DAFTAR ISI

PEDOMAN TRANSLITERASI

ا	=	a	غ	=	g
ب	=	b	ف	=	f
ت	=	t	ق	=	q
ث	=	th	ك	=	k
ج	=	j	ل	=	l
ح	=	ḥ	م	=	m
خ	=	kh	ن	=	n
د	=	d	و	=	w
ذ	=	dh	ه	=	h
ر	=	r	ء	=	'
ز	=	z	ي	=	y
س	=	s			
ش	=	sh			

Untuk Madd dan Diftong

آ	=	ā (a panjang)
إي	=	ī (i panjang)
أو	=	ū (u panjang)
او	=	aw
أي	=	ay

ص	=	ṣ
ض	=	ḍ
ط	=	ṭ
ظ	=	ẓ
ع	=	'

Contoh penulisan dengan transliterasi:

اعوذ بالله من الشيطان الرجيم; (*a'ūdhu bi al-Lāh min al-shayṭān al-rajīm*)

بسم الله الرحمن الحيم; (*bism al-Lāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm*)

اِنَّآ أَعْطَيْنَاكَ الْكَوْثَرْ; (*innā a'ṭaynāka al-kawthar*)

فَصَلِّ لِرَبِّكَ وَانْحَرْ; (*faṣalli lirabbika wanḥar*)

صباح الخير. (*ṣabāḥ al-khayr*)

BECOMING A PERFECT HUMAN: IBN ʿARABĪ'S THOUGHTS AND ITS SPIRITUAL LEGACY

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Abstract: *This essay explains the concept of waḥdah al-wujūd, as the central doctrine of Ibn ʿArabī, in its relationship to the concept of perfect human being. As manifestation of God, humans and all creatures ontologically bear the status of hūwa/lā hūwa (He/not He) and inherit God's names. Therefore, the process to be a perfect human is an effort to cultivate those God's names in the right manner. Here sharīʿa according to Ibn ʿArabī is irreplaceable in guiding human being unto perfection. In contrast to some antinomian sufis who treated sharīʿa as a set of rules that lost its value when someone has arrived at the stage of mystical union with God, the deepest concern of humanity, Ibn ʿArabī regards sharīʿa as the deepest reality (haqīqa) itself.*

Abstrak: *Tulisan ini menjelaskan bagaimana konsep* waḥdah al-wujūd, *selaku ajaran sentral dari* Ibn ʿArabī, *berkaitan erat dengan ajarannya tentang manusia sempurna. Sebagai manifestasi dari Allah, manusia beserta seluruh makhluk semesta secara ontologis adalah Dia/bukan Dia* (hūwa/lā hūwa) *yang mewarisi nama-nama Allah. Dengan demikian perjalanan menjadi manusia sempurna adalah suatu upaya untuk menempatkan nama-nama Allah, yang inheren di dalam manusia itu, pada tempat yang semestinya. Di sinilah* sharīʿa *dalam pemikiran* Ibn ʿArabī *justru tidak dapat tergantikan dalam membimbing manusia dalam kesempurnaan. Berbeda dengan beberapa sufi antinomian yang melihat* sharīʿa *tata aturan yang tak lagi perlu ketika seseorang sudah mencapai kesatuan dengan Allah yang dianggap sebagai tujuan terdalam,* sharīʿa *justru dilihat sebagai kenyataan terdalam (haqīqa) itu sendiri.*

Keywords: Ibn ʿArabī, *waḥdah al-wujūd, sharīʿa, Hūwa/lā Hūwa,* perfect human.

WHILE researching a paper on Ibn Taymiyya's criticism of Christianity in *al-Jawāb al-Ṣāḥīḥ*, I noted the view that Christianity is less dangerous than the doctrine of *waḥdah al-wujūd*.[1] Ibn Taymiyya's thesis engaged my personal curiosity. Looking into this, I read a passage from the treatise "Whoso Knoweth Himself," which describes the concept of *waḥdah al-wujūd*.[2] This text led me to two thoughts: first, the concept seems to be expressing a pantheistic idea. Second, it evokes the Christian-Gnostic idea of the ontological unity between humans and the divine as a means to salvation. These pre-research on Ibn ʿArabī's thoughts motivated me to going further in elaborating some of Ibn ʿArabī's key concepts in this essay.

