

# **'IRFANI EPISTEMOLOGY IN ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY PERSPECTIVE**

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*Abstract: This study tries to describe the epistemology of Irfani and formulate the Irfani method in Islamic philosophy. In this study, the researcher used the literature review method. This study concludes that Irfani means knowledge, where this knowledge is obtained directly through experience (experiment) on religious spiritual reality. Irfani's development is divided into six phases: 1) The nursery phase. 2) Birth phase. 3) Growth phase. 4) Peak phase. 5) The specification phase 6) The decline phase. Irfani's methods and stages: a) The first stage, preparation. b) The second stage, the acceptance stage. c) The third stage, disclosure. Irfani in the perspective of Islamic Philosophy can be seen in the explanation of Muhyiddin ibn 'Arabi, who said Makrifat and this intuitive knowledge are not reached by reason and rational argumentation, but by divine guidance. Surahwardi does not consider that intuitive knowledge (read: irfani knowledge) precedes reasonable knowledge. The preamble of intuitive knowledge is the purification and enlightenment of the soul, which is a prelude to rational discussion, namely the science of logic.*

**Keywords: Irfani, Epistemology, Islamic Philosophy**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Epistemology or theory of science became the primary concern of Muslim scholars in the past. They are entirely aware of the importance of defining science for seeking clarification, identify scope and imitations, explain sources, explain the methods, and clarify them into various disciplines, explaining hierarchies and the interrelation. A strong belief inspires the continuous efforts in presenting scientific expositions in the most fundamental doctrine of Islam, namely Tauheed.

In Epistemology, many parts are each as a design, which then forms an autonomous discipline. One of them is Epistemology Irfani which is a branch of Islamic philosophy, like Burhani and Bayani. However, when discussing continues into the realm of science in general, then of course, Irfani's epistemology also has a hand in it. Maybe Irfani's Epistemology is considered a small part of the whole branch of philosophy. However, it will find interesting phenomena that can actually be used as the beginning of the following ideology in the discussion.

## **METHOD**

The research method used in compiling this article is a literature review. The researcher explores the empirical and theoretical data contained in relevant articles in various journals and books. Among other methods, a literature review plays an essential role in identifying previously written subjects and topics. The following function is to determine the specific position of research among various research trends and patterns. Grouping empirical findings related to research questions that are narrowed to support evidence and generate new theories and frameworks and identify topics or questions that require further investigation. The literature review involves the culture, ethics, and various sources in which we as researchers, including our values, beliefs, and experiences as researchers.

According to Creswell, the purpose of the literature review is to show knowledge of the field before conducting the research. Creswell suggests a seven step process for carrying out the literature review: 1. Identify key words that will be useful in locating materials, 2. Search a library catalogue for holdings using key words, 3. Try to locate about 50 reports of research in articles or books related to the topic. Aim for journal articles and books, 4. Select from the above, those articles that are central to the research by looking at abstracts and content pages to determine whether they will make a useful contribution to an understanding of the literature, 5. Design a literature map, 6. Draft summaries of the most important articles. Include references, 7. Assemble the literature review thematically or by concepts addressed in the study<sup>1</sup>.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **1. Definition of Irfani**

The term irfani was first conveyed by Ibn Arabi. irfani itself is a

model of illuminative knowledge known in Shi'a circles. So ideologically, this term is closely related to the Shi'is. Among the Sunnis, we are familiar with the term *ladunni*, which al-Ghazali popularized. However, essentially, this term intends to refer to a kind of illuminative knowledge language that is the result of mystical experiences by the *irfans*. In Ibn Arabi's sense, *'irfani* is a kind of knowledge with enlightened representation and is obtained from knowledge with mystical presence through scientific relations<sup>2</sup>.

*Irfani* is the Arabic language that consists of the letters *ع ر ف*, has two original meanings, namely something that is sequentially connected to each other and means silence and calm<sup>3</sup>. But literally, *al-'irfan* is to know something by thinking and studying deeply. Thus *al-'irfan* is more unique than *al-'ilm*<sup>4</sup>.

*Irfani* from the Arabic root word *'arafa*, which means *makrifat*, means knowledge<sup>5</sup>. But it is different from knowledge (*'ilm*). *Irfan* or *makrifat* is related to the knowledge obtained directly through experience, while science refers to knowledge acquired through transformation (*naql*) or rationality (*aql*).

