



## The Concept of Islamic Aesthetic of Abdul Hadi WM

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**Abstract** : *This study aims to see how the concept of Islamic aesthetics in the thought of Abdul Hadi WM. Aesthetics is an interesting discourse to study because aesthetics is one of the five branches of philosophy that relate to values that are contained in something or arise from human actions. Although the values contained in aesthetics are very important and are always relevant in human life, the fact is that aesthetics receive less attention in philosophical studies. One reason is the narrow view that aesthetics is only related to art. Abdul Hadi WM sees an important aesthetic in the realm of philosophy and is related to human aesthetic experience. Islamic aesthetics essentially refers to the expression of religious values and can bring awareness to the spiritual realm*

**Keywords** : *Abdul Hadi WM, Aesthetics, Islam, Philosophy, Religiosity*

**Abstrak** : *Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk melihat bagaimana konsep estetika Islam dalam pemikiran Abdul Hadi WM. Estetika merupakan wacana yang menarik untuk dikaji karena estetika merupakan salah satu dari lima cabang filsafat yang berhubungan dengan nilai-nilai yang terkandung dalam sesuatu atau muncul dari tindakan manusia. Meskipun nilai-nilai yang terkandung dalam estetika sangat penting dan selalu relevan dalam kehidupan manusia, namun faktanya estetika kurang mendapat perhatian dalam kajian filsafat. Salah satu alasannya adalah pandangan sempit bahwa estetika hanya berkaitan dengan seni. Abdul Hadi WM melihat estetika penting dalam ranah filsafat dan berkaitan dengan*

*pengalaman estetika manusia. Estetika Islam pada hakekatnya mengacu pada ekspresi nilai-nilai religius dan dapat membawa kesadaran pada ranah spiritual.*

**Kata Kunci** : Abdul Hadi WM, Estetika, Islam, Filsafat, Religiusitas.

## A. Introduction

Aesthetics is an interesting discourse to study because aesthetics is one of the five branches of philosophy relating to values that are contained in something or arise from human actions. The four other branches that provide the principle for the formation of a philosophical tradition or thought about life are epistemology, ethics, metaphysics, and logic. Aesthetics is a young branch of philosophy compared to other branches of philosophy. Aesthetics examines what beauty is, and investigates the principles of the foundations of art, and experiences of art, namely the creation of art, and the assessment or reflection of works of art.<sup>1</sup>

Although the values contained in aesthetics are very important and are always relevant in human life, the fact is that aesthetics receive less attention in philosophical studies. One reason is the narrow view that aesthetics is only related to art or the arts. Whereas art and art are considered less important to study when compared to other branches of science such as economics, law, and politics.

Such aesthetic views are reflected in the ideas of Plato in Ancient Greece. In describing beauty, Plato said that beauty in terms of everyday life is only second-level beauty. Real beauty only exists in the world of *Idea*. Plato, whose real name is Aristocles, explains that the beautiful cannot be separated from sensory experience that builds aesthetic experience and beauty in everyday terms.<sup>2</sup>

Plato explained as quoted by Matthew Ali that everything in this world is an imitation (*mimesis*) of the original in the world of Ideas. In his *Republic*, Plato gave a parable about a craftsman who made a chair he was imitating the form of "Obscurity". So, Plato provides an assessment of art that tends to lead to negative assessments. For him, art is an imitation of reality in the world (except music), which is far from the true truth.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Matius Ali, *Estetika: Pengantar Filsafat Seni* (Medan: Sanggar Luxor, 2011), v.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 14–15.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 15.

There are at least two reasons why Plato looked cynically at works of art. *First*, the works of art in this world are imitations of the world. Because for him, art cannot be used as a source of knowledge. Only philosophy is the most appropriate source of knowledge, wisdom, and morals. *Second*, because the nature of art is emotional, Plato considers that works of art have a bad influence on society, on the pretext that the existence of works of art such as drama, it only makes people negligent in building the country because it is caused by unfavorable scenes, so the results cannot benefit the treasury of knowledge. Not only drama, for him poetry also cannot be used as a strong source, because the process is irrational and lacks control over reason so it hurts the audience.<sup>4</sup>

In the Islamic tradition, aesthetic thinking began to develop in the 9th and 10th centuries, along with the movement to translate Greek philosophical books. The works of leading Greek philosophers such as *Poetics*, written by Aristotle were studied and criticized so which gave birth to its aesthetic theory. In line with the development of Arabic literature, poetry, and music became the main focus of the study of Muslim thinkers.<sup>5</sup>

Islam is a religion full of openness. For a long time, the elements of culture from outside received a free space in the tradition of Muslim thought and creativity. As long as the elements from outside can be combined with the principles of Islamic teachings based on monotheism, it will not be difficult to be accepted as a source of ideas and experiments by Muslim artists, past, present, and in the future. However, the elements that lead to shirk, nihilism, worship of a particular social class, ethnicity, or race, false fetishism, material hedonism, historical distortions of revelation and prophecy, and denial of things that are metaphysical and eschatological, obviously will not be accepted.<sup>6</sup>

Both in Arabic, Persia, Islamic India, and Malay, art plays an important role when it is associated with *suluk* (spiritual path) and *tajarrud*, namely the liberation of the human soul from the shackles of material nature through something that is material itself. This opinion is in line with the view of Imam al-Ghazali in his book *Kimiya-i Sa'adah*

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 16.