The text of "Whoso Knoweth Himself," although ascribed to Ibn ʿArabī, was not written by him, but by one of his disciples. Therefore, to gain a better perception of Ibn ʿArabī's teaching, especially regarding the unity of being (*waḥdah al-wujūd*), this paper addresses these issues: What is the basic teaching of Ibn ʿArabī on the unity of being, and how does it differs from the latter view of *waḥdah al-wujūd*? Is it parallel to or distinct from some of the *ṣūfīs'* claim of self-union with God? If there is a unity of being between God and creatures, what kind of spirituality could emerge from it? Furthermore, where is the place of *sharīʿa* in Ibn ʿArabī's thinking? The general purpose of this paper is to perceive the model of spirituality derived from Ibn ʿArabī's thoughts.

Ibn 'Arabī's Life and Works

Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Muḥammad Ibn al-ʿArabī al-Ṭāʾi al-Ḥātimī is Ibn ʿArabī's full name. Usually he is called, incorrectly, Ibn ʿArabī to differentiate him from another Ibn al-ʿArabī, Abū

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[1]Ibn Taymiyya, Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm, *A Muslim Theologian's Response to Christianity: Ibn Taymiyya's Al-Jawāb Al-Ṣaḥīḥ,* ed. and trans. Thomas F. Michel (Delmar, N.Y.: Caravan Books, 1984), 140.

[2]Ibn-al-ʿArabī, Muḥyi-'d-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn-ʿAlī, "*Whoso Knoweth Himself….*": From the Treatise on Being (Risale-t-ul-wujudiyyah), ed. and trans. Thomas H. Weir (Cheltenham: Beshara Publications, 1976), 5, 7-9.

Bakr.[3] He was born on August 7, 1165 CE and died in 1240 CE. In Islamic tradition he is known as *al-Syakh al-Akbar* or "The Greatest Syakh." This title refers to some of his achievements. First of all, he wrote extensively on many aspects of Islam untouched by writers both before and after him.[4] There are more than 850 works attributed to him, but based on Osman Yahia's study, 700 are authentic. Many of these writings are short treatises and so there is repetition here and there, but many are full-sized books in length.[5] Second, Ibn ʿArabī's thought spread very widely all over the Islamic world, even as far as Indonesia,[6] and has greatly influenced and shaped the development of Islamic tradition.

The Syakh spent his early life in Andalusia and was trained in the unique Islamic milieu there. His father served in the government, as also he did for a while. When he was eight years old, his family moved to Seville, where he received a formal Islamic education: the *Qur'ān*, *Qur'ānic* exegesis, *ḥadīth*, *sharīʿa*, and more. He was attracted to ṣūfism at the age of twenty.[7] Ibn ʿArabī studied with many prominent *ṣūfīs* at that time in Andalusia, and then also in the Middle East when he made a pilgrimage and traveled around.[8]

Apart from the teachings he learnt from the masters, Ibn ʿArabī felt divine gifts from an early age, via dreams and visions.

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[3]A. Ateş, "Ibn al-ʿArabī," in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam Volume IV*, eds. E. van Donzel, Bernard Lewis, and C.H. Pellat, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1978), 707.

[4]R.W.J. Austin, Introduction to *Sufis of Andalusia: The Rūḥ al-Quds and al-Durrat al-Fākhirah of Ibn ʿArabī* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 46.

[5]William C. Chittick, *Ibn ʿArabī: Heir to the Prophets* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2005), 6-7.

[6]See Anthony H. Johns, "From Arabic into Javanese: The Gift Addressed to the Spirit of the Prophet," in *Windows on the House of Islam: Muslim Sources on Spirituality and Religious Life*, ed. John Renard, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 283.