In philosophy, *irfani* is better known as intuition. With intuition, humans acquire knowledge suddenly without going through a specific reasoning process. Characteristics of intuition include; *zauqi* is through direct experience, *huduri* science is the presence of objects in the subject, and *existential*, namely without going through categorization but knowing it intimately. Henry Bergson considered intuition to be the product of the highest evolution of thought, but it was personal<sup>6</sup>.

In the first surah that was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad, it is explained that there are two ways to gain knowledge. first through the "pen" (writing), which must be read by humans:

مَّا يَلْمِزُكَ الْإِنشَاءُ لَمْ يَلْمِزْهُم (5)

the second is through direct teaching without tools. This second method is known as *'ilm Ladunni* as the knowledge gained by the Prophet Haidir:

فَوَجَدَا عَبْداً مِّنْ عَبَادِنَا أَيْ نَاهُ رَحْمَةً مِّنْ عِنْدِنَا  
أَعْلَىٰ (65)

The philosophers introduced what is called intuition. Some of them divide it into three kinds of intuition. The first, based on sensory experiences such as knowledge of smells or without something. The second, direct

knowledge achieved through reason and axioms like A is A, not B, or 2 is bigger than 1. While the third, is the sudden emergence of a brilliant idea, as was Newton, who discovered the force of gravity after seeing an apple that fell not far from where he was sitting<sup>7</sup>.

## **2. The Origin of Irfani's Epistemology**

Experts differ on the origin of the irfani source. This opinion can be classified into the following points: 1. Some groups think that irfani comes from Persia and the Magian as stated by Dozy and Thoulk. The reason is that several great Sufis came from Khurasan and the Magi group<sup>8</sup>. 2. Others say that irfani comes from Christianity as expressed by Von Kramer, Ignaz Goldziher, Nicholson, and others. Their reasons can at least be grouped into two points, namely: a. The interaction that occurred between Arabs and Christians during the period of ignorance and Islam. b. The similarity of life between Sufis and Jesus and Monks in teaching, rituals of Riyadhah, worship and dress code. 3. Others argue that irfani comes from India like Horten and Hartman. The reasons put forward are a. The emergence and spread of the first irfani from Khurasan. b. Most of the first generation of Sufis were not Arabs. c. Turkistan was the center of religion and culture of the east and west before Islam which more or less influenced mysticism. d. Irfani concepts and methods such as generosity of heart and the use of tasbih are practices from India. 4. Others argue that irfan comes from Greece, especially neo-platonism and Hermes. The reason is simple that Aristotle's theology is an amalgamation of the porphyry and proclus systems that are well known in Islam<sup>9</sup>.

The question here is, is it true that Irfani comes from sources outside of Islam? Is it true that Islam itself does not have teachings about irfani? According to Nicholson, irfani or Sufism is something that is complicated and complex, so it cannot be given a simple answer or based on one aspect of its origin. Based on this basis we try to see the origin and source of irfani.

The first opinion, that irfani comes from Persian sources and Magi, obviously do not have a solid footing. (1) The development of irfani and Sufism is not just the efforts of Ma'ruf al-Kharkhi and Bayazid Busthami. Many Arab Sufi figures who lived in Egypt, Syria and Baghdad, such as Dzun al-Nun al-Misri (d. 861 AD), Abd al-Qadir Jailani (d. 1165 AD), ibn Arabi (d. 1240 AD), Umar ibn Faridl (d. 1234 AD), and Ibn Athaillah al-Iskandari (d. 1309 AD). They are even figures who have a big influence on

Irfan's development in the future. (2) The emergence of Ma'ruf al-Kharkī (d. 815 AD) and Bayazid Busthamī (d. 877 AD) was after the time of the Apostle, the Companions and the first generation of Sufism. This means completely ignoring the influence of the life of the Apostle, the companions and the first figures of the Sufism generation, such as Hasan al-Basri (d. 728 AD), Malik ibn Dinar (d. 748 AD), Rabi'ah al-Adawiyah (d. 752 AD) and Ibrahim ibn Adham (782 AD)<sup>10</sup>.