<sup>5</sup> Abdul Hadi W.M, *Hermeneutika, Estetika dan Religiusitas: Esai-esai Sastra Sufistik dan Seni Rupa*, ed. Ali Zainal Abidin (Jakarta: Sadra International Institute, 2016), 34.

<sup>6</sup> Abdul Hadi W.M, *Cakrawala Budaya Islam: Sastra, Hikmah, Sejarah dan Estetika* (Yogyakarta: IRCiSoD, 2016), 350.

(Chemistry of Happiness) which explains that a work of art influences morals and religious appreciation. Artwork, especially poetry, is seen by Muslim philosophers such as Ibn Sina and Al-Jurjani, as expressions of *mimesis* (*muthabaqah*). Expression of feelings and thoughts of a poet who tries to express feelings using thoughts and imagination.<sup>7</sup>

In the next stage of development, from the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> century AD, there were three schools of philosophy that developed in Islam which had a great influence on the development of aesthetics and art or literature, namely: Philosophy of *Masya'iyah* (Paripatetik), Hikmah *Isyraqiyyah* (illuminations), and the Philosophy *Shufiyyah* (Sufism).<sup>8</sup> Aesthetic discourse is more developed by Sufi philosophers and philosophers *Isyraqiyyah*. This is because Sufis began to play an important role in cultural life. Another factor is that the mystical experiences of Sufis are similar to the aesthetic experiences achieved by artists. In this phase, aesthetics is not only associated with literature, but also with music and fine arts, including architecture, painting, and design.

In the Sufi aesthetic tradition, it is further linked to the metaphysics and the spiritual path that they take on the path of Sufism, which is discussed in the Sufi aesthetics, including the nature and function of art, its influence on the psychology and human spiritual life, the use of works of art in fostering religious enthusiasm and social solidarity, and spiritual interpretations of the verses of the Qur'an that were transformed into the figurative language of poetry.<sup>9</sup>

Abdul Hadi WM, as an Indonesian Muslim intellectual and poet with a tendency towards Sufism, sees that a Muslim who truly understands Islamic aesthetics (with its various streams) will understand that the highest beauty to be achieved in a work of art is precisely related to moral achievement and spiritual knowledge/divinity that is deep, called wisdom or *ma'rifat*.<sup>10</sup> By returning to authentic sources of creation, the aesthetic function as enlightenment can be restored. In the Islamic tradition, what is meant by enlightenment is the awakening of the illuminative life of the soul

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<sup>7</sup> W.M, *Hermeneutika, Estetika dan Religiusitas: Esai-esai Sastra Sufistik dan Seni Rupa*, 34.

<sup>8</sup> Abdul Hadi WM, *Seni Rupa Islam: Hubungan Estetika dan Agama* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 2005), 17.

<sup>9</sup> W.M, *Hermeneutika, Estetika dan Religiusitas: Esai-esai Sastra Sufistik dan Seni Rupa*, 38.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, 198.

in the form of the revelation of one's deepest consciousness or one's heart to the deepest nature of life and the core secrets of religious teachings namely monotheism and its radiance in every aspect of life. For Muslim authors, monotheism is a great mystery (*daqā'iq* reveal) that must be solved to the deepest consciousness and open the possibility of soul transformation.<sup>11</sup>

This study has mainly used a library research methodology. Through a qualitative approach with a descriptive method, this study aims to obtain a picture of how the Islamic aesthetic in the perspective of Abdul Hadi WM. The data relevant to the study were collected and analyzed by using an analytical approach.

Historical studies assisted by various works of literature. At least, there are several major kinds of literature that help to explain this study. First, *Dimensi Sufistik Dalam Stilistika Puisi "Tuhan, Kita Begitu Dekat"* Karya Abdul Hadi W.M (The Sufistic Dimension in the Stylistic Poem "God, We Are So Close" by Abdul Hadi W.M) written by Ali Imron in 2012.<sup>12</sup> In his study, Ali Imron described the level of language or style of sentences and images to see the Sufistic dimension of poetry by Abdul Hadi W.M which contains the value of *wahdat al-Wujud*.

Second, *Tasawuf Dalam Sastra*, (The Sufism in Literature) was written by Denny Muslimin in 2008.<sup>13</sup> His findings explained that the poetry description of Abdul Hadi WM was written with a pre-concept, which is called intuitive experience and imagination that comes from an appreciation of the Transcendental.

