The Concept of Divine Oneness:
A Synthesis Between Sufistic Tauhid and Mulla Sadra's Philosophy of *Wujud*

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Abstract: *This article discusses the relationship between Mulla Sadra's philosophy of existence and the sufistic concept of monotheism. Tauhid as an Islamic paradigm can be seen from several levels, including the belief that there is no God but Allah; experience and witness to the Oneness of Allah; and the philosophical construction of experience and witness to the Oneness of Allah. Tauhid in the first point reflects the general theological view, while the second and third points reflect the Sufism paradigm. And according to the theologians, the philosophical construction of the Oneness of God, which is called wahdah al-wujud, among other things, has come out of the Islamic creed. At that point, Mulla Sadra can become a strategic bridge because he synthesizes various previous philosophies into a distinctive philosophical system. From the building of his philosophy, Sadra has three important parts that talk about the philosophy of Being: asalah al-wujud, wahdah al- wujud, and tashqiq al- wujud. This philosophy of being will be dissected through the sufistic paradigm to provide an answer whether sufistic monotheism has violated the Islamic creed. The approach used is descriptive analysis. The main finding is that Mulla Sadra's philosophy of being is still related to monotheism, especially sufi monotheism, because Sadra does not deny Allah as the One Supreme Being, nor does he carry the idea of mono-existentialism like Ibn Arabi, which is the main goal of the theologians' criticism.*
Keywords: *Philosophy of Wujud; Mulla Sadra; Sufistic Tauhid*

A. Introduction

The concept of tauhid, which is the core axis of Islamic teachings, finds a vibrant discursive space because—as Bruce B. Lawrence outs it—islam is not monolithic,[1] including tauhid, which is expressed with various articulations and perspectives by muslim thinkers. Simply put, tauhid is a monotheistic doctrine: believing in the Oneness of Allah in terms of essence, atrributes, and actions.[2] The sufi group places the ontological principle of the doctrine of *wahdah al-wujud* as an embodiment of tauhid teachings. In contrast, theologians—through intense and lengthy debates—present counter perspectives and view the doctrine of *wahdah al-wujud* as having departed from the boundaries of Islamic creed.[3] According to theologians, there is no ontological principle convergence between *wahdah al-wujud* dan tauhid. Throughout history, figures like al-Hallaj and Syekh Siti Jenar, who promoted *wahdah al-wujud* have faced serious consequences.[4]

The sufi position often becomes marginalized. On one hand, the attempt to explain tauhid in a complex and not easily understood manner because the articulation of

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[1] Bruce B. Lawrence, *Islam Tidak Tungggal: Melepaskan Islam Dari Kekerasan*, Terj. Harimukti Bagoes Oka (Jakarta: Serambi Ilmu Semesta, 2004), 11.

[2] Muḥammad 'Abduh, *Risalah al-Tauhid* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1996), 5.

[3] See Oman Fathurahman, *Ithāf Al-Dhaki: Tafsir Wahdatul Wujud Bagi Muslim Nusantara* (Jakarta: Mizan, 2012).

[4] The story of the tragedy of the proponents of this controversial idea can be seen, among others K.H. Husein Muhammad, *Menimbang Pluralisme: Belajar dari Filsuf dan Kaum Sufi* (Bandung: Mizan Pustaka, 2022), 78–81; Media Zainul Bahri, *Satu Tuhan Banyak Agama: Pandangan Sufistik Ibn 'Arabi, Rumi dan Al-Jili* (Jakarta: PT Elex Media Komputindo, 2021), 5; Mojdeh Bayat dan Muhammad Ali Jamnia, *Telaga Cinta Para Sufi Agung*, Terj. Tim Penerjemah (Yogyakarta: Saufa, 2015), 50–60.

sufis stems from *kashf* experiences. On the other hand, theologians evaluate sufi opinions within a textual paradigm, makin it theoritically clear that these two groups are difficult to reconcile. Nevertheless, sufi-philosophers, through what is known as theosophy, try to explain various concepts of sufi tauhid inrational narratives, making them easier to verify. In this context, Mulla Sadra occupies a strategic position as someone who tries to explain the philosophy of existence through three simultaneous approaches: knowledge based on *kashf* from Allah, in accordance with the Quranic text, and not contradictory to rationality.