[7]Austin, *Introduction …,* 22-23.

[8]Stephen Hirtenstein compiled the Syakh's biography and his meetings with those *ṣūfīs* in a chronological way. Stephen Hirtenstein, *The Unlimited Mercifier: The Spiritual Life and Thought of Ibn ʿArabi* (Oxford: Anqa Publishing, 1999).

Therefore, according to his own writing, the Syakh called the first phase of his early life, before spiritual enlightenment, an ignorant state (*jāhiliyya*).[9] The spiritual enlightenment phase was signified by divine illumination. In *ṣūfī* tradition, these kinds of experiences related to the spiritual state of a person as a sign of *walī* or sainthood.[10] The divine sign was reflected in Ibn 'Arabī's account of his meeting with the famous philosopher Ibn Rushd. His father was a friend of Ibn Rushd; when the young syakh was brought to meet him, he struck Ibn Rushd with his spontaneous answer. The answer impelled Ibn Rushd to recognize that the young Ibn 'Arabī possessed the divine unveiling and illumination.[11] Later on, he would claim himself to be not only a *walī*, but also as "the seal of Muḥammedan sainthood" (*khatm al-awliyāʿ*), as he received divine guidance through the Prophet Hūd.[12]

Ibn 'Arabī made pilgrimage and wandered in many places to teach and write until he finally settled in Damascus in the year 1223 CE, where he remained until his death.[13] Among his works, there are two that are regarded as the most important and have been the frequent subject of commentary, even until today. The first one is *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* (The Ringstones of Wisdom), which was written in 1229 CE in Damascus.[14] In this book, the Syakh describes twenty-seven prophets mentioned in *Qur'ān*, from Adam to Muḥammad, and how each is connected to a particular divine name.[15] These prophets are like the setting of a ring that holds a jewel of wisdom.[16] The second book is *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* (The Meccan Revelations), consisting of thirty-seven volumes. It was completed in 1238 CE. This

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[9]Ates, "Ibn al-'Arabī …, 707.

[10]Hirtenstein, *The Unlimited* …, 39-40.

[11]*Ibid.*, 57-58.

[12]*Ibid.*, 86.

[13]Claude Addas has compiled Ibn 'Arabī's life-span in a chronological order. Claude Addas, *Quest for the Red Sulphur: The Life of Ibn 'Arabī*, trans. Peter Kingsley (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1993), 296-310.

[14]Hirtenstein, *The Unlimited* …, 271.

[15]Chittick, *Ibn 'Arabī* …, 7.

[16]Hirtenstein, *The Unlimited* …, 271.

massive works covers a whole range of Islamic subjects, such as *Qur'ān*, *ḥadīth* explanations, jurisprudence, cosmology, and metaphysics.[17] It emphasizes Ibn ʿArabī's divine gifts, since it was written based on visions that occurred first at Mecca.

Ibn Arabi's Thought on the Unity of Being, the Perfect Human, and Divine Law

This section deals with Ibn ʿArabī's teaching on ontology and the place of the human being in it. Furthermore, it examines what kind of spirituality can be derived from such ideas and what kind of relationship these concepts have with the *sharīʿa*.

Unity of Being: Ibn ʿArabī's Ontological Conception

The term *waḥdah al-wujūd* is easily misunderstood as a pantheistic concept that regards every single thing in the world as God. To correct that mistake, we must recall that *waḥdah al-wujūd* was not coined by Ibn ʿArabī, but developed later on. William Chittick conveniently attributes *waḥdah al-wujūd's* essential teaching to Ibn ʿArabī, because it was definitely the Syakh's ideas that predisposed the *waḥdah al-wujūd* school.[18] But, to understand Ibn Taymiyya's critique of *waḥdah al-wujūd*, it is important to determine first what the Syakh really meant.