Third, *Aspek Religius Dalam Kumpulan Puisi Pembawa Matahari Karya Abdul Hadi W.M, Tinjauan Semiotik* (Religious Aspects in the collection of Pembawa Matahari Poetry by Abdul Hadi W.M (Semiotic Review) written by Akhmad Roni Sulaiman in 2007.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> W.M, *Cakrawala Budaya Islam: Sastra, Hikmah, Sejarah dan Estetika*, 196.

<sup>12</sup> Ali Imron al-Ma'ruf, "Dimensi Sufistik Dalam Stilistika Puisi "TUhan, Kita Begitu Dekat' Karya Abdul Hadi W.M," *Tsaqafa, Jurnal Kajian Seni Budaya Islam* 1, no. No. 1 (2012): 101–18.

<sup>13</sup> Denny Muslimin, *Tasawuf Dalam Sastra* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 2008).

<sup>14</sup> Akhmad Roni Slaiman, "Aspek Religius Dalam Kumpulan Puisi Pembawa Matahari Karya Abdul Hadi W.M, Tinjauan Semiotik" (Surakarta, Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta, 2007).

## B. Aesthetic Discourse

Art and beauty are included in the study of philosophy in the field of aesthetics because aesthetics talks about what is beautiful and ugly. Therefore, aesthetics cannot be discussed using moral benchmarks, because morals talk about good or bad and this study is called ethics. Besides, aesthetics cannot be discussed in terms of right and wrong which are the subject of logic.<sup>15</sup> The word aesthetic comes from the Greek root *aisthetikos*, which means to observe with the senses (*aisthanomai*). The word aesthetic is also related to the word *aesthesia* which means perception. This perception is closely related to the experiences and sensory perceptions and the various feelings that they cause.<sup>16</sup> Whereas in English, aesthetics comes from the word *aesthetic*, which means "beautiful" (the science of beauty).<sup>17</sup>

According to Abdul Hadi WM, in his book titled *Hermeneutika, Estetika, dan Religiusitas*, explaining that aesthetics according to their etymological meaning are knowledge of objects of sense enjoyment.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, aesthetics are criteria that can be used as a basis for evaluating art. Efforts in establishing these criteria need to be considered an aesthetic insight or outlook that underlies creation, in terms of assessing the quality of works of art and their effects on the human soul, namely feelings, imagination, nature of mind, and intuition.

Based on the explanation above, we can see that aesthetics is an important part of human experience, as well as one of the branches of philosophy that discuss beauty and art and human responses to it so that it aims to find the true nature of something in the universe.<sup>19</sup> In terms of beauty itself related to the characteristics of aesthetic objects and why there are objects called "beautiful and ugly", it has been investigated by

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<sup>15</sup> Jujun S. Suriasumantri, *Filsafat Ilmu Sebuah Pengantar Populer* (Jakarta: Sinar Harapan, 1993), 32.

<sup>16</sup> Matius Ali, *Estetika: Pengantar Filsafat Seni*, 1.

<sup>17</sup> Edy Tri Sulistyono, *Kaji Dini Pendidikan Seni* (Surakarta: UNS Press, 2005), 88.

<sup>18</sup> W.M., *Hermeneutika, Estetika dan Religiusitas: Esai-esai Sastra Sufistik dan Seni Rupa*, 219.

<sup>19</sup> Marcia Muelder Eaton, *Persoalan-persoalan Dasar Estetika* (Jakarta: Salimba Humanika, 2010), 6.

philosophers.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, understanding and aesthetic concepts emerge from time to time.

Aesthetics in the Western world are as old as philosophy. Talk about beauty and art as part of philosophical contemplation, has long been a concern of thinkers in the Western world. This fact as far as can be seen from the history of his thought, has given birth to various theories from several leading philosophers. Plato was one of the philosophers who participated in discussing discourse on aesthetics. Absolute beauty according to Plato only exists at the world level of ideas.<sup>21</sup>

Plato expressed his views regarding works of art, in his work entitled *Politeia* (Republic), in his assessment two elements were covering the theoretical and the practical. The theoretical element states that all the facts that exist in this world are imitations (*mimesis*) of the original reality, which is in the world of ideas and is far superior to reality in this world. That is why Plato underestimated the work of art.

Another important figure who emerged after Plato was his student Aristotle (348-322 BC) who rejected the theory of ideas and did not approve of Plato's negative assessment of works of art. The starting point of Aristotle's view described in the book *Poetika* (Poetics), in this book, stated that the work of art must be valued as imitation and not merely a mere imitation, namely the imitation of the natural world and the human world. According to him, art is not only an imitation of things that exist in nature but more an "imitation of something universal".<sup>22</sup>

In the Middle Ages, a philosopher named Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274 AD) gave a beautiful limit as something that gives a sense of pleasure and can be captured senses. Thomas Aquinas formulated three factors closely related to the beautiful, namely perfection, proportion or harmony, and brightly colored.<sup>23</sup>

Collingwood developed a theory of artistic expression that was comprehensive and influential. He tried to arrange systematically and

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<sup>20</sup> Mudji Sutrisno dan Christ Verhaak, *Estetika Filsafat Keindahan* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1993), 13.