As a research object, Mulla Sadra has been extensively studied from various perspectives, resulting in a variety of conclusions. Kusen, in "Menurunkan Konsep Ontologi Mulla Sadra ke Dalam Filsafat Ketuhanan", explores the similarities between Sadra's philosophy of existence and the concept of divinity.[5] Antother study titled "Kontribusi Teosofi Transendental Mulla Sadra Bagi Pendidikan Agama Islam" by Miswari attempts to offer how Mulla Sadra's metaphysics can be summarized as a new approach in Islamic religious education, particularly in the field of aqidah.[6] Imam Ibnumalik et al., in "Konsep Teosofi Transendental Mulla Sadra dan Implikasinya dalam Praktik Pendidikan Tauhid," conclude tha Mulla Sadra's thought can serve as a factual-conceptual basis for students.[7]

The aforementioned research shares a commen thread: examining Mulla Sadra's philosophy in the context of divinity, where they have strong similarities. It should be noted that this research shares common ground with previous studies, but there is a research gap that this study aims to fill. This research does not focus on the implications of Sadra's philosophy in Islamic education but rather seeks the similarities between the philosophy of existence and the concept of tauhid. Althought it has some similarities with Kusen's research, this study will elaborate more thoroughly and conceptually situate the philosophy of existence within the framework of tauhid.

In generalm Mulla Sadra did not concentrate fully on tauhid, as in the tradition of Muslim philisophers, he mastered many fields of knowledge simultaneously. However, Mulla Sadra paid special attention to the philosophy received a new touch. Based on this reality, this article targets the main question: How is Mulla Sadra's concept of the philosophy of existence viewed within the framerwork of sufi tauhid? The answer to this question is intended to serve as an initial bridge to build the articulation that sufi and theologian groups essentially rest on the same principles of tauhid. Mulla Sadra can be a gateway to the discourse of the philosophy of existence and tauhid because he has synthesized various previous philosophical thoughts. In other words, he possesses a fairly encyclopedic repository of philosophy representing both philosopers and sufi.

B. Method

This reseacrh employs a qualitative descriptive-analytical method. Operationally, this method comprises systematic steps. The first step is data selection, conducted through a literature review by collecting relevant primary and secondary sources. These sources include the works of Mulla Sadra, sufism text, and theological works on the concept of

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[5] Kusen Kusen, "Menurunkan Konsep Ontologi Mullâ Shadrâ Ke Dalam Filsafat Ketuhanan," *Refleksi* 15, no. 2 (26 Desember 2018)

[6] Miswari M.Ud, "Kontribusi Teosofi Transendental Mulla Sadra Bagi Pendidikan Agama Islam," *Al-Ikhtibar: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan* 5, no. 1 (14 Agustus 2018).

[7] Imam Ibnumalik dan Ali Bowo Tjahjono, "Konsep Teosofi Transendental Mulla Sadra dan Implikasinya dalam Praktik Pendidikan Tauhid," (2022)

wahdah al-wujud. The data are analyzed qualitatively using content analysis techniques, wich involve mapping the core concept of Mulla Sadra's philosophy of existence; examining how these concepts interact with the sufi concept of tauhid; and evaluating theological critiques of *wahdah al-wujud*. The results of this analysis aren then integrated to determine whether Mulla Sadra's philosophy of existence aligns with tauhid in the sufi context.

C. Result and Discussion

Varieties of Tauhid Articulation: From Philosophers to Sufis

The monotheistic doctrine that forms the fundamental basis of Islam emerged when the people of Hijaz Arabia venerated three ancient deities: al-Lat, al-Uzza, dan Manat. These deities were represented by large stones and had been worshiped indirectly for centuries before the advent of Islam.[8] One significant resistance from the Arabs to Islam was due to the conception of God in Islam—Allah the One—being completely different from and divergent from their longstanding worship traditions. This implies that the Islamic principle had both social and theological impacts at the time. However, according to Islamic thinkers like Said Aqiel Siradj and Abul Kalam Azad, it should be noted that the doctrine of tauhid has been the main mission carried by all prophets and messengers, albeit with diffrent terms, times, and forms of sharia.[9] The teachings of the messengers orbit around one core: Worshipping, deifying Allah the One, and negating others besides Him.[10]

Scholars further divide tauhid into three categories: *tauhid rububiyyah, tauhid al-uluhiyyah,* and *tauhid asma wa sifat. Tauhid rububiyyah* is the recognition that Allah is the Lord of all creatures, the Creator of the universe, the Creator of everything within it, the One gives life and death, and so forth. When a servant strives to worship Allah sincerely and purely, accompanied by feelings of love, fear, hope, and submission to Him, that servant has entered *tauhid uluhiyyah. Tauhid asma wa sifat* pertains to the belief that Allah possesses numerous names and attributes that do not entail change, nullification (*ta'lil*), conditionality, or anthropomorphism.[11] These three dimensions then find various new touches according to the characteristics and tendencies of Islami scholars.

