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Taqwā as an Epistemic Filter in Sufi Ways of Knowing: *Murāqaba* and the Regulation of Unveiling

In this paper, it is argued that *taqwā* functions in the Islamic mystical tradition not merely as an ethical virtue, but as an epistemic filter that regulates the reliability and authority of experiential knowledge claims. Drawing on Qur'anic formulations such as "Have *taqwā* of God, and God will teach you" (2:282) and "Whoever has *taqwā* of God, He will make for him a way out" (65:2), the study contends that Sufi ways of knowing, including unveiling, inspiration, spiritual tasting, presential knowledge, and dreams, require principled modes of regulation if they are to be situated responsibly within Islamic epistemology. Methodologically, the present paper combines conceptual analysis with close reading of Qur'anic language, focusing on the semantics of guarding, protection, and sustained attentiveness implied in *taqwā*. These insights are then situated within classical Sufi practice by identifying *murāqaba* (sustained conscious self-monitoring) as the operational mode through which *taqwā* is put into practice. Within this framework, experiential knowledge is neither dismissed nor absolutized; rather, unveilings and inner spiritual effusions, especially those claimed by seekers who do not embody the fullness of a perfect prophet-level human being, need to be verified against and calibrated by the divinely-sent revelation, and also by the Intellect illuminated by revelation. It is further demonstrated in this paper how this epistemic architecture helps explain a recurring tension in Islamic intellectual history between the mere accumulation of texts and genuine understanding. While textual mastery alone may yield technical competence, the disciplined regulation of attention, intention, and conduct through *murāqaba* is presented as a condition for sound judgement, responsible interpretation, and creative engagement with new intellectual and spiritual challenges. Finally, the present paper argues that attaining *taqwā* requires a sustained lifelong spiritual journeying whose essence is strengthening one's sustained and conscious presence before God as the Absolute Truth. As this self-discipline deepens, the seeker progressively learns to guard the truth through attentive fidelity across all dimensions of life, culminating in a form of spiritual dignity explicitly affirmed in the Qur'an: "Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of God are the most God-conscious among you" (49:13). The paper thus concludes that the regulation of unveiling in Sufism is inseparable from continuous ethical–existential transformation, wherein knowledge, presence, and human perfection ultimately converge.



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