<sup>21</sup> A. Teeuw, *Sastra dan Ilmu Sastra* (Bandung: PT. Dunia Pustaka Jaya, 2013), 266.

<sup>22</sup> Sutrisno dan Verhaak, *Estetika Filsafat Keindahan*, 28.

<sup>23</sup> Hamidah Abdul Hamid, *Pengantar Estetika* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 1995), 8.

based on a philosophical argument about the general view that there is an essential relationship between art and emotional expression. Collingwood has stated in his book, that art is an imaginative expression.<sup>24</sup>

Besides, according to Susanne K Langer, art does not only repeat nature. Therefore, he rejects the theory of *mimesis* Plato which says that art is an imitation, but art is an imitation of imitation (*mimesis-memeseos*). According to him, art is a new creation. Art truly produces something completely different from natural reality. In art, there is the principle of *otherness* from reality, which makes art truly stand alone as a creation.<sup>25</sup> For him that every work of art contains symbols that store deep meaning behind these symbols to display the aesthetic value of a work of art.<sup>26</sup>

The pinnacle of aesthetic development is seen in the thought of Immanuel Kant (1724-1784 AD). According to him, the psychiatric tool called taste is related to the achievement of satisfaction or the achievement of the observed object or satisfaction, and that satisfaction is also related to one's interest in something. Objects are said to be beautiful if they satisfy a person's interests and at the same time attract their interests. This view gave birth to subjectivism which influenced the emergence of modern art streams, especially romanticism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century AD Kant has distinguished between "free beauty" and "bound beauty" (defendant beauty). According to him the beauty of art is the free beauty, that is free from ethical and moral principles, scientific truth, and religion. This reinforces the notion that art should be a truly independent field, separate from religion, philosophy, and morals. But in reality, the problems raised by art are still interrelated with various problems of life and so are the problems of philosophy, religion, and science.

Towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century AD, an anti-aesthetic attitude emerged, especially among thinkers who called themselves *postmodernists*. This can be read in the thoughts of Jameson, Baudrillard, Derrida, Lyotard, Foucault, and others. Lyotard in his book entitled *After the Sublime: The State of Aesthetics* has stated that "After Kant aesthetics have no function and position anymore". This statement arises in line with the widespread

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<sup>24</sup> Sutrisno dan Verhaak, *Estetika Filsafat Keindahan*, 79.

<sup>25</sup> Matius Ali, *Estetika: Pengantar Filsafat Seni*, 206.

<sup>26</sup> Djelantik, *Estetika: Sebuah Pengantar* (Bandung: Masyarakat Seni Pertunjukan Indonesia, 1999), 183.



understanding of cultural relativism and nihilism, which views that values go bankrupt and become relative.

In the tradition of Islamic scholarship, the groups that give the most attention to the problems of art and aesthetics are philosophers, humanists, and Sufis. Art and aesthetics are considered important as giving principles and direction for the development of culture, as well as having a role in cultural development. At first, Islam did not need an art form, but as its development emerged Muslim artists made artworks as a medium to express their outlook on life. They create art that departs from the awareness of Islamic values.<sup>27</sup>

As far as can be observed in its history, aesthetic thought and art can be said to be infertile as happened in the Western world. This is as far as Amin Abdullah's observations, it is said that there was a skeptical assumption of some Muslims regarding art in the aesthetic discourse, which was ruled out due to the thick dominance of kalam thinking and the legality of fiqh law. Can be seen from the view of several jurists and kalam experts who tend to forbid art.<sup>28</sup> And there are still statements that art creation is an act of insulting God and drawing a living creature is considered the same as creating the creature.<sup>29</sup> However, many also state that Islam as a religion of revelation has a considerable interest in developing aspects of art to actualize divine values, namely an imperative that must be fulfilled for the realization of Islam which is *rahmatan lil 'alamin*. Therefore, the discussion of aesthetics in Islam can still be considered neutral (*mubah*) law.<sup>30</sup>

The figure who discusses aesthetics in the treatise on philosophy and Sufism is Imam al-Ghazali (d. 505 H / 1111 AD). Imam al-Ghazali's view of beauty is expressed in the book *Kimiya-i Sa'adah*, as quoted by Oliver Leaman, stating that beauty is very important because it gives us pleasure, and the essence of beauty is the recognition of perfection.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> M. Abdul Jabbar Beg, *Seni di Dalam Peradaban Islam* (Bandung: Pustaka, 1988), 1.

<sup>28</sup> Ahmad Pattiroy, "Gagasan Tentang Seni Islam: Sisi Falsafah Muhammad Iqbal" (Yogyakarta, UIN Sunan Kalijaga, 2003), 5.

<sup>29</sup> Oliver Leaman, *Estetika Islam: Menafsirkan Seni dan Keindahan* (Bandung: Mizan, 2005), 135.

<sup>30</sup> Amri Yahya, "Agama Sebagai Sumber Inspirasi Kreativitas dan Implikasinya Hubungan Islam dan Seni," *Humaniora* 12, no. No. 1 (2000): 106.

<sup>31</sup> Leaman, *Estetika Islam: Menafsirkan Seni dan Keindahan*, 60.

Everything has a distinctive form of perfection but the outward form is often a misleading guide to the ultimate perfection that lies within. According to him, the eye can judge the born but the heart can capture the inner. For him, the beauty of an object lies in its embodiment and perfection which can be recognized again and following the nature of that object.<sup>32</sup> This applies to a work of art that is created with different aims and purposes and therefore for different functions and with different measurements of weights and qualities.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, the beauty of poetry lies in the wisdom it contains which has moral, intellectual, and spiritual aspects.<sup>34</sup> We can see that al-Ghazali connects beauty with transcendent values, especially with the concept of God besides beauty which is only perceived through the senses.<sup>35</sup>

The thought of art in Islam found its pioneering for the first time when philosophy developed rapidly in the period between the 9th and 12th centuries AD. Philosophers such as al-Kindi, al-Farabi, Ibn Sina and ar-Razi were Muslim scholars who were known to have expertise in the field of creation of musical theories which are used primarily for medicinal purposes. In the history of Islamic philosophical thought, ethical and metaphysical issues do appear more dominant than aesthetic and artistic issues, based on the need to reconcile philosophy and religion.<sup>36</sup>

Abdul Hadi, in his writing titled *Seni Rupa Islam: Hubungan Estetika dan Agama*, said that in Islam, the influence of philosophy is indeed great for the development of art, as the development of science including the religious sciences. Likewise, the refusal of some scholars towards philosophy, especially those related to art. This can be traced through philosophical thoughts that influence Islam because aesthetics are branches of philosophy.<sup>37</sup> According to him, the influence of philosophy on the development of Islamic art, namely its aesthetic insight, has only recently received the attention of Islamic art scholars who were pioneered, among others, by Titus Burckhard, Martin Lings, Seyyed Hossein Nasr,

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<sup>32</sup> Mawardi dan Nur Hidayati, *Ilmu Alamiah Dasar, Ilmu Sosial Dasar, Ilmu Budaya Dasar* (Bandung: Pustaka Setia, 2000), 144.

<sup>33</sup> W.M, *Hermeneutika, Estetika dan Religiusitas: Esai-esai Sastra Sufistik dan Seni Rupa*, 43.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>35</sup> Hamid, *Pengantar Estetika*, 30.

<sup>36</sup> Pattiroy, "Gagasan Tentang Seni Islam: Sisi Falsafah Muhammad Iqbal," 5.

<sup>37</sup> Abdul Hadi WM, *Seni Rupa Islam: Hubungan Estetika dan Agama*, 92.

Oliver Leaman and more than half a century ago. Indian art expert and philosopher named AK Comaraswamy stated that in Islam there was and developed superior Islamic art thought and aesthetics, especially in Persia. It is also interesting to quote the statement of a professor of philosophy and aesthetics at the University of Naples, Italy named Giovanna Lelli in her writing: "*Today, a renewed interest in Islamic aesthetics and philosophy might help the West recompose its fragmented postmodernism, while it could turn to help The Islamic world constructs a new and critical approach to its classical author* ", which more or fewer means as follows: "Today, a new interest in Islamic aesthetics and philosophy can help the Western world in reshaping its fragmented postmodernism, on the other hand, it can also help the world Islam developed a new and critical approach to classical authors".<sup>38</sup>

The philosophy developed in Islam is not one school of thought but rather many. In those schools, there are also different streams. However, of these schools, there are three schools that have a major influence on the development of aesthetics and art, namely: the philosophy of *Masysya'iyah* (Peripatetic), *Hikmah Isyraqiyah* (illumination), and the Philosophy of *Shufiyah* (Sufism). It is through the door of philosophical thought from these three schools that the aesthetics of Islam can be explained in terms of their diverse tendencies, shapes, and patterns and the relation between art and Islam or aesthetics with religion can be explored.<sup>39</sup>

### C. Islamic Aesthetics as Expressions of Religiosity

Aesthetics is one of the important studies in philosophy which is considered as a complementary study. Concerning teaching and education, even in arts and literature majors, attention to the need for aesthetic teaching has tended to decline lately. Moreover, attention is given to aesthetics that was born outside Western traditions, such as India, China, Japan, Islam, Persia, Java, and Malay. If it cannot be said to be very sad, attention to the aesthetics of this Eastern tradition is very lacking.<sup>40</sup> The issue of the relationship between Islam and art is not just a matter of the

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 85–86.

<sup>39</sup> Leaman, *Estetika Islam: Menafsirkan Seni dan Keindahan*, 17.

<sup>40</sup> Abdul Hadi W.M, *Hermeneutika Sastra Barat dan Timur* (Jakarta: Sadra Press, 2014), xi.

attitude of most scholars and fuqaha (Islamic jurists) who are rigid and uncomfortable with art activities. The issue that is no less important involves basic things. This is as stated by Abdul Hadi, among others:<sup>41</sup>

*First*, the shrinking of the collective memory of Muslims towards the Islamic treasury, especially his art, which is rich and has developed for several centuries not only in parts of the Arab and Persian countries but also in the archipelago. *Second*, the declining conceptual understanding of art in the wider community of Muslims, as well as their ignorance of the meaning and important role of art in life. Especially as a means of education and the expansion of imagination, which would undoubtedly benefit cultural development and increase the creativity of the people.

Abdul Hadi argued that the need for aesthetics to be given attention was not in the interest of the development of literature itself and also not in the interests of mere literary science and art history. Greater needs lie within it, namely for the development of humanities or culture in general. We know that what gives the main characteristic of a culture is the foundations of life (way of life), the picture of the world (weltanschauung), and the value system. This characteristic is seen in the basics of ethics and aesthetics which are used as a community in developing culture and identity. As an aesthetic expression, literature reflects the cultural dynamics that develop in a society. Therefore, literary research that pays attention to the aesthetic aspects and metaphysical principles or the philosophy of life that gives birth to work can enrich and strengthen the development of culture and humanities.<sup>42</sup>

Aesthetics play an important role in human life and the history of civilization, especially in shaping the cultural traditions of a people or people, can be seen in the history of nations that have great civilizations, such as Ancient Greece, Rome, India, China, Japan, Arabia, Persia or Islam, European Renaissance, and Enlightenment. We can also see the same thing in the history of Javanese and Malay culture. The civilizations that have been mentioned were formed in their history through dynamic interactions with the great traditions from outside that they encountered, both in the intellectual, religious, and government fields. Javanese and Malay culture grew in such a way and developed into a big tradition after its encounter with Indian, Arabic, Persian, Chinese, and European cultures, as well as

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<sup>41</sup> Abdul Hadi W.M, "Islam dan Seni di Indonesia," *PUSAT*, 2012, 14.

<sup>42</sup> Abdul Hadi W.M, *Hermeneutika Sastra Barat dan Timur*, xiii.

with major religions, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam. In the process of transformation that continues throughout its history, it is not small the role of literature and art. We know that through literary works the ideals of culture and philosophy of life of a nation, as well as its value system and worldview (*weltanschauung*) are disseminated and permeated in the lives of a wide audience.<sup>43</sup>

Hamidah Abdul Hamid in his book entitled *Pengantar Estetika*, explained that aesthetics is a field in the philosophy that sees, enjoys, analyzes, and tells the beauty of being in nature and the work of artists.<sup>44</sup> According to him, people who live under the influence of various times, cultures, and atmospheres will have a subjective attitude and relative to something called beautiful. As an effort by Abdul Hadi in explaining the relationship of art or aesthetics, both as a philosophy of beauty and as a theory of art with religion. For him, Islamic philosophy is important to study because almost all branches of Islamic science and spirituality, including aesthetics and art, are influenced by philosophical thoughts that have developed in the history of Islamic thought. He further explained that so far we have set aside and ignored the philosophy of seeing Islamic scientific expressions and culture, and tend to see it only from the perspective of Jurisprudence and Shari'a, including in viewing the art phenomena that arise among Muslims.<sup>45</sup>

Some questions often arise in many debates about what is Islamic art. Abdul Hadi said that if the purpose of the question was to obtain an adequate description and explanation of the nature of Islamic art, inevitably in answering it we examined the views and thoughts about art that had developed in the Islamic intellectual tradition. This is rarely done because people usually want answers to be practical and fast. But if what is desired from the question is an explanation of art following Islamic teachings, the answer will be more complex and require many examples, which is why a formal and logical definition is difficult to give.<sup>46</sup>

Abdul Hadi argued that the most appropriate way to find the relationship between art and religion is to examine the variety and aesthetic features that underlie the creation of diverse Islamic arts. This is based on

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Hamid, *Pengantar Estetika*, ix.

<sup>45</sup> Abdul Hadi W.M, *Seni Rupa Islam: Hubungan Estetika dan Agama*, 77.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

the fact that one important concept in aesthetics as well as in religion is "how to view things as something else" and this perspective is inherent in the thoughts and images of the world (worldview) of Muslims as well as related to the philosophical schools that never developed and influenced in the history of Islam. The worldview and worldview developed by philosophers have provided a model or picture of how a person acts and sees things and how one expresses oneself in broad areas of life activities such as science, art, and literature.<sup>47</sup>

Abdul Hadi explained that Islamic aesthetics can be said to be a spiritual path because all forms of beauty can be used as a means to religious experience, according to the way a person responds to beauty. However, as a spiritual path, literary or artistic works are not necessarily expressions of religiosity and spirituality in a narrow sense. In Islamic tradition, aesthetics also transforms into an expression of social and historical solidarity. As manifested in works classified as literary manners, history, epics, saints' stories, stories of common people, didactic stories, and animal stories such as *Khalilah wa Dimnah*, or works that are classified as *solace*.

As forms of expression related to spirituality and religiosity appear in praise poems to the Prophet Muhammad, called *na'tiyyah*, have a special position in Islamic civilization, because what is revealed is the nature of the human spiritual journey to the highest truth, namely monotheism. On the other hand, because it is related to the achievement of monotheism, Islamic aesthetics are concentric, focusing on the One or witnessing the One, Beloved, and Lover. Therefore, in broad outline, the reflections of Islamic aesthetics about beauty revolve around the beauty of the One, His spiritual presence (in the form of mercy, the merciful and merciful nature as contained in the sentence *Basmalah*) in various objects in the universe and human self.<sup>48</sup>

Abdul Hadi stated that there are five factors of artwork agreed upon by aesthetic experts to be used as a benchmark, namely: *First*, perfect in terms of the weight of ideas, concepts, and aesthetic insights. *Second*, perfect seen from the large function of a work of art for human life. *Third*, it is perfect in terms of the values offered by works of art and their relevance

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>48</sup> Abdul Hadi W.M, *Hermeneutika, Estetika dan Religiusitas: Esai-esai Sastra Sufistik dan Seni Rupa* (Jakarta: Sadra Press, 2016), 44–45.

to the development of culture. *Fourth*, perfect from the compatibility of artworks with the ideals of life and humanity/spiritual values that humans want to uphold. *Fifth*, perfect in terms of usability.<sup>49</sup>

Reflections on Muslim aesthetics of the aesthetic beauty (*zahir*) can also be revealed through the imagery they use in describing the stages of the spiritual journey (*suluk*) they take towards the One. On the other hand, because the trip is a journey up from the low realm of existence to the higher realm of existence, the imagery is used like a flight of birds to a high mountain peak in the story of *Manthiq al-Thayr* (Deliberation of Birds) by 'Attar. Birds represent imagery for a spirit that is constantly disturbed by its longing for the origin of its spiritual nature in the divine world.<sup>50</sup> This, for example, was said by Imam Al-Ghazali in his book *Kimiya-i Sa'adah*, through information about the purpose of the creation of works of art and the relation of art to reality in the overall order in the realm of being which meant not only empirical and social realities, namely the realities in nature phenomenal (*shahadah realm*), but also the realities in the mental (the realm of *Mitsal*) and the spiritual realm.<sup>51</sup>

Aesthetics as a religious expression can also be seen in Rumi's explanation of beautiful and weighty paintings. Rumi associates beautiful works of art as a result of the process of purification and attainment of inner enlightenment. It is said that the beautiful image in the painting can be likened to a reflection reflected in the mirror of an artist who has achieved his inner vision. His inner vision is clear after his purification.<sup>52</sup>

According to Abdul Hadi, it is clear that the process of enlightenment obtained by Sufi writers is not the same as that of Plato or the followers of Neo-Platonism, who rely on contemplation and meditation for inspiration. Sufi writers have at least three paths: *First*, through intense spiritual training and worship. *Second*, through deep meditation on the Qur'anic verses using the method of *ta'wil* or

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<sup>49</sup> Salman Yoga S, *Kesenian Dalam Perspektif Islam* (Jakarta: Serambi Indonesia, 2007), 2.

<sup>50</sup> Abdul Hadi W.M, *Hermeneutika, Estetika dan Religiusitas: Esai-esai Sastra Sufistik dan Seni Rupa*, 45.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

hermeneutics of Sufi divinity. *Third*, his understanding of the Qur'anic verses is used to read the questions of life in all its aspects.<sup>53</sup>

The great works of Rumi *Matsnawi*, as well as Attar's *Manthiq al-Thayr* and the work of Iqbal *Asrar-i Khudi* enlightenment, are the result of the process of achieving through these three paths. If poetry is not *mimesis* and not *creation*, then what is poetry? For Sufis and Muslim writers working on such aesthetic insights, poetry is nothing more than an elaboration or dissociation, which is a symbolic expression of ideas and experiences of spirituality acquired after practicing magic. Or as Braginsky says that "Religious literature or the Sufism strengthens the faith of the occultist while explaining to him the formal laws of Islamic religion (theology), theology, and metaphysics that depict the stages of spiritual travel, the introduction of self-awareness, warnings of dangers that threaten one's soul, as well as explanations of ways to overcome these dangers. They all shape and purify the conscience and prepare it to bring down divine inspiration."

Abdul Hadi says that the word "religion" itself comes from the word "religious" meaning that binds itself. In that word, it contains closeness, closeness, submission, and obedience. Obedience is a manifestation of total submission or attachment to God. In the context of Sufi poetry in general, true love is the path that leads one to transcendence, which is the penetration of the formal (spiritual) into the spiritual, including our spiritual self. Art has always given a place or path to the existence of the spiritual nature of man. That's where faith is. Faith is in the spiritual realm, not in the material world. It's not our bodies that believe, but our conscience. Therefore, this conscience needs to be educated, one through the arts. So, it's not just a body that is disciplined, but a conscience.<sup>54</sup>

As a hustle or a hike from the lower (the realm) to the higher (the realm) aesthetic expressions in literature and art have the following functions:

*First*, *Tawajjud* is to bring enjoyment to a state of peace (*muthmainnah*) and unite with the immortality of the Eternal. This was suggested by Imam al-Ghazali, among others. The word *tawajjud* is formed from the word *wajd*, which means to achieve or meet what is desired. But

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 48–49.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 52.



its conceptual meaning is the state of a person's soul experiencing mystical (ecstasy). Iqbal calls it *Junon*, which is also a mystical passion achieved by someone who is intensely seeking the truth.

*The second*, as put forth by Ruzbihan al-Baqli a Persian scholar of the early 13<sup>th</sup> century, is *Tajarrud*, which is the liberation of the soul from nature through something derived from nature itself. For example, sounds, sounds, pictures, drawings, and words. If aesthetic expressions in literary or artistic works still haunt us in our physical and sensual lives, then they do not fulfill their function as religious or spiritual expressions.

*Third*, another function of the expression of art is *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, the purification of self-worship of forms. This is stated among others by Jalaluddin Rumi.

*Fourth*, art as a means of transcendence permeates the world of form through its formal forms. Therefore, in looking at the Sufi aesthetic expression, which in poetry appears in *majaz* (figurative language) encompassing metaphors, *tamtsil*, or *tasybih* (symbolic imagery), it does not see as mere expression, but as a metaphor (metaphor) and *metaphor* (symbol). What is to be explored is what is elevated and symbolized, that is, the inner meaning, not the metaphor or the symbol itself

*Fifth*, another function of aesthetic expression is to convey wisdom, that is wisdom that can help us to be just and true to God, our fellow man, the social environment, the environment in which we live, and ourselves. Much has been suggested by philosophers and writers such as Ibn al-Muqaffa, al-Jāhiz, Ibn Sinā, Abū 'Ala al-Ma'arri, Abu al-'Āhiyah, and Mulla Sa'di.

*Sixth*, aesthetic expression serves as an effective means of communicating ideas, knowledge, and useful life information such as knowledge and information about history, geography, law, law, manners, government, politics, economics, and religious ideas. Scientists, scholars, jurists, and *ushuluddin*, as well as sages, hold this view.

*Seventh*, aesthetic expressions are also created to convey the praises of the One. Or as a means of concentrating the mind and heart on the One (*tafakkur*), or as a reflection on His existence and His secret presence in the human heart.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 53.

The aesthetics of Islam as an expression of modern human religiosity appear in the works of Muhammad Iqbal, Amir Hamzah, and contemporary writers in various Islamic countries. In Indonesia can be seen in the works of the suicidal Danarto, Kuntowijoyo, Sutardji Calzoum Bachri, Fudoli Zaini, Abdul Hadi WM, and others. In the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, Malay Sufi aesthetics were laid down by Hamzah Fansuri, Syamsudin Sumatrani, and as appears in Amir Hamzah's poems in the anthology of *Buah Rindu, Nyanyi Sunyi*, and others.<sup>56</sup> In the Islamic intellectual tradition, literature and poetica question together with a discussion of linguistics, and rhetoric (*balaghah*). Similarly, literature and philosophy, and spirituality have long been prominent in Muslim intellectual circles.<sup>57</sup>

#### D. Conclusion

Based on the preceding chapters, it can be concluded that what is meant by Aesthetics and Art in Islamic Studies is that both can be understood and agreed upon as knowledge of the objects of sensual enjoyment. Therefore, aesthetics is a criterion that can serve as a basis for evaluating artwork.

The Islamic aesthetic view of Abdul Hadi can be said to be a path of happiness, as all forms of beauty can be used as a means of religious experience in the way one responds to beauty. He argues that although aesthetics is a means of spirituality, it is not necessarily a literary or artistic work that is an expression of religiosity and spirituality in a narrow sense. In Islamic tradition, aesthetics also transformed into expressions of social and historical solidarity. [.]

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>57</sup> Abdul Hadi WM, *Hermeneutika Sastra Barat dan Timur*, xv.

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