According to Fazlur Rahman, tauhid as the core of Islamic doctrine has moral ethical implications. Tauhid depict Allah as the Creator, who envisions the realization of goodness through His creation. Humans, as His creation, bear the responsibility of managing the universe with the goal of achieving the goodness and perfection of Allah's entire plan and creation. This relationship is emphasized when humans are viewed as part of Him, in the sense that God breathed His spirit into humans.[12] Such a paradigm positions tauhid not only as the oneness of God but also includes the dimention of how humans behave and act. Humans are a reflection of God, His vicegerents on earth. When huans interact with other entities, the divine element and theological values are inherently manifested. Fazlur Rahman's stance articulates tauhid and social ethics.

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[8] Karen Amstrong, *Sejarah Tuhan: Kisah Pencarian Tuhan yang Dilakukan Oleh Orang-orang Yahudi, Kristen, dan Islam Selama 4000 Tahun*, Terj. Zaimul Am (Bandung: Mizan, 2004), 205.

[9] Said Aqiel Siradj, *Tasawuf Sebagai Kritik Sosial: Mengedepankan Islam Sebagai Inspirasi, Bukan Aspirasi* (Bandung: Mizan dan Yayasan Khas, 2006), 317.

[10] Mawlana Abul Kalam Azad, *The Tarjumān Al-Qur'ān: the Opening Chapter of the Qur'an (Surat-ul-Fatiha)*, vol. 1, Terj. Syed Abdul Latif (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 1991), 154.

[11] Siradj, *Tasawuf Sebagai Kritik Sosial*, 317.

[12] Nunu Burhanuddin, *Ilmu Kalam: Dari Tauhid Menuju Keadilan* (Jakarta: Prenada Media, 2017), 233.

Fazlur Rahman integrates tauhid into the societal system, encopassing justice, goodness, welfare, and all behaviors rooted in moral values. These moral behaviors can be derived from the universal values of the al-Qur'an. Unlike traditionalist, Rahman does not refer to the universal aspects of the behavior of the Prophet and his companions in Mecca and Medina using formal regulatory frameworks. Rahman goes further by positing that the universal must refer to the ideal-moral values of the Quran, aligned with the conditions where the concepts and ideas are to be applied.[13] This does not mean Rahman aims to diminish the transcendent value of the Quran; rather, his emphasis is on ensuring that the universal value of the Quran engage with contemporary contexts. His approach to interpreting the moral values of the Quran is the *double movement* method. The ultimate goal of Rahman's tauhid model is to establish an ideal relationship between humans and God, humans with other humans, and humans with nature.

Similarly, Raji al-Faruqi sees tauhid as intimately connected with all aspects of life. To understand this connection, tauhid must first be liberated from mere verbal declarations and proclamations; tauhid must be realized as a source of life, for it is the most essential worldview that shapes Islamic civilization Tauhid, as a communal identity, fosters integration among communities and unifies various elements into a mutually supportive from.[14] This level is achieved when an individual internalizes tauhid as an inner reality and faith that develops within the heart. Al-Fauqi regards tauhid as the fundamental principle of all human life because it encompasses views on the cosmos, humanity, morality, and eschatology, providing a spiritual dimension to human actions. The priciple of bearing witness that there is no God but Allah, according to al-Faruqi, demonstrates that reality is composed of two levels: the natural (creation) and the transcendent (Creator).

The hierarchy of Creator and creation provides the conception that Allah is the Lord of everything that is not God. He is the creator ot the cause of everything apart from God. Awareness of the human position as creation bring the consequence that humans must realize the ultimate purpose of creation is Allah while also being given the mandate to do goo. This awareness leads humans to the essential principle that they are capable of action and inaction, a form of freedom accompanied by responsibility. Al-Faruqi refers to this principle of tauhid with two terms. First, duality, meaning reality consists of two kinds: the Creator and the created. Within humans, there exists a cognitive dimension and understanding that can lead humans to comprehend the will and mandate of creation.

Through this concept of tauhid, al-Faruqi strives for the emergence of the ummah community, an organic and cohesive society not bound by birthplaces, nationalities, races, tribes, cultures, and so on. This community focuses on realizing collective reponsibility in the mandate of creation. At this point, tauhid becomes the axis of all forms of piety, religiosity, and goodness. Islam places tauhid at the forefront of religious practice because it encompasses various operational forms that bring blessings to the universe.[15] This is why al-Faruqi sees the most essential pount of Islamic civilization as the understanding of tauhid.

Both Fazlur Rahman and al-Faruqi conceptualize tauhid as a strategy for how Islam can manifest positively in social spaces. In this context, another important figure to discuss is Ali Shariati. He positions Islam as an ideology of liberation: Islam as a driver of

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[13] Burhanuddin, *Ilmu Kalam: Dari Tauhid...*, 234.

[14] Ismāʾīl Raji Al-Fārūqī, *Al Tawḥīd: its Implications For Thought And Life* (Herndon, VA: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1992), 17.

[15] Al-Faruqi, 103–12.

social awareness towards comprehensive social welfare. Islam as an ideology is a consciously chosen belief to addres needs and solve problems in society.[16] To achieve th goal of mobilizing society with Islam, Shariati redefines key concepts in Islam, including tauhid, wich must function as a foundational worldview. This view posts that life a unified entity— an organism that is alive and conscious, possessing will, feeelings, and purpose. This principle is clearly diffrent from the old paradigm that placed life within a dichotomous framework: worldly-otherworldly; physical-spiritual; substance-meaning; bodily-spiritual, and so on.[17]

Based on the view the unity of the organism, theoretically, alla discrimination base on differences must be eliminated, as it is inconsistent with the most fundamental divine values. Subsequently, this concern how to reconstruct understandings and thoughts that shape the social environment. According to Shariati, Islam is a worldview that can be understood through the Quran as a collection od ideas. The history of Islam, on the other hand, can be seen as a summary of the progress of Islam in terms of liberation ideas.[18] These two elements are sources for translating the concept of tauhid—as understood as the unity of the organism—into more operational forms. This comprehensive reconstruction is ultimately aimed at the renewal of Islam.

Tauhid, through its various interpretations, has both philosophical and practical orientations. This concept, with its differing interpretations, is presented by Murtadha Mutahhari, who divides tauhid into two clusters: practical and theoretical. Theoretical tauhid discusses the oneness of God along with His attributes and actions. Practical tauhid, wich he refers to as tauhid ibadah, relates to the practical life of humans or, in other words, the application of theoretical tauhid. Mutahhari believes that theoretical knowledge alone does not influence the practical life of humans. Understanding the oneness of God does not lead one to practice tauhid in its perfect and true sense. Tauhid hakiki is reflected in everyday life, measured by the elimination of "deification" of objects, humans, or even satan. As al-Ghazali puts it, someone may utter the words of tauhid, but their herat might forget or deny Allah, which categorizes them as hypocrites.[19] The measure to understand practical tauhid is sincerity.[20]

The terms shirk, according to Mutahhari, often attributed to pre-Islamic communities, represents the failure to implement practical tauhid. Theoretically, they accepted God as the creator of the universe and everthing in itu, but in their daily livers, they submitted to idols and satan.[21] Mutahhari divides practical tauhid into two aspects: one that relates to God and the one that relates to humans. Relating to God means that every being, wheter angels, prophets, sainst, or sacred entities, does not deserve to be worshiped. Relating to humans means that a human, as a servant, has the duty to worship and serve only Allah.[22] In the other word, these two aspects are intertwined.

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[16] `Ali Shari`ati, *Tugas Cendikiawan Muslim*, Terj. M. Amien Rais (Jakarta: Raja Grafindo Persada, 1996), 167.

[17] Burhanuddin, *Ilmu Kalam: Dari Tauhid Menuju Keadilan*, 250.

[18] Burhanuddin, *Ilmu Kalam: Dari Tauhid Menuju Keadilan*, 250

[19] al-Ghazali said that this model of monotheism is the first level of monotheism, which is called *lūb*. The second level of monotheism is *lūb al-lūb*, recognizing the sentence of monotheism in the heart. The third level is *qasr*, intuitive testimony of monotheism. The fourth is *qasr al-qasr*, do not see in form, exept *al-Wahid*. See al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, vol. 4 (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, n.d.), 246.

[20] Burhanuddin, *Ilmu Kalam: Dari Tauhid Menuju Keadilan*, 260.

[21] Burhanuddin, *Ilmu Kalam: Dari Tauhid Menuju Keadilan*, 260.

[22] Burhanuddin, *Ilmu Kalam: Dari Tauhid Menuju Keadilan*, 260.

These various concepts of tauhid indicate the efforts of Muslim thinkers to impart nuances to tauhid, wheter philosophical or sufi.[23] Philosophy and sufisme, as mentioned, serve to provide a spiritual dimention—especially sufismin theological understanding. Therefore, tauhid not only stands as a concept but also functions in social spaces and can be applied across different times and places. Both philosophy and sufism, as the intellectual foundations of the above figures, suggest that tauhid can serve as the basis for social movement (Ali Shariati); can be lead to the formation of the ummah community (al-Faruqi); and can anchor actions of justice, goodness, welfare, and all universal ethical-moral values (Rahman).

The Philosophy of Existence in Mulla Sadra: *Asalah al-wujud, Wahdah al-wujud,* **and** *Tashqiq al-Wujud*

The fundamental metaphysical debate among muslim philosophers resolves around determining the most fundamental reality, specifically between *mahiyah* (essence) and *wujud* (existence),[24] and which one is the ontologically fundamental.[25] In addressing this issue, muslim philosophers are divided into two gropus: one asserting that the most fundamental reality is *mahiyah* and the other asserting that it is *wujud*. Shihabuddin Yahya Suhrawardi is a philosopher who supports *asalah al- mahiyah,* and long after Suhrawardi, Mulla Sadra inagurated a new era by formulating *asalah al-wujud*, using the approach of *hikmah al-muta'aliyah* to distinguish his systematic concept from earlier philosophers.[26]

Mulla Sadra's *asalah al-wujud* emerges from his critique of the concept of *asalah al-mahiyah,* as proposed by Suharawardi, among others. According to Suhrawardi, when observing reality, one must start from the principle that a mental difference does not signify a real difference. Thus, if humans perceive two conceptually different things, this does not necessarily a concept unrelated to the external-concrete world, since, according to Suhrawardi, existence is the actualization of *mahiyah.* In other words, *mahiyah* is the most fundamental reality. *Mahiyah* is real, and when there is a conceptualization of *mahiyah,* existence arises as a result.[27]

Suhrawardi's statement above critiques Ibn Sina, who posited that in the external world, existence is distinct from *mahiyah* because humans can form cognitive (mental) processes about *mahiyah* while simultaneously doubting its real existence. Ibn Sina ilustrates that someone can understand the meaning of a triangle while doubting its concrete existence because a triangle is a mental process. According to Suhrawardi, Ibn Sina's statement has serious implications. The ability to doubt the real existence of *mahiyah*, wich indeed possesses existence, leads to emergence of two categories of existence: real concrete existence and existence within the mind. Concrete existence can exist if mental existence exist, and vice versa. These two imply an absolute unity. For Suhrawadi, this is impossible

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[23] Samsul Munir Amin, *Ilmu Tasawuf* (Jakarta: Sinar Grafika Offset, 2014), 195.

[24] *Mahiyah* refers to the essence of something, whereas *wujud* denotes the existence of something. For instance, when considering an object called the sun, the mind analyzes it into two part: (1) its 'sun-ness' (*mahiyah*) and (2) its existence (*wujud*). If expressed in propositions, the statement of the first point is "it is the sun" (this *mahiyah* differentiates the sun from other objects), and the second point is "the sun exists" (this *wujud* makes the sun actual, concrete, and real).

[25] Syaifan Nur, *Filsafat Wujud Mulla Sadra* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2002), 10.

[26] Syaifan Nur, *Filsafat Wujud Mulla Sadra*, 11.

[27] A. Khudori Soleh, *Filsafat Islam: Dari Klasik HIngga Kontemporer* (Yogyakarta: Ar-Ruz Media, 2016), 142–48; Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Tiga Mazhab Utama Filsafat Islam*, Terj. Ach. Maimun Syamsuddin (Yogyakarta: IRCiSoD, 2020), 127–28.

due to the assumption that existence is something real. The solution of this issue, according to Suhrawardi, is to build a paradigm where existence is not fundamenal—only *mahiyah* is fundamental.[28]

Mulla Sadra's concept of *asalah wujud* challenges Suhrawadi's perspective. According to Sadra, existence (*wujud*) is an entity that cannot be grasped by the mind, which can only capture general ideas and essences (*mahiyah*). This proves that *mahiyah* is a cognitive-mental phenomenon as it only appears in the mind and can be comprehended by conceptual thought. This is why Suhrawardi considers *wujud* as *i'tibari* (contingent), whereas Sadra argues that when *wujud* is abstracted intp a mental proces, it becomes false, as it is a reality constructed by the mind. [29] Thinking about *wujud* falsifies the true nature of *wujud* itself.

Sadra's stance is clear: *wujud* is fundamental to everything that exists, it is the true reality, and everything other than *wujud* is a