The second opinion, irfani from Christianity. It is admitted that there are similarities between Islamic Sufism and Christian mysticism, but this is not sufficient as an excuse that irfan comes from a Christian source. Likewise, it is undeniable that Christian teachings influenced some Sufi figures, such as al-Hallaj (858-913 AD), who used Christian terminologies, such as malakût, lahût, and nasût. However, such symptoms only appeared at the end, after Sufism's second and third periods were quite well established and had the potential to support the emergence of the next generation of Sufism. The teachings of the Qur'an, Sunnah, the life of the Prophet and his companions more convincing us that irfani and spiritual practice are taken from Islamic sources themselves. Nicholson himself, in his final study, denied the irfani basis from outside Islam. According to him, Christianity does have an influence on Irfan's growth but not as a source.

The third opinion, irfani from an Indian source. No different from the first, this opinion is even more unacceptable to reason. There is no concrete evidence that shows that the Sufis knew the doctrine and spiritual practice of the Hindus except for Abd al-Haqq ibn Sab'in (d. 1270 AD), who wrote al-Risâlah al-Nuriyah. There is a form of praise quoted from Hindu circles. But this is meaningless, because Sufism and Irfani have been firmly rooted more than 6 centuries before. The orientalist themselves, such as Nicholson, O'leary, and EG. Browne rejected this opinion.

The fourth opinion, irfani from Greek, Neo-platonic or Hermes. There is no denying the influence Greece against irfan. The thought of illumination and the singular form of Plotinus (205-270 AD) influenced several Sufi figures, such as Suhrawardi (1153-1191 AD), Ibn Arabi (1165-1240 AD), ibn Faridī (d. 1234 AD), Abd Karim al-Jilli (1365-1402 AD) and others. However, according to Taftazani, this does not mean that all Sufism or Islamic irfani must originate from Greece. This is because the

attitude of the first generation of Sufis towards Greek philosophy was different from that of the theologians and philosophers of later centuries. The Sufis did not open themselves to Greek philosophy except for the late period, when they deliberately trying to compromise his intuition with intellectual insight, after entering the sixth century Hijriyah. In addition, Sufism or Irfani is related to awareness and feeling. Human feelings and souls are one and the same, despite different races and nations. Anything related to the human soul, through spiritual exercises, can be the same, even without any contact between the two, so that the similarity between Irfan and foreign gnosticism does not mean that there is influence. Therefore, on this esoteric aspect, Ibn Arabi brought forth the idea of *wahdat al-adyan* (religious unity). Huston Smith also saw that the essence of all these religions was the same and met in the esoteric aspect (the essence) or *irfan*, although the exoteric aspects were different. This is what other observers, including Jabiri, did not see from his analysis using an anthropological approach.

Thus, *irfani* actually comes from the source of Islam itself, but in its development it is then influenced by external factors, Greece, Christianity, Hinduism or others. Some orientalist figures such as Nicholson, Louis Massignon, Spencer Trimingham, also stated the same thing about the origin of Islamic *irfani* or Sufism<sup>11</sup>.

We also tend to argue that *irfani* did not come from outside Islam because of the life of the Prophet Muhammad. the companions and *tabiin* indicated that they would someday use *irfani* and even practice *irfani*, even though the name does not exist. One proof that the Messenger of Allah. Justifying and even acknowledging the existence of the meaning of *irfani* is the hadith which reads:

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The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, "Verily Allah ta'ala has said: 'Whosoever shows enmity to a wali (friend) of Mine, then I have declared war against him. And My servant does not draw near to Me with anything more loved to Me than the religious duties I have obligated upon him. And My servant continues to draw near to me with *nafil* (supererogatory) deeds until I Love him. When I Love him, I am his hearing with which he hears, and his sight with which he sees, and his 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 seek refuge with Me, I would surely grant him refuge.'" [Al-Bukhari]

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is:

- a. The nursery phase occurred in the first century Hijriyah. At this time, it was called the new irfan in the form of zuhud (asceticism). The character of asceticism in this period was (1) based on the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah, namely staying away from worldly things in order to gain rewards and protect oneself from hell. (2) is practical, without any attention to formulating a theory of the practices carried out. (3) the motivation for zuhud is fear, which arises from the basis of sincere religious charity<sup>12</sup>.
- b. The birth phase occurred in the second century Hijriyah. At this time, some figures of Sufism began to talk openly about irfan. Works on Irfan also began to be written, starting with Hasan Basri's Ri'ayat Huquq Allah (642-728 AD), considered the first writing about Irfani. Asceticism has also changed. If initially performed out of fear and hoping for a reward, in this period, in the hands of Rabbiah Adawiyah (d.801 AD), Zuhud was performed on the basis of love for God, free from fear or hope of getting a reward. According to Nicholson, this zuhud is the earliest model of Irfan behavior or early period Irfan<sup>13</sup>.
- c. The growth phase occurred in the 3-4 hijriyah centuries. Since the beginning of the 3rd century H, Sufism leaders began to pay attention to matters related to the soul and behavior, so that Sufism became a religious moral science (akhlaq). The discussion of this issue further encouraged them to discuss intuitive knowledge along with its means and methods, about the essence of God and His relationship with humans or human relationships with Him. Thus, with this phase, Irfan has studied the matter of morals, behavior and improvement. Direct intuitive recognition of God, mortality in absolute reality. The attainment of happiness, the general tendency of this phase is still at the psycho-moral, not yet at the metaphysical level. Metaphysical ideas that have not been clearly revealed. Therefore, Nicholson states from a theoretical and practical point of view, the Sufis of this phase have designed a perfect system of Irfan. However, being not philosophers, they paid little attention to metaphysical problems<sup>14</sup>.
- d. The peak phase occurred in the 5th century. During this period, Irfan

reached a glorious period. Many great personalities were born and wrote about Irfan, among others said Abu Khair (d.1048 AD), who wrote ruba'iyat, ibn Uthman al-hujwiri (d.1077 AD) wrote kashf al-mahjub, and Abdullah al-Ansari (d.1088 AD) wrote manazil alsa'irin, one of the most important in irfan. The peak is al ghazali (d.1111 AD) wrote ihya 'ulum al-Din, which harmonizes Sufism and fiqh (Irfan and Bayani). According to Nicholson and TJ. De Boer, in hand Al-Ghazali, Irfan became a clear path of character to achieve recognition and mortality in monotheism and happiness.

- e. The Specification Phase occurred in the 6th and 7th centuries. Thanks to Al-Gazali's great personal influence, Irfani became increasingly known and developed in Islamic society. Thus, in this phase, epistemologically, irfani has split (specifically) into two streams. (1) Sunni Irfan, according to the term Taftazani, which tends to practical behavior (ethics) in the form of traditions, (2) Theoretical Irfan which is dominated by philosophical thought. Besides that, in Jabirin's view, there is also a mystical sect dominated by mystical aspects. However, according to Muthahari, practical irfan is not the same as ethics and theoretical irfan is different from philosophy<sup>15</sup>.
- f. The decline phase has occurred since the 8th century H. Since that century, Irfani has not experienced significant development. In fact has experienced a setback. The characters tend to give comments and endeavors on previous works and emphasize rites and formalism, which encourage them to deviate from the substance of their own teachings<sup>16</sup>.

#### 4. Irfani's Methods and Stages

Irfani's knowledge is not based on the text like Bayani, nor is it based on a ratio like Burhani, but on kasyf, the revelation of the secrets of reality by God. It is also mentioned that Irfani is closely related to the concept of Sufism. Therefore, Irfani's knowledge was not obtained based on text analysis but by spiritual means, wherewith a pure heart, it is hoped that God will bestow knowledge directly on him. Enter in the mind, conceptualized, and then presented to others logically. Thus, Irfani's knowledge is obtained through at least three stages:

*The first* stage, preparation. To be able to receive abundance knowledge (kasyf), a person who is usually called a Salik (spiritual walker) must complete the stages of spiritual life. The figures differ on the



amount to go through. However, at least seven stages are followed, all of which depart from the most basic level to the top level. (1) Repentance leaves all bad deeds accompanied by deep regret and then replaces them with new, commendable actions. This repentance behavior consists of several stages: repentance from sinful acts and unlawful food, repentance from ghaflah (negligent remembrance of God), and finally repentance from claiming that he has repented. (2) Wara', stay away from anything that is not clear status (syubhat). In Sufism, wara' consists of two levels, namely outer and inner. Wara' birth means not doing anything except to worship God, while inner wara' is not putting anything in the heart except God. (3) Zuhud, not greedy and not prioritizing the life of the world. However, zuhud does not mean leaving property altogether. According to Al-Syibli, a person is not considered zuhud if this happens because he does not have property. Zuhud is that the heart is not preoccupied with anything except God (even though there is a lot of wealth). (4) Faqir, Emptying all thoughts and hopes from the present and future life, and does not stop anything except God, so that he is not attached to anything and the heart does not want anything. The level of faqir is the realization of an effort to purify the heart as a whole from everything other than God (tathhir al-qalbi bi al-kulliyah 'anma siwa Allah). (5) Patience, namely accepting all disasters politely and willingly. This is a further stage after a person reaches the level of faqir. (6) Tawakkal, believing in everything that is determined by God. The initial stage of tawakkal is surrendering oneself to God like a corpse in front of a bathing person.. (7) Ridla, the loss of displeasure in the heart so that what remains is only joy and joy. This is the pinnacle of tawakkal.

The second stage is the acceptance stage. If one has reached a certain level in Sufism, one will get an illuminative abundance of direct knowledge from God (enlightenment). At this stage a person will get the reality of self-awareness (musyahadah) as a known object. However, the reality of consciousness and the realized reality, the two are not something different but are the same existence, so that the known object is none other than the knowing consciousness itself, and vice versa (ittihad), which in the study of Ittihad, which in the study of mehdi yazdi is called huduri science or object knowledge. This kind of knowledge in the Islamic world is often referred to as ilham, as Ali Issa Othman said, that knowledge gained in 'awakening' is called ilham. But inspiration is not revelation or

prophethood. Revelation are words that are described by things that cannot be seen in general, which are revealed by God with the intention of being conveyed to others as instructions from God, while inspiration is only a "revelation" to the individual human being conveyed through his heart. . revelation is only given to prophets, while inspiration is given to whomever God allows<sup>17</sup>.

The third stage, disclosure. This is the last stage of the process of achieving irfani knowledge, where mystical experiences are interpreted and revealed to others, through speech or writing. However, because irfani knowledge does not enter the order of conception and representation but is related to the simple unity of God's presence in the self and the presence of self in God, so that it cannot be communicated, then not all of these experiences can be expressed. Some reviewers of irfan or mystical issues divide this knowledge in several levels, a) unspeakable knowledge, b) irfan knowledge or mysticism, c) metastatic knowledge which is divided into two parts; 1) by a third person but still in the same tradition as the person concerned (Muslims explain the mystical experiences of other Muslims). 2) by a third person and from a different tradition (Muslims become mystical experiences of non-Muslim mystical figures)<sup>18</sup>.

### **5. Irfani Epistimology in Islamic Philosophy**

To find out the perspective of Islamic philosophy on the epistemology of Irfani, we will analyze the opinions and theories of several Islamic thinkers.

#### **a. Muhyiddin Ibn' Arabi**

Ibn' Arabi in *Fushushul Hikam* states, "Makrifat and this intuitive knowledge are not reached by reason and rational argumentation, but by divine guidance<sup>19</sup>." According to Ibn' Arabi, reason cannot know and understand the nature of everything metaphysical and its things. Humans can achieve makrifat and intuitive knowledge only through the intercession of musyafah and musyahadah and the presence of intuitive manifestations in the heart that are singular (*bashit*) but include all the essences of everything. In his view, makrifat and knowledge are immaterial realities emanated and manifested from the names of God in human souls and hearts. Ibn Arabi assumes that the principles and foundations of all existence and existence are manifestations and *tajalli*. All existence is a manifestation of divine

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creation. Therefore, makrifat is an emanation of God.