Ibn ʿArabī regards God as the only *wujūd* that exists. This view arises from the *Qur'ān's* basic Islamic principle of tawḥīd, "there is no God but God" (*lā ilāha illā l-Lāh*). He interpreted this statement as a solid proof for the tenet. If there is any *wujūd* beside God, then God is not unique and so ceases to be one God. However, it is crucial to understand the Arabic term *wujūd*, because its meaning differs from the Western philosophical concept. Usually, *wujūd* is translated as "being," and *waḥdah al-wujūd* as "the unity of being." But within Ibn ʿArabī's system, this is not really correct: as applied to God, *wujūd* can be translated as both "essence" and "existence." Thus, anything other than God (a human, for instance) can be distinguished

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[17]*Ibid.*, 272.

[18]William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn Al-'Arabi's Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1989), 79.

between essence and existence. But while for God, this distinction is impossible, because His essence is identical with His existence.[19] We can imagine a yellow elephant, but it does not mean a yellow elephant existed; it could exist only in our minds. There is always a separation when one thinks of essence and existence for any creatures. But this is not so with God. When God's essence is seen as distinct from existence, then it means one claims to see God's existence in its wholeness, which is an absurd and impossible claim. God's essence and existence must be identical. Therefore, God is the Necessary Being (*wājib al-wujūd*) because without God there is nothing.

If Ibn 'Arabī relates the idea to *tawḥīd* so far, that only God is *wujūd*, then does he mean that "all creatures besides God are not *wujūd* too"? The Syakh's answer would be both "yes and no."[20] On the one hand it is negative. The cosmos and everything in it does not have its own existence, or they are non-existent, because only God has the real *wujūd*. They exist only in relation to and through God, because it is via God's existence that any thing other than God could exist. Ibn 'Arabī's famous term for this is He/not He (*hūwa/lā hūwa*). Creatures are dwelling between existence and non-existence, in a middle state which is called *barzakh* or *isthmus* (it literally means "veil"). William Chittick states that creatures do "exist" in God's mind in a way similar to the way our thoughts exist in our minds.[21] Creatures exist in an imaginal world, as the place for real *wujūd* manifestation.[22] Being imaginal means that the "…reality is one that dwells in an intermediate domain between two other realities and shares in the attributes of both sides. An imagined thing is both the same as and different from each of the two sides that define it."[23] Chittick rightly illustrates this with an image of an object in a mirror that reflects the real object. God is the real *wujūd*, the mirror is the *isthmus* or *barzakh*, and the

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[19]*Ibid.*, 80

[20]*Ibid.*, 81.

[21]*Ibid.*, 79.

[22]William C. Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds Ibn Al-'Arabī and the Problem of Religious Diversity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 26.

[23]*Ibid.*, 25.

image in the mirror is any creature.[24] Nevertheless, it is important to realize that non-existence in Ibn 'Arabī's thought is far different from absolute nothingness or nihilism, let alone pantheism.

The Divine Names and Becoming a Perfect Human

In Ibn 'Arabī's ontology, where is the place for humans and what kind of spirituality can be derived from it? To begin with, as a non-existent being it is not possible for a human to know God, because the two are far too different. Therefore, how can a human know God, even only to some extent? The answer is that God allows Himself to be known through God's self-disclosure (*tajallī*).[25] The famous *ḥadīth qudsī* often quoted by the Syakh is this: "I was a hidden treasure and I loved to be known, so I created." God wants to be known so He discloses Himself to humanity.

There are three channels for God's self-disclosure: through the cosmos, through scripture (*Qur'ān*), and through the human self.[26] That is why Ibn 'Arabī interprets the *Qur'ān* verse, "Wherever you turn there is the face of God" (Q. 2:115), as a proof for this concept. The whole universe is God's self-disclosure and the loci for manifestation of his *wujūd*. The Syakh affirmed al-Ashaʿrī's concept of *kaṣb* by stating that the self-disclosure of God constantly occurs every instant; God never repeats Himself in his disclosure.[27] The human self bears the same nature as the cosmos, i.e., He/not He (*hūwa/la hūwa*), and is counted as one of the loci of God's self disclosure. Thus, the human is capable of knowing God's *wujūd* even if that knowledge is only partial. This identification is possible through God's divine names.

God creates every creature in His names, and, thereby, gives it existence. All created beings manifest God in some ways

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[24]*Ibid.*. See also, Michel Chodkiewicz, *An Ocean Without Shore Ibn 'Arabī, the Book, and the Law* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993), 40.

[25]Chittick, *Imaginal* …, 20.

[26] Chittick, *Ibn 'Arabī* …, 38.

[27]*Ibid.*, 20.

depending on the degree to which each is showing the attributes of God. Therefore, in Ibn ʿArabī's system, there are degrees of excellence (*tafāḍul*) among creatures. For instance, if we talk about "life" as one of God's attributes, a stone possesses "life" in lesser intensity than does a lion: the first's rank is lesser than the following one.[28] In this scheme, humans occupy the highest rank in degree because humans posses all of the names of God. The Syakh likes to use a *ḥadīth* similar to an account in the book of Genesis. It recounts that Adam was created in God's own "form." This text legitimate the Syakh's idea that humans were created in all divine names, not partially, and so unlike other creatures.[29] In addition, Ibn ʿArabī uses the *Qur'ānic* verse in which God states His willingness to teach Adam all the names as proof that humans are created in all God's names.[30] The fullness of human beings as the bearers of divine names is reflected in the human capacity to recognize God through recognizing themselves, despite his or her real being as existence/non-existence. This unique capacity enables humans to pursue perfection.[31] Chittick summarizes:

> If Adam had been created not in the form of God, but in the form of the All-compasionate, no human being could be angry or cruel. If he had been created in the form of the Vengeful, no one would ever forgive his enemy. If he had been created in the form of the Almighty or the Inaccessible, no one would ever obey God or anyone else. But since human beings were created in the form of all names, they can make manifest any conceivable attribute. The divine names, after all, are nothing but designations for the possible modalities of *wujūd*'s manifestation and nonmanifestation.[32]

It is generally known that God has ninety-nine names, such as desire, knowledge, power, speech, justice, forgiveness, generosity, and so on, but in Ibn ʿArabī's interpretation the concept is quite different. The Syakh says that God has unlimited names, so every entity in the cosmos can be

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[28]Chittick, *Imaginal* …, 21-22.
[29]Chodkiewicz, *An Ocean* …, 37-38.
[30]Chittick, *Ibn ʿArabī* …, 49.
[31]*Ibid.*
[32]Chittick, *Imaginal* …, 32.

considered a name of God. That is why the Syakh's followers distinguish God's ninety-nine names from the entities: they call the first "universal names" and the second "particular names."[33] The task of a human being is to achieve perfection through cultivating all "universal" divine names embedded in one's self in the right proportion. Obviously, this is not an easy task because we can perceive easily how humans have different individual qualities that reflect God's divine names in an un-proportional way. Some people are more generous than others, or others more arrogant than others. The lack of moral and ethical behavior can be caused by a particular human who cultivates the divine attributes in the wrong proportion. For example, *al-mutakabbir* is one of God's names, but when one tries to cultivate it too much he or she would end up as an arrogant person. Hence, the fullness of humanity lays in the true *wujūd*, God. A human who wants to actualize this must bring out the divine qualities he or she possesses.[34] This is the model of spirituality derived from the Syakh's idea, i.e., how a human, apart from knowing his true nature as He/not He, should put forth much effort to activate God's characteristics in the correct proportion in order to achieve perfection.

The Perfect Human (*al-insān al-kāmil*) is one of Ibn 'Arabī's most famous doctrines. From the earlier description, we can see that even among humans, the degree of excellences can be applied based on each human's cultivation of the latent divine names. Humans belong to certain stations (*maqām*) and the highest level of these is the "station of no station" (*maqām la maqām*).[35] This is the level of a perfect human, one who manifests the totality of divine attributes.[36] Chittick notes that perfect human beings "…are God's goal in creating the cosmos, since only through them does He manifest the totality of His attributes….[perfect humans] display every name of God in complete harmony and equilibrium."[37] The perfect human has

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[33]*Ibid.*, 21.

[34]*Ibid.*, 22.

[35]Chittick, *Ibn 'Arabī …,* 50; Chittick, *The Sufi Path …*, 375-376.

[36]Chittick, *Imaginal …*, 23.

[37]*Ibid.*

no station because no more perfection or station can define its nature.

The Sharīʿa and Human Perfection

The spirituality of *waḥdāt al-wujūd* involves the process of actualizing the self in accordance with divine names in order to increase his or her spiritual station. This process evokes a key question: how can a human pursue perfection? The Syakh confidently suggests one to follow the *sharīʿa*. This section explains the place of *Sharīʿa* in Ibn ʿArabī's thought.

Some *ṣūfī*s promote an antinomian tendency, because they believe that a mystical union with God is everything that is needed. They regard *sharīʿa* as an Islamic law devoted to outward appearance (*ẓāhir*), while the most important element is the inward aspect (*bāṭin*) or the true reality (*haqīqa*). Looking from this point of view, as Ibn Taymiyya endorses it, Ibn ʿArabī's teaching is more hazardous. This is so because not only does he promote mystical union, but also oneness of being itself, where everything is God's manifestation since there is only one real being/existence or *wujūd*: God. However, Ibn ʿArabī agreed neither with the antinomian *ṣūfī*s nor with the mystical union trend. He believed that if a human being has acknowledged his or her true nature as existence/non-existence, there is no point in trying to achieve mystical union with God; all humans are God's manifestation to begin with. Moreover, this reality did not make Ibn ʿArabī take an antinomian way either, because humans need to discipline themselves to cultivate the divine names in the right proportion, and the *Sharīʿa* is a way for humans to be successful in their efforts to achieve perfection.[38] "[T]he *sharīʿa* provides the necessary concrete guidelines for achieving the equilibrium among the names and character traits," [39] says Chittick.

Sharīʿa is not an outward form of spirituality viz-a-viz the *haqīqa*, according to the Syakh; contrariwise, the *sharīʿa* is the

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[38]*Ibid.*, 36.
[39]*Ibid.*, 44.

haqīqa itself. [40] In one of his works, *Isharat al-Qur'ān*, the Syakh refers to the relation between the *sharī'a* and the *haqīqa*: they are two daughters of a single father (*bintānī min abin wahīd*).[41] As a result, the *sharī'a* is integral to and inseparable from the relentless endeavor to acknowledge *wujūd* by cultivating the divine names in right proportion. Chittick concludes:

> If people want to find the proper use for their own character traits as full manifestations of *wujūd*, they need the guidance of the prophets, who show them how to transform blameworthy traits into praiseworthy ones. In other words, if they follow the Shariah [sic!], this will ensure that they have made the right choices in employing the characteristics of *wujūd* that are inherent in their divine form. If they ignore or actively contravene the Shariah [sic!], they will be actively striving to contravene the laws of *wujūd*.[42]

Conclusion

As a Christian, I found Ibn 'Arabī's thought illuminating. It enriched my personal spiritual journey. Although Ibn Taymiyya might be right on diminishing the concept of "seal of the saints" claimed by Ibn 'Arabī, the concept of friends of God (*walī*) itself is necessary to orient one's spiritual life. Knowing that a human's deepest existence is rooted in God, who inherently assigns His divine names so each human can cultivate those names and apply it to her/his character, I am motivated to reduce the human attributes (erasing the "not He" part) in myself so what is left will be Godly traits (the "He" part) that connect to a human's true existence. Moreover, I have learnt that there are no "evil" characters, which resonate with the Christian teaching that humans are God's good creation. "Evil" characters occur because a human is not yet be able to acquire the character of the divine names in the right proportion. *Wa al-Lāh a'lam bi al-ṣawāb.*●

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[40]Chodkiewicz, *An Ocean …*, 57.
[41]*Ibid.*, 101.
[42]Chittick, *Imaginal …*, 47.

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