas and Fazlur Rahman," *Al-Shajarah: Journal of the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC)* Vol. 2, no. 1 (1997): 1-19.

⁴Alain Finkielkraut, *The Defeat of The Mind, Translated by Judith Friedlander* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 18; Ferid Muhic, "Postmodern Theory and Its Two Major Self-Deceptions," *Al-Shajarah; Journal of ISTAC* 5, no. 1 (2000): 5.

⁵Rene Guenon, "A Material Civilization," in *The Betrayal of Tradition; Essays on the Spiritual Crisis of Modernity*, ed. John Herlihy (world Wisdom inc, 2005); John Herlihy, *The Essential Rene Guenon; Metaphysics, Tradition, and the Crisis of Modernity*, ed. John Herlihy (Indiana: World Wisdom Inc and Shopia Perennis, 2009), 28-29; Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Man and Nature; The Crisis of Modern Man* (Australia: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1968); Rene Guenon, *Crisis in the Modern World* (Pakistan: Suhail Academy, 1981).

experience.⁶ Then all the invisible things are considered non-existence. Eventually, science is regarded as 'value free' which cannot be avoided.⁷

Al-Attas said that Western civilization produces 'the intellectual confusion'.⁸ Intellectual confusion emerges as a result of the changes and prohibition of keywords usage projecting worldview derived from revelation. As a consequence, this intellectual confusion destructs morality, as well as a culture which is a symptom of the decline of religious knowledge, as well as faith and values.⁹ In other words, the most fundamental issue nowadays in epistemology is the western interpretation of reality, which excludes the aspect of metaphysics called reality where God is the most important.

Then this particular issue, the most fundamental difference between Islam and modern philosophy and science revolve around an understanding of reality and truth. Owing to different understandings of reality, understanding of truth becomes different. The definition has a very big influence on understanding of the science and also the value of epistemology. Finally, it also impacts fundamental differences in the understanding of human nature. With a simpler expression, interpretation of reality will determine the human worldview. If this understanding is wrong, the worldview that is generated will be wrong too.

A different understanding of reality can be traced for example from Western philosophers' statements like Gorgias. He believes that there is no such thing as reality, even though it exists, it cannot be known, even if it can be admitted, it

⁶Based on Hans Daiber, there is no dicotomy specifically between religion and science, between reason and revelation in Islamic tradition, specifically science. Its mean, separate them, is one act of carelessness. See Hans Daiber, "The Way from God's Wisdom to Science in Islam: Modern Discussions and Historical Background," in *Islamic Science and the Contemporary World: Islamic Science in Contemporary Educations*, ed. Baharudin Ahmad (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC-IIUM, 2008), 8.

⁷Martin Carrier, "Values and Objectivity in Science: Value-Ladeness, Pluralism and the Epistemic Attitude," *Science and Education*, 2013, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11191-012-9481-5>; Hans Radder, "Rethinking Science and Values," *International Studies in the Philosophy of Science*, 2010, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02698590903467143>.

⁸Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, "Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam," *Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization*, 1995.

⁹Al-Attas; Fahmy Zarkasyi Hamid, "ANALYZING ISLAMOPHOBIA AS HATE SPEECH: AL-ATTAS' VIEWS ON THE CORRUPTION OF KNOWLEDGE," *Al Qalam* 36, no. 2 (2019): 1-18.

cannot be communicated.¹⁰ So it is not strange that to a certain extent, metaphysical reality cannot be categorized as a 'science' in the Western tradition. Because according to them, the metaphysical reality does not explain anything, except only a subjective view of transcendent matters. The view is dominated by rationality that ultimately requires what is called the philosophy of empiricism. Where the pattern of reality becomes very empirical.¹¹

A very empirical belief in seeing this reality ultimately results in the universe which is seen as limited to a long natural process (evolutionism).¹² This view was approved by Descartes when he says that in the universe no traces of God are found.¹³ In a similar form, Stephen Hawking called the universes were created from nothing, and deny the existence of God.¹⁴ This indicates that Western epistemology does not reach the metaphysical reality. The dominance of rationality and empirical power limits reality to mere appearances. Based on the background above, there are, at least, several questions that arise and need be answered, which are: how is the concept of 'God as Reality' in Islamic Philosophy and Sufism? Is there a meeting point of view in their elucidation about God and His relationship with reality? Both are the main problem in How to elucidate God in two different Islamic intellectual traditions.

¹⁰Original text: "There was no such thing as reality, that if there were, we could not know of it, and even if we could know of it, we could not communicate our knowledge of it". See: Paul Edwards, *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Paul Edwards (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 7.

¹¹Zarkasyi, "Liberalisasi Pemikiran Islam: Gerakan Bersama Missionaris, Orientalis Dan Kolonialis (Liberalization of Islamic Thought: Study on Missionary, Orientalist, and Colonialist Movements)."

¹²Arqom Kuswanjono, *Integrasi Ilmu Dan Agama Perspektif Filsafat Mulla Sadra (The Integration between Science and Religion: Mulla Sadra's Perspective)*, *Psychological Bulletin*, 2010, <https://doi.org/1037//0033-2909.I26.1.78>.

¹³Muhammad Asad on "Islam at the Crossroad" mention that; this Western worldview that considered against God, stems from a very materialistic conception of life, which is the essence of it comes from problematic Christian theology. Asad even considered that the contribution of Christianity to Western civilization was too little. Even if examined more, the core of Western civilization itself is irreligious. See: Muhammad Asad, *Islam at the Crossroads* (Kuala Lumpur: The Other Press, 2005), 26-29.

¹⁴Original text: "Instead M-theory predicts that a great many universes were created out of nothing. Their creation does not require the intervention of some supernatural being or god. Rather, these multiple universes arise naturally from physical law." See: Stephen Hawking and L. Mlodinow, *The Grand Design* (London: Bantam Press, 2010), 18.

2. Discussion

2.1 Reality in Islamic Intellectual Tradition

Before moving on to the concept and how reality is seen from the perspective of philosophical and Sufi traditions, it would be better to first know its etymological meaning and terminology. Etymologically, the reality in the intellectual tradition of Islam can be interpreted into two key terms, namely: *al-ḥaq* and *al-ḥaqīqah*. Al-Tahanawi in the “*Kasyāf Isṭilāḥāt al-Funūn was al-‘Ulūm*” mentions that *al-ḥaq* has a fairly broad field of meaning, besides being interpreted as truth, reality, certainty, honesty, *al-ḥaq* can also be interpreted as a provision that occurs continuously, firmly, steadily, and connotes eternity.¹⁵ Agreeing with al-Tahanawi, Khalil Ibn Ahmad in “*mu’jām al-‘Ain*” means *ḥaq* as opposed to falsehood. Therefore, vanity actions are often called sneaking out of reality in general. Because in reality, humans want goodness. Whereas *al-ḥaqīqah* has meaning as everything that shows the truth about something and its obligation, “*mā yusīru ilaihi ḥaq al-Amri wa wujūbuhu.*”¹⁶ ‘Abdur-Razzaq al-Husaini in *Tāj al-‘Urs* describes *al-ḥaq* as one of the names of Allah SWT, while *al-ḥaqīqah* is interpreted as the effort of the human mind to understand the meaning of “*tabādīr al-dhihni ilā Fahmi al-ma’nā.*”¹⁷

Furthermore, Ibn Mandzur in *lisān al-‘Arab* interpreted *al-ḥaq* as mentioned before, but for him, *al-ḥaqīqah* is about what brings truth and obligation with it.¹⁸ Whereas in another explanation al-Jurjani means *al-ḥaq* with something fixed which is not justified to be denied or rejected because of its fixed and unchanging nature, “*al-tsābit al-ladzī lā yasūghu inkāruhu,*” while the *ḥaqīqah* means what it is, “*mā bihi syaī’ huwa huwa.*”¹⁹ It can be seen that intersecting the real facts that occur and manifest are the same as sneaking around *ḥaqīqah*.

¹⁵Muhammad bin Aliy bin al-Qadhi Muhammad Hamid bin Muhammad Shabir al-Faruqiy al-Hanafiy Al-Tahanawiy, *Mausu’atu Kasyaf Ishtilahat Al-Funun Wa Al-‘Ulum Tahqiq Rafiq Al-‘Ajam Wa Aliy Dahruj* (Beirut: Maktabah Lubnan Nasyirun Publisher, 1996), 682.

¹⁶al-Khalil Ibn Ahmad Abu ‘Abdurrahman, *Mu’jām Al-‘Ain Tahqiq Mahdi Al-Makhzumi* (Dar al-Maktabah al-Hilal, n.d.), 6.

¹⁷Muhammad Ibn Muhammad Ibn ‘Abd Razaq Al-Khusaini, *Tāj Al-‘Ursmin Jawāhir Al-Qāmūs* (Dar al-Hidayah, n.d.), 166.

¹⁸Muhammad bin Mukrim bin Ali Abu al-Fadhl Jamal al-Din Ibnu Mandzur, *Lisān Al-Arab*, vol 10 (Beirut: Daar al-Shadir, n.d.), 52.

¹⁹‘Ali Ibn Muhammad ‘Ali al-Zain al-Sharif Al-Jurjani, *Kitāb Al-Ta’rīfāt Tahqiq Jama’ah Min Al-‘Ulama’* vol 1 (Beirut: Dar al-Kutb al-‘Ilmiyyah Bairut, 1983), 89.

Therefore, terminologically, *al-ḥaq* according to al-Jurjani means assessment of something, and by reality. Besides this meaning, al-Jurjani also interpreted *al-ḥaq* into several meanings: first as opposed to the word from *bāṭil*; second as one of the important names of Allah SWT. The three accuracies of the word “*Sidq al-ḥadīth*”; third, belief after doubt “*al-Yaqīn ba’da al-Syak.*” fourth, the provision “*tsābit*”; and fifth is the compatibility of reality “*wāqī*” with the belief “*i’tiqād*,” like the word *ṣidq* which means conformity with belief and reality. It is clear that the word *ḥaqīqah* means something that is placed by its proper position “*mā uqīru fī al-Isti’māl ‘alā aṣli wad’ihi.*” So here, indirectly *ḥaqīqah* has a corresponding meaning to justice, that is, to put something in its place, consistent, not excessive, and not negligent.²⁰

Apart from that, *al-ḥaqīqah* can also be referred to as quiddity “*al-māhiyyah*,” that-ness “*hūwiyyah*”, and the essence of a thing, “*dzāt.*”²¹ An interesting explanation is given by al-Taftazāni, when *al-ḥaqīqah* is judged from the realization of external reality then it means (*ḥaqīqah*) real. When judged as an individual, it is called ipseity (*hūwiyyah*). Whereas if he is judged as something that stands alone—without judging its manifestation from external reality or standing independently—then it is called quiddity (*māhiyyah*). Furthermore, al-Taftazani adds that the terms of subsistence (*al-thubūt*), realization (*taḥaqquq*), and existence (*wujūd*) have similar fields of meaning.²² Thus, *al-ḥaqīqah* is the true essence of something in a reality, which forms the identity of something and can be measured; both logically and ontologically.

In logical proof, humans, for example, can be considered from adhering to its quiddity, where the genus (*jins*) is animal and the difference (*faṣl*) is ‘rational.’ Therefore, the identification of humans’ species (*naw*) is ‘rational animals.’ Similarly, when viewed from an ontological perspective, namely by paying attention to external reality or its existence individually. Then the composition becomes composed of elements (*māddah*) and forms (*sūrah*), where the identity is the substance, body (*jism*).

Furthermore, in line with the previous explanation, Imam al-Ghazali also has interpreted reality into two terms namely *al-ḥaq* and *al-ḥaqīqah*, in the sense that both are related things, so they cannot be separated. Because according to him *al-ḥaqīqah* has implications for *al-ḥaq* which is true by itself “*mā bihi al-sya’ huwa*

²⁰Al-Jurjani, vol. 1, 152.

²¹Al-Jurjani, vol. 1, 103.

²²Al-Taftazani Sa’ad al-Din, *Syarḥ Al-‘Aqā’Id: A Commentary on the Creed of Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950), 10-11.

fī Nafsihi.” In other words, the essence of something is reality and quality. Then in another explanation when explaining the name of God, al-Ghazali also connects *al-ḥaq* to units of existence and divides existence into three types: the necessary, the possible, and the impossible. It is called ‘necessary’ because it is an absolute truth by itself “*al-ḥaq muṭlaqan*”. Then it is called ‘possible’ because it is ‘possible’ by itself but ‘necessary’ with others, real in one aspect but false in the other aspects “*ḥaq min wajh wa baṭīl min wajh.*” Whereas it is called ‘impossible’ because its existence cannot exist, it is called “*baṭīl Mutlaqan*”. As he said in his book:

"فإن الحقيقة قد يراد بها الحق وهو ما به الشيء حق في نفسه، وهو ذات الشيء وحقيقته وماهيته، ويقابله المجاز، ويكون تقابل الحقيقة والمجاز بهذا الطريق كتقابل الحق والباطل، وهذا مجاز لا حقيقة له ولا أصل له، وهذا المعنى يجب القطع بأن القرآن لا مجاز فيه."²³

Thus, “*Al-ḥaq muṭlaq*” absolute truth is the only thing that exists with itself. So-called, because everything true or real comes from the true or real reality too. That is, God is the only absolute reality which in al-Ghazali’s view is called “*al-Maujūd al-ḥaqīqī*”. Then everything other than Him is relative, intangible, and does not deserve existence “*Kullu syāi’ siwāhu lā yastahiqqu al-wujūd.*” The holy Qur’an also in surah al-Qasas verse 28 states, “*everything must perish, except Allah.*” Up to this point, it can be understood that al-Ghazali connects the concept of *al-ḥaq* which he has in the form of God. Therefore *al-ḥaq* can be translated into “*Real*” or “*True*” simultaneously.²⁴

In short, according to al-Ghazali, reality—*al-ḥaq* or *al-ḥaqīqah*—includes two things namely absolute reality and external reality where the model of its existence differs from one another. It is called a real existence “*al-Maujūd al-ḥaq*” when it exists by itself and does not depend on anything outside of itself. What does not exist by itself, then there will not be: it depends on something else outside of itself. In other words, something that exists by itself will continue to exist even though something around it does not exist.²⁵

Another interesting matter to reveal is that al-Ghazali connects reality with the reality of nature that can be seen and divides it into four degrees of existence. *First*,

²³Al-Ghazālī Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Ṭūsī, *Asās Al-Qiyās*, ed. Fahd ibn Muhammad al-Sarhān (Riyād: Maktabah al-Abikan, 1993), 34.

²⁴Al-Ghazālī Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Ṭūsī, *Al-Maqsād Al-Asnā’ Min Asmā’ Allāh Al-Husnā Tahqiq Mahmud Al-Nawawi* (Cairo: Maktabah al-Kulliyat al-Azhariyyah, n.d.), 91.

²⁵Al-Ghazālī Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Ṭūsī, *Al-Iqtisād Fi Al-I’tiqād*, ed. Insaf Ramadhan (Beirut: Maktabah Kutaibah, 2003), 72.

the reality is in “*laūh mahfūdz*”. This is a reality in an immaterial form, that is, a reality before real reality is realized. The world of nature that can be seen today is derived from this reality. *Second*, the ultimate reality is “*al-Wujūd al-Ḥaqīqī*”. This reality is a reality in the form of matter, which is in physical form. *Third*, imaginative existence “*al-wujūd al-khayālī*.” This existence is the result of human imagination in seeing physical reality. *Fourth*, is the mental reality “*al-Wujūd al-Aqli*” the reality perceived by human reason.²⁶ Furthermore, al-Ghazali explains the intent of the form which he describes as a group of beings, and divides it into five levels of existence: “*al-wujūd al-dzāti*” real form, “*al-wujūd al-ḥissī*” material form, “*al-wujūd al-khayālī*” imaginative form, “*al-wujūd al-Aqli*” form of intellect, “*al-wujūd al-syibhi*” a form of metaphor.²⁷

It can be understood that reality has a wide and diverse range of meanings. But rather, from the variety of meanings, all of them converge to some fundamental aspects; that reality does not only cover what can be observed, measured, and seen, and is limited to them, but also covers metaphysical, non-sensory matters. In addition, the reality is closely related to term truth. And more importantly, understandings and terms relating to reality have interrelated slices and lead to the reality of God.

2.2 Reality on the Philosophy Tradition

After previously the things related to reality in the etymology and terminology were explained, the next discussion that was no less important was how this discourse of reality is seen from the tradition of philosophy. Because reality in itself is a philosophical discourse, a famous discourse is studied in the subject of ontology, especially metaphysics.²⁸ Metaphysics itself is a branch of philosophy that seeks to answer fundamental questions relating to existence²⁹ and reality, truth

²⁶ Al-Ghazālī Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Ṭūsī, *Faiṣāl Tafriqah Bayna Islām Wa Al-Zandaqah*, ed. Sulaymān Dunyā (Cairo: Daar al-Minhaj, 1961), 28-31.

²⁷ Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Ṭūsī, 31.

²⁸ Jabbar Sabil, “Masalah Ontologi Dalam Kajian Keislaman (Ontological Problems in Islamic Studies),” *Jurnal Ilmiah Islam Futura*, 2014, <https://doi.org/10.22373/jiif.v13i2.67>

²⁹ Aristotle in his book mentions that, metaphysics is a science that is different from others sciences. Where the discussion focuses on the “*being qua being*.” In his book he mentions: “[metaphysics studies Being qua Being] There is a science which studies Being qua Being, and the properties inherent in it in virtue of its own nature. This Science is not the same as any of the so-called particular sciences, for none of the others contemplates Being generally qua Being; they divide off some portion of it and study the attribute of this portion as do for example mathematical sciences...[metaphysics studies all the species of

and coincidence, unity and plurality, along with all the attributes that accompany it.³⁰ Thus, metaphysical analysis usually includes a discussion of existence, reality, potentiality and actuality, the conception of space and time, and relations between everything that exists including the problem of causality and so on.

In general, in the discourse of philosophers, reality, truth, and existence refer to the use of the term *al-ḥaq*. All of them refer to a single entity, namely God. Al-Kindi in his book, "*Kitāb al-Kindi ilā al-Mu'tasim Billāh fī Falsafah al-Ūla*" mentions that God is the beginning of the cause of everything "*illāt Syai' kulli wujūd*" and the cause of all truth.³¹ Ibn Rusḥd called it "*Muḥarrik*" (*Kullu muḥarrik Lahu muḥarrik*) and God is the mover of all reality.³² This means that the source of *al-ḥaq* of all beings originates from *al-Ḥaq al-Awwal*. So all beings, owe 'existence' to God, the driving reality that moves. Without the existence of God as a moving reality, the existence of various other entities becomes impossible to occur and materialize.

The same thing was expressed by the famous philosopher al-Farabi. With a slightly different explanation, al-Farabi mentions *al-Ḥaq* as one superiority or independence. This means that He (God) does not need (the existence of) creatures or other realities, instead. He implements reality for other entities, so that the entity becomes available and exists.³³ In another book, al-Farabi explained that God is an independent entity, so He does not need other entities to prove His existence. Besides that, God also describes him as a reality that cannot be associated with any material. He is pure Intellect, internally, He relates to Himself and thinks of Himself.³⁴ Therefore, the "*First Intellect*" for al-Farabi is referred to as the

Being]. See; Aristotle, *The Metaphysics, Translated: Hugh Tredennick* (London: Harvard University Press, 1933), 147-49; Olga Lizzini, "Utility and Gratuitousness of Metaphysics: Avicenna, *Ilāhiyyāt I*, 3," *Quaestio: Journal of the History of Metaphysics* 5 (2005): 307-44, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1484/J.QUAESTIO.2.301835>.

³⁰Adnin Armas, "Wacana Metafisika Al-Attas (Discourse on Al-Attas' Metaphysics)," *ISLAMIA: Jurnal Pemikiran Dan Peradaban Islam* XI, no. 2 (2017): 29-35.

³¹Abu Yusuf Ya'qub Ibn Ishaq al-Sabbah Al-Kindi, *Kitāb Al-Kindi Ilā Al-Mu'tasim Billāh Fī Al-Falsafah Al-Ūla*, *Tahqiq Ahmad Fuad Al-Ahwani* (Cairo, 1948), 98; Felix Klein Franke, "Al-Kindi," in *History of Islamic Philosophy*, Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman (ed's.). (London: Routledge, 1996), 210.

³²Abu al-Walid Muhammad bin Ahmad Ibn Rusyd, *Risālah Al-Atsār Al-'Ulūwiyyah Tahqiq Jirar Jihamy* (Beirut: Daar al-Fikr, 1994), 48-54.

³³Abu Nasir Muhammad bin al-Farakh Al-Farabi, *Fuṣūl Muntaza'ah Tahqiq Fawzi M. Najjar* (Beirut: Daar al-Masyriq Publisher, 1971), 53.

³⁴Abu Nasir Muhammad bin al-Farakh Al-Farabi, *Kitāb Al-Siyāsah Al-Madaniyah Tahqiq FM. Najjar* (Beirut: Dar El-Mashreq Publisher, 1964), 23, 30, 42-45.

principle of all the principles of “*mabdā ‘al-mabādi*” and the principle of all forms of existence. So for *him*, the first reason “*First Intellect*” also means “*First Existent*” (*al-Maujūd al-Awwal*), “*the First One*” (*al-Wahīd al-Awwal*) also “*The First Truth*” (*al-ḥaq al-Awwal*).³⁵ Here, reality is interpreted as the first truth, which is associated with the form of God.

In addition, another peripatetic philosopher al-Kindi applied *al-ḥaq* to all beings, while al-Farabi correlated *al-ḥaq* with the form “*al-Ḥaq tusāwiq al-wujūd*.”³⁶ Al-Farabi also argues that the existence of God is true, and not a speculative argument; so it has a speculative and relative degree of truth.³⁷

“فإن الحق يساوق الوجود، والحقيقة قد تساوق الوجود، فإن الحقيقة الشيء هي الوجود الذي يخصه. وأكمل الوجود هو قسطه من الوجود: وأيضا فإن الحق قد يقال على المعقول الذي صادف به العقل الموجود حتى يطابقه.”³⁸

While Ibn Sina has a relatively identical opinion. He mentions that *al-ḥaq* refers to a single being, its existence is eternal, and also as a statement or belief that shows correspondence with external reality. But it needs to be stressed here that *al-ḥaq* in the meaning of eternal being here refers to the form of God because His being is obliged “*wajīb al-wujūd*” and holy truth “*ḥaq Mahd*” which His substance is truly eternal “*al-ḥaq bidhātihī dā’iman*”³⁹ In another explanation, Ibn Sina mentions God as the first cause of all causes; also the foundation of all kinds of foundations.⁴⁰ Furthermore, Iqbal, a Pakistani philosopher, mentions God as the ultimate reality and is the most obvious. God is seen as the source of all forms, and

³⁵Ibrahim Kalin, *Knowledge in Later Islamic Philosophy: Mulla Sadra on Existence, Intellect, and Intuition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 5.

³⁶Abu Nasir Muhammad bin al-Farakh Al-Farabi, *Arā’ Ahl Al-Madīnah Al-Fādilah Tahqiq Al-Kurdi*, second (Cairo, 1948), 37.

³⁷Abu Ali al-Husain Ibn Abdullah Ibn al-Hasan Ibn Ali Ibn Sina, *Al-Sifā’ Al-Ilāhiyyāt Tahqiq Qanwatiy Wa Said Zayid* (Cairo: Maktabah al-Azhariyah, 1960), 10,48.

³⁸Al-Farabi, *Arā’ Ahl Al-Madīnah Al-Fādilah Tahqiq Al-Kurdi*, 57.

³⁹Ibn Sina, *Al-Sifā’ Al-Ilāhiyyāt Tahqiq Qanwatiy Wa Said Zayid*, 45-48; Abu Ali al-Husain Ibn Abdullah Ibn al-Hasan Ibn Ali Ibn Sina, *Kitāb Al-Najāh Fī Al-Hikmah Al-Mantiqiyyah Wa Al-Ilāhiyyah*, ed. Majid Fakhri (Beirut: Dar al-Afaq al-Jadidah, 1982), 15, 229.

⁴⁰Abu Ali al-Husain Ibn Abdullah Ibn al-Hasan Ibn Ali Ibn Sina, *The Methaphysics of Healing, (Al-Syifā’ Al-Ilāhiyyāt), Annotated by: Michel M. Marmura*, ed. Davis Morgan (Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2005), 2.

all the diversity that exists in the world and that creates harmony in it. Then the reality of God is also called by Iqbal as “*Ultimate Ego*.”⁴¹

Here, even though philosophers explain in slightly different terms, they substantially agree that the true meaning of reality is referred to as the reality of God. This argument—once again—indicates an important conclusion, namely that the dimension of reality is not merely about the visible and measured by the five senses, but more than that. Even when referring to the philosophers’ arguments, the reality of God which is metaphysical in reality is the foundation of the reality of physically visible objects.

2.3 Reality on the Sufi Tradition

In the Sufi tradition, reality can be categorized at least into three broad categories. *First*, God’s essence that transcends all boundaries; including existence, as well as the principle of all manifestations of existence itself. *Second*, “*wujūd al-munbasith*” extended of existence: including the action, word, or first determination of God’s essence, whose entity is equated with light. *Third*, particular existence which are levels and gradations of expanded forms. From this expanding form, all kinds of abstractions of essence occur. However, all levels of reality cannot be understood separately; but rather put together. So that it can also be called that reality—in the perspective of the Sufis—is an absolute unity which has gradations; where the symbols are being understood as light.⁴² So here, the reality is one, although basically, it is a collection of various gradations.

Furthermore, in tasawuf discourses, existence indicates certain intuition—“finding” something behind the phenomenon. Abdullah Ansari, a Sufi born of Khurasan, identifies existence form as capturing (acquiring) the reality of something (*al-ẓafār bi ḥaqīqati al-syai’*).⁴³ In his book *Ṭabaqāt*, Ansari shows that the sign of being is *fanā’* (annihilation).⁴⁴ Ansari’s argument seems to imply a paradox; that is the overlapping statement, but the intention is not the case. The purpose of this statement is that, when that existence is truly present, it implies the

⁴¹Mohammad Iqbal, *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Lahore: Peace Publication, 2015), 68; Jamila Khatoon, *The Place of God Man and Universe in the Philosophic System of Iqbal* (Karachi: Iqbal Academy Pakistan, 1963), 41-42.

⁴²Toshihiko Izutsu, *Creation and the Timeless Order of Things: Essays in Islamic Mystical Philosophy* (Pakistan: Suhail Academy, 2005), 187-88; Toshihiko Izutsu, *Struktur Metafisika Sabzawari* (Bandung: Penerbit Pustaka, 2003), xiii–xiv.

⁴³Abdallah Ansari, *Manāzil Al-Sā’irīn Tahqiq A.Shirvani* (Iran: Intisyarat-i Furughi, 1380), 138.

⁴⁴Abdallah Ansari, *Ṭabaqāt Al-Şūfiyyah* (Tehran: Intisyarat-i Furughi, 1380), 137.

absence of *fanā'*. Because the actual refers to the form of God. Then reality in the true sense means the existence of God.

It is interesting to examine, that Ibn Arabi also identifies existence as acquiring reality in existence (*wijdān al-ḥaq fī al-Wajd*).⁴⁵ So from this explanation, it can be said that existence refers to the spiritual experience or the period of someone's illumination through an intuitive way, or in the language of al-Ghazali known as "*mukāsyafah*." Interestingly, the intuitive experience can be developed through different channels between one person and another. Here it appears that in the Sufi tradition, existence is discussed as the presence of mystical intuition. This is different from the philosophical tradition which suggests an investigation of existence in the sense of 'present' and reality in real terms. Differently, Suhrawardi states that all reality is nothing but 'light' which has various levels of intensity. In the Suhrawardi framework, what becomes "*nūr al-Anwar*" is the Essence of God, and as the 'Supreme Light' God is called the source of existence of all things. The universe in all fields of reality is nothing more than light and darkness. In other words, the reality of (existence) God is the Light, the very nature of 'light' being to be self-manifesting in self and bringing others into manifestation; it is in brief, the presence "*ḥudūr*" of itself and others, "*zāhir binafsihi wa muḥhir lighairihi*."⁴⁶ As quoted in his book as follows:

The Essence of the First Absolute Light, God, gives constant illumination, whereby it is manifested and it brings all things into existence, giving life to them by its rays. Everything in the world is derived from the Light of His essence and all beauty and perfection are the gifts of His bounty, and to attain fully to this illumination is salvation.⁴⁷

In line with that, Haidar Amuli divides existence into two things. *First*, pure absolute existence as pure light *nūr*. While *second*, shadow *zill* and dark existence. Based on Amuli's thought, in the eyes of the real metaphysician, the shadow also is existence, but it is not the pure reality of existence.⁴⁸ With the same argument,

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⁴⁵Abu Abdillah Muhammad Ibn Ali Ibn Muhammad Ibn Arabi, *Al-Futūḥāt Al-Makkiyya*, ed. Ibrāhīm Madkour and Usman Yahya (Cairo: al-Hay'at al-Mashriyah al-'Ammah li al-Kutub, 1985), 538.

⁴⁶Izutsu, *Creation and the Timeless Order of Things: Essays in Islamic Mystical Philosophy*, 192.

⁴⁷Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages: Avicenna - Suhrawardi - Ibn 'Arabi*, First Prin (Delmar, New York: Caravan Books, 1964), 69; Margareth Smith, *Readings From the Mystics of Islam* (New York, 1950), 79.

⁴⁸Toshihiko Izutsu, *Creation and the Timeless Order of Things: Essays in Islamic Mystical Philosophy*, 9.

Ibn Arabi called God as the ‘Absolute’ which in his view is also called *al-ḥaq*: that is the only real and absolute reality.⁴⁹ Apart from that, Ibn Arabi called it a *dream* reality, but he was not merely an illusion. It means that true sensory reality is a particular appearance of Absolute Reality; a particular form of self-manifestation from God’s *tajalli*.⁵⁰ So all diversity in the world of reality, both sensory and intellectual, is only a shadow. It is formed in the human mind as the second image of an object in someone’s eye.⁵¹ With another expression, the various realities do not manifest themselves, but as expressions of a single reality.

This opinion of Ibn Arabi relies on a hadith of the Prophet, “*Al-Nās Niyāmun wa Idzā Mātū fa intabahū*.”⁵² According to him, this hadith means warning to humans, as well as the fact that whatever humans perceive in this world is the same as dreams that occur in people sleeping “*niyām*”. What is seen in dreams is an “imaginal” form of reality, not reality itself. While the meaning of “dead” is not a biological event that occurs in humans as known by ordinary people, but a spiritual event that demands human action to remove the senses of reason to go beyond phenomenal boundaries of nature, and look far behind phenomenal objects that, by feeling the mystical experience of “*fanā*” self-annihilation. In his book Ibn Arabi writes as follows:

"فمن حيث أحديّة كونه ظلّا هو الحق، لانه الواحد الأحد. ومن حيث كثرة الصورة هو العالم، فتفطن وتحقق ما أوضحته لك. وإذا كان الأمر على ما نكرته لك فالعالم متوهم ماله وجود الحقيقي، وهذا بمعن الخيال. أي خيل لك أنه أمر زائد قائم بنفسه خارج عن الحق وليس كذلك في نفس الأمر."⁵³

"...فاعلم أنك خيال وجميع ماتدركه مما تقول فيه ليس أنا خيال. فالوجود كله خيال في خيال، والوجود الحق إنما هو الله خاصة من حيث ذاته وعينه..."⁵⁴

Based on the above facts, it can be said, even though the object of the study is ‘manifestation’, the approach used in the Sufi tradition and philosophical tradition has quite striking and fundamental differences. The approach used in more philosophical traditions—certainly not to say the whole—focuses on rational

⁴⁹Toshihiko Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism: A Comparative Study of Key Philosophical Concepts* (London: University California Press, 1984), 8.

⁵⁰Abu Abdillah Muhammad Ibn Ali Ibn Muhammad Ibn Arabi, *Fuṣūṣ Al-Ḥikam Tahqiq Abu Al-‘Ala ‘Afif* (Cairo: Dār al-Kitāb al-Arabī, 1946), 159.

⁵¹Haidar Bagir, *Epistemologi Tasawwuf: Sebuah Pengantar (An Introduction to Sufi Epistemology)* (Bandung: Mizan Pustaka, 2017).

⁵²Toshihiko Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism: A Comparative Study of Key Philosophical Concepts*, 8.

⁵³Ibn Arabi, *Fuṣūṣ Al-Ḥikam Tahqiq Abu Al-‘Ala ‘Afif*, 103.

⁵⁴Ibn Arabi, *Fuṣūṣ Al-Ḥikam*, 104.

“*istidlāl al-Aqli*”⁵⁵ arguments and “*burhān Aqli*” rational demonstrations,⁵⁶ while in the Sufi tradition the focus is on intuitive experiences or illuminative existence “*hudūr isyrāqi*” so their goal is not only to expose reality but also to the reality of being itself.⁵⁷ However, both agree to one thing, the Reality of God is the only real reality and becomes the cause of the whole reality of the universe.

3. The Main Elements of Reality

In Islam, the discourse on reality will at least intersect with various elements, including the concept of God, which deals with the concept of oneness of God, and with its characteristics. Then the discussion regarding cosmology; where the doctrine of creation becomes a serious object of study. Besides, what is not less important is the talk about the reality of things. For this reason, in this section, we will discuss some of the things mentioned above, with the intention that the presentation focused on the title of this thesis can be comprehensively presented and illustrated.

3.1 On The Concept of God

The explanation of God has an essential place in the supersystem. In general, the discourse concerning God in the Islamic intellectual tradition can be categorized into two major groups: philosopher (*falāsifah*) and theologian (*mutakallimūn*). Although in fact, theologians have a more varied explanation than the explanation of philosophers, nevertheless both agree that the concept of God is the principle that supports a house in which many concepts are also interconnected, such as the concept of the world, the concept of human being, the concept of Science, and so on. In short, if the explanation of the concept of God has been established then the other concepts will automatically follow.

About the concept of God, al-Ghazali emphasized that God is transcendent and faithful at the same time. It means that God transcends the boundaries of space and

⁵⁵Murtadha Muthahhari, *Theoretical Philosophy and Practical Philosophy: An Introduction to Islamic Philosophy* (Yogyakarta: Rausyan Fikr, 2010).

⁵⁶Abu al-Walid Muhammad bin Ahmad Ibn Rusyd, *Faṣl Al-Maqāl Mā Bayna Al-Syarī'ah Wa Al-Ḥikmah Min Ittiṣāl Tahqīq Muhammad 'Immarah* (Cairo: Daar al-Ma'arif, 1969), 28-29; Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi, “Ibn Taymiyyah’s Critique of Aristotelian Metaphysics,” *Jurnal Akidah & Pemikiran Islam* 11, no. 1 (2010): 167-90, <https://adminconference.um.edu.my/index.php/afkar/article/view/5805>.

⁵⁷Ibn Rusyd, *Faṣl Al-Maqāl Mā Bayna Al-Syarī'ah Wa Al-Ḥikmah Min Ittiṣāl Tahqīq Muhammad 'Immarah*, 38.

time, he has full will and authority to regulate the whole universe⁵⁸. In al-Razi; everything depends “contingent being” requires the determinant to realize something. And those who can realize it are only God as a “*wajīb al-wujūd*.” Besides, God is also close to his servant at the same time. The holy Qur’ān mentions “*I (God) am closer to the neck veins.*” Interestingly, to show the transcendence of God, al-Ghazali does not refer to God as substance (*jawhar*), because substance usually refers to worldly objects⁵⁹. According to him, God is an incorporeal reality outside of space and time. Then the idea of the holy Qur’ān regarding the hands, eyes, the face of God must be interpreted metaphorically (*majāz*)⁶⁰. Al-Ghazali also mentions that God’s essence is unique, individual; for it does not require a companion, and nothing resembles Him, He is eternal.⁶¹

3.2 On the Unity of God

According to al-Farabi, the unity of God means that God is perfect, has no shortcomings, and stands independently because it does not depend on other entities.⁶² Similar to this, al-Ghazali mentions that the oneness of God has the meaning of the negation of anything that matches Him and affirms its essence. In addition, the term “one” means denial of plurality; that He does not accept division, then does not amount, and does not have the quantity of both small and large parts (*lā kammiyah wa lā juz’ wa lā miqdār*). God cannot be equated in any way and does not have a partner. God is perfect and nothing equals both essence and nature.⁶³ Furthermore, al-Ghazali identified this oneness of God into three theories. First, the theory of “*divine uniqueness*” that God—as mentioned earlier—is an

⁵⁸Yasin Ceylan, *Theology and Tafsiir in the Major Works of Fakhr Al-Din Al-Razi* (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought & Civilization (ISTAC), 1996), 85; Al-Ghazālī Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Ṭūsī, “Al-Ḥikmah Fī Makhlūqātillāh,” in *Al-Qusūr Awāli Min Rasā’il Al-Ghazālī*, ed. M. Mustafa Abu Al-‘Ala, III (Cairo: Maktabah al-Jundi, 1972), 11-12.

⁵⁹Al-Ghazālī Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Ṭūsī, *Tahāfut Al-Falāsifah*, ed. Michael E. Marmura (Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2000), 41; Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Ṭūsī, *Al-Iqtisād Fī Al-‘Itiqād*, 69-70.

⁶⁰Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Ṭūsī, *Tahāfut Al-Falāsifah*, 56-58.

⁶¹Al-Ghazālī Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Ṭūsī, *Al-Arba ‘in Fī Uṣhūl Al-Dīn*, ed. al-Shaykh Mustafa Abu Al-‘Ala (Cairo: Maktabah al-Jundi, n.d.), 13.

⁶²Al-Farabi, *Arā’ Ahl Al-Madīnah Al-Fādilah Tahqiq Al-Kurdi*, 42-43; Al-Farabi, *Kitāb Al-Siyāsah Al-Madaniyah Tahqiq FM. Najjar*, 42.

⁶³Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Ṭūsī, *Al-Iqtisād Fī Al-‘Itiqād*, 69.

entity that is different from anything and anyone.⁶⁴ So, the characteristics of God cannot be imagined by anything; like anything, humans know. This means that the knowledge of God has a far divergence from the knowledge of His creatures.⁶⁵

Furthermore, the indifferent explanation was also explained by al-Thahanawi. In "*aqidah al-Ṭahāwiyah*" he explained that the purpose of a verse of Al-Qur'ān "*Laisa kamithlihī syai'un*" is that God has the will for all things; everything other than himself is called *fakr*, all matters become easy at His will, and He does not need anything but Himself.⁶⁶ This fact reaffirms that God is an Absolute Reality that cannot be matched by anything. He is different and depends on other realities outside of Himself. Ismail Raji al-Faruqi gives such an explanation as to the principle of duality; part of his explanation of *tawhīd* as a worldview.

According to al-Faruqi, the principle of duality means dividing reality into two types; *khāliq* and *makhlūq*. The *first* type has only one entity, the transcendent creator Allah. While the *second* type, is the order of space and time, experience, and so on which includes all beings, the world of objects, plants, animals, humans, jinn, angels, heaven and earth, heaven and hell. These two types of reality—namely *khāliq* and *makhlūq*—are completely different in their existence, anthology and existence. In short, it is forever impossible to happen that one is entered into another; the Creator can't be ontologically transformed and changed to become a creation, and *vice versa*. Al-Faruqi explained in his book as follows:

Reality is of two generic kinds, God and non-God; Creator and creature. The first order has but one member, Allah SWT. He alone is God, the Eternal, the Creator, the Transcendent. "*Nothing is like unto Him*". He remains forever absolutely unique and devoid of partners and associates. The second is the order of space-time, of experience, of creation. It includes all creatures, the world, the things, plants, animals, humans, jinn and angels, heaven and earth, paradise and hell, and they're becoming since they came into being. The two orders of Creator and creation are utterly and dispartes as far as their being, or ontology, as well as their experience and careers, are connected. It is forever impossible that the one is united with, infused, confused with, or diffused into the other. Neither can the

⁶⁴Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Ṭūsī, *Al-Maqsād Al-Asnā' Min Asmā' Allāh Al-Husnā Tahqiq Mahmud Al-Nawawi*, 34.

⁶⁵Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Ṭūsī, *Al-Arba'īn Fī Uṣhūl Al-Dīn*, 18-23.

⁶⁶Abi Ja'far Al-Thahawi, *Al-'Aqidah Al-Ṭahāwīyyah, Tahqiq Majdi Abu 'Arisy* (Beirut: Dar al-Bayariq, 2001), 19.

Creator be ontologically transformed to become the creature, nor can the creature transcend and transfigured itself to become, in any way or sense, the Creator.”⁶⁷

The *second* theory states that the oneness of God comes from the human experience of recognition “*there is no God but Allah [lā ilāha illa Allāh]*”. Al-Ghazali clarified this experience into four forms of expression: (a) the level of statement in the form of speech, but at the same time accompanied by denial of the truth in his heart. This expression occurs at the level of the hypocrites. (b) Expressions accept the truth from the statement of the oneness of God both in the heart and in speech. This is the *tawhīd* of ordinary people, which is practiced by ordinary people and applies in general. (c) The degree to which humans—as seekers—feel that the diversity of things is produced by the One and the Almighty, God. This expression is a feature of *tawhīd Fi’li* (trust in an Actor) which can only be achieved by humans who approach God “*al-muqarrabūn*”. (d) The level at which humans do not see any existence except the existence of God. This level is filled by the *siddiqūn*.⁶⁸

Furthermore, at this last level, Sufis call it the term “*al-fanā’ fi al-tawhīd.*” This means that the situation is unconscious of anything in seeing oneself and whatever is created even outside of it all. This happens with the full awareness that God’s ownership as the Absolute Reality is too great.⁶⁹ So if we pay close attention, the argument of the unity of God mentioned earlier is by the concepts of *al-ḥaq* and *al-ḥaqīqah* and the reality of existence. The first two levels are descriptions of the meaning of truth, while the last two are by the meaning of reality.

The third theory refers to God-world relations in two different phrases; action phrases and expressions phrases.⁷⁰ That God is the only entity capable of wanting and acting. In other words, God is the real Agent (*fi’l*), the true actor in all existence. This is the stage where humans feel nothing but “*al-Wahīd al-Ḥaq*”. Then because God is called the only real reality, the result is that everything other than himself will be destroyed; the holy Qur’an mentions “*Kullu syai’in hālikun*

⁶⁷Ismail Raji Al-Faruqi, *L-Tawhīd: Its Implications for Thought and Life*, IV (Virginia: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1992), 10-11.

⁶⁸Harun Nasution, *Filsafat Dan Mistisisme Dalam Islam (Philosophy and Mysticism in Islam)* (Jakarta: Penerbit Bulan Bintang, 1978).

⁶⁹Abu Hamid Muhammad ibn Muhammad Al-Ghazali, *Iḥyā’ Ulūmiddīn, Tahqiq Abdul Aziz Sirwān* (Beirut: Dar al-Qalam, n.d.), 230-32.

⁷⁰Abdul Haq Ansari, “The Doctrine of Divine Command: A Study in the Development of Ghazzali’s View on Reality,” *Islamic Studies*, No. 3, Vol. XXI, (autumn 1982), 19-20.

illa wajhah."⁷¹ It means that outside of God's reality cannot be called "*al-Maujūd al-Ḥaq*".⁷²

3.3 On The Attributes of God

In addition to the oneness of God discussed earlier, in the concept of God there is also an argument concerning the attributes of God. This argument inspires an interesting view of the "*tasybīh*" which says that between God and his creatures, especially humans, it is possible for similarity in positive knowledge about God. This interesting statement starts from a Qudsi hadīth that reads "*kuntu kanzan makhfiyyan*"; *I was a Hidden Treasure (and) I wanted to be known, so I created Creation.*" Here, God expressed his desire to be known by His creatures—especially humans—so He created the universe as a medium, through which the human being can ultimately recognize its glorious properties; *sifāh* Her attributes.⁷³

Those are reasonable because something can be known well when between subjects (who know) with objects (known) found in common.⁷⁴ This means that when speaking of the nature of God, humans can find some similarities, which lead to allowing people to know God positively. As an example; humans can—to some extent—know the nature of "knowing" God because even humans have the nature of knowing⁷⁵. The same thing is also believed by al-Ghazali. He divided the nature of God into seven characteristics; Alive, All-Knowing, All Willing, All-Powerful, All-Seeing, All-Hearing, Most Speaking; all are called the nature of *sifāt al-ma'nā*.⁷⁶ For al-Ghazali *sifāt* cannot be separated from the Divine dimension, because for him God cannot be understood without it. Apart from that, the attachment of character to God has a logical consequence that God is a living entity

⁷¹QS: *Al-Qashash* [28]: 88, n.d.

⁷²Al-Ghazali, *Iḥyā' Ulūmiddīn, Tahqiq Abdul Aziz Sirwān*, 33–34.

⁷³William C. Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God: Principles of Ibn Al-Arabi's Cosmology*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr (New York: State University of New York, 1998), xxi–xxii; Mulyadi Kartanegara, *Menyelami Lubuk Tasawwuf (In the Deep of Sufism)* (Jakarta: Erlangga, 2006), 44–48.

⁷⁴Rowson and Everett K, *A Muslim Philosopher on the Soul and Its Fate: Al-'Amiri's Kitāb Al-Amād 'alā Al-Abād* (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1988), 264–65.

⁷⁵Abdul Hye, *Aliran Asy'ariyah* in *Aliran-Aliran Filsafat Islam: Mu'tazilah, Asy'ariyyah, Maturidiyyah, Thahawiyah, Zhahiriyah, Ikhwan Al-Safa (The Asy'arite in Islamic Philosophy and Theology: Mu'tazilite, Asy'arite, Maturidite, Thahawiya, Zahirite, Ikhwan Al-Safa)*, ed. M. M. Sharif (Bandung: Nuansa Cendekia, 2006).

⁷⁶Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Ṭūsī, *Al-Iqtisād Fi Al-I'tiqād*, 29.

and describes Him as having the ultimate will which is the cause of creation. God is an agent who is omniscient, most powerful, he does what he wants, and likes.

".....المبدأ الأول عالم قادر مرید يفعل مايشاء ويحكم مايريد، يختفات والمتجانسات كمايريد وعلى مايريد..."

".....the First Principle is knowing, powerful, willing; that He enacts as He wishes, governs what He wills, creates things that are varied and things that are homogeneous as He wills and in the way He wills"⁷⁷

It should be noted, as previously reviewed that God does have traits, but in truth, these traits are different from the essence of God itself; both have differences. In this regard, al-Ghazali introduced four principles; *first*, nature is recognized not by His essence. Because to mention God, does not mean knowing God is powerful, and so on. *Second*, all of God's attributes live according to His essence. *Third*, all the attributes of God are eternal. *Fourth*, that all "*sifāt al-ma'na*" the nature of God—such as the Supreme willing—is eternally continuously based on him.⁷⁸ Al-Ghazali's argument about this trait was criticized by the Mu'tazilites. Because for them, if God has character, that character is eternal as God. This has an impact on the existence of dual immortality "*ta'addud al-qudamā*". Al-Ghazali himself dismissed the accusation by stating that the nature of God is not the same as God; even different from the essence of God itself. This defense of al-Ghazali is known as "*lā hiya Huwa wa lā hiya ghairuhu*."⁷⁹

4. Conclusion

To sum up in conclusion, we can understand in connection with this, Ash'arite also believes that God, which is Reality itself; must have character. But they reject the arguments of "*Sifātiyah Mujassimah*" and "*Musyabbihah*". The reason is that God has the same characteristics as in the holy Qur'ān and al-Hadith, whose characteristics are by His Substance and are not at all resembling the characteristics of beings. This means that God hears but not as a creature hears, not like a creature in seeing and so on. For Ash'arite, the nature of God is unique because it cannot be equated with beings. God does have attributes that are identical to humans, but all those attributes must be understood in "*bi lā Kayf*", without being overshadowed by the question 'how', and "*bi lā tasybīh*" that is without looking

⁷⁷ Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Ṭūsī, *Tahāfut Al-Falāsifah*, 76.

⁷⁸ Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Ṭūsī, *Al-Iqtisād Fi Al-I'tiqād*, 114,121,123.

⁷⁹ Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Ṭūsī, 138-39.

for a comparison.⁸⁰ Furthermore, al-Baqillani divided the attributes of God into two parts; the attributes of *al-dzāt* and the attributes of *al-af'āl*. The *first*, cannot be separated from the Sublime Substance of Allah. While the *second* describes the nature of God that is related to His actions.⁸¹

On another occasion, Ibn Arabi described God's character with the cosmos. As Chittick explains, for Ibn Arabi the nature of 'Most knowing' for example, indicates God's knowledge of the entire reality of the universe. In other words, the relationship of knowledge is formed between God and what God knows. Because God is a creator, the nature of the relationship of creativity is formed between God and His creation.⁸² From the explanation above, it can be concluded that the discourse relating to God; both His oneness and His attributes have a profound influence on the concepts of reality and existence. The concept of God is closely related to the concept of God as "*al-Maujūd al-Ḥaq*" or "*The Real Existence*." That God is the only source of existence, the only entity that creates the universe. So it is commonly understood that the concept of God and His attributes are the foundation of the concept that plays an important role in providing more detailed explanations regarding Absolute Reality, as well as other realities or creations.

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⁸⁰Abu al-Hasan al-Asy'ari, *al-Ibānah 'an Uṣūl al-Diyānah* (Madinah Munawarah: Markāz Syu'ūn al-Dakwah, 1409), 47.

⁸¹Ahmad Mahmud Subhi, *Fī 'Ilm al-Kalām* (Cairo: Dār al-Kutūb al-Jamī'ah, 1969), 97.

⁸²William C. Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God: Principles of Ibn al-Arabi's Cosmology*, (ed) Seyyed Hossein Nasr (New York: State University of New York, 1998), xvii.

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