Elsewhere he said, "Intellect only accepts understanding and knowledge, not reaching them. Some knowledge and wisdom can be reached through rational argumentation. Still, most of the knowledge and understanding cannot be produced by rational demonstration. Still, they can be obtained by heart and intuition, because there are pieces of knowledge that are possible and believed to exist by reason but cannot be achieved by the mind itself. Therefore, logic has no limits in terms of receiving knowledge that is believed, even though that knowledge cannot be understood and explained by the mind. The mind can only grasp physical objects and understand the natures of nature and metaphysics only obtained from the path of mukasyafah and divine revelation. The highest makrifat is knowledge of God which is not produced by reason because reason cannot reach and perceive God. The human mind can only understand and know something that has something in common from the aspect of species, genus, or essence. God is only reached by intuition, musyafah, musyahadah, and revelation and the heart, "<sup>20</sup>.

He believes that intuitive and essential makrifat can only be achieved by righteous deeds, piety, and treading the paths of truth; this is different from the knowledge that results from rational argumentation methods, which are full of criticism, doubts, and contradictions.

b. Suhrawardi al-Maqtul

Surahwardi does not consider that intuitive knowledge (read: irfani knowledge) precedes rational knowledge. The preamble of intuitive knowledge is the purification and enlightenment of the soul, which is a prelude to rational discussion, namely the science of logic. According to him, with the science of reason where there is no way to find out something by intuition, then the science can be used, although not absolutely. in this case, he states, "If something is not known and it is still not understood even though the method of reminding and giving understanding to the subject and closed the way to understand it by the method of intuition, as experienced by philosophers, then in this case there is no other way. except sorting and compiling known things to be

used to reveal things that are not yet understood." <sup>21</sup>. Elsewhere he states, "Although before writing this book, Hikmah al-Ishraq, I had compiled a small treatise dealing with Aristotelian philosophy, this book is different from this treatise and has its special method. All of his studies were not obtained from rational thought and argumentation, but were achieved by the method of intuition and undergoing the deeds of zuhud. Our views which are not reached through rational arguments, even reached by the mukasyafah and musyahadah methods, cannot be doubted and overturned by doubters and critics<sup>22</sup>."

### Conclusion

Irfani's epistemology is the knowledge obtained through God's irradiation of essence to His servant (kasyf); Irfani means knowledge, where this knowledge is obtained directly through experience (experiment) on spiritual reality. Irfani is one model of Islamic epistemology. Potentially irfani may be obtained by every human being who experiences a spiritual journey. Apart from being an epistemological model, irfani is a rich spiritual experience. It is seen as a wealth of Islam that must be appreciated for perfecting the practice of Islam itself.

The source of the origin of Irfani comes from Islamic sources itself, but in its development, it is obtained by external factors, Greek, Christian, Hindu, and others. Irfani's development is divided into six phases: 1) The nursery phase is called Irfan, which is in the form of zuhud (asceticism) practice, 2) Birth phase: zuhud is done on the basis of love for God, free from fear or hope for a reward. 3) Growth phase: Sufism figures begin to pay attention to matters related to the soul and behavior, so that Sufism becomes religious morality (akhlak). 4) Peak phase: reaching a glorious period and at During this peak phase, many great people were born and wrote about Irfan. 5) The specification phase: Irfani is divided into two schools, namely, Irfan Sunni according to the term Taftazani which tends to practical behavior (ethics), in the form of traditions, and theoretical Irfan, which is dominated by philosophical thought. 6) The decline phase: Irfan did not experience significant development.

The method of obtaining Irfan stages: a) The first stage, preparation. In order to receive the abundance of knowledge (kasyf), a person who is usually called a Salik (a traveler on the spiritual path) must complete the stages of the spiritual life. b) The second stage, the acceptance stage. In the study of Mehdi Yazdi's philosophy, a person will

get the reality of his own awareness (musyahadah) as a known object at this stage. c) The third stage, disclosure. This is the last stage of the process of attaining irfani knowledge, where mystical knowledge is interpreted and expressed to others through speech or writing. In irfani, the concept of dzahir and inner is used. Mind is essence of the source of knowledge, while dzahir is a text (al- Qur'an and al-Hadith) as a protector and light.

Irfani in the perspective of Islamic philosophy can be seen in the explanation of Muhyiddin ibn 'Arabi who said Makrifat and this intuitive knowledge are not reached by reason and rational argumentation, but by divine guidance. Surahwardi does not consider that intuitive knowledge (read: irfani knowledge) precedes rational knowledge. The preamble of intuitive knowledge is the purification and enlightenment of the soul, which is a prelude to rational discussion, namely the science of logic.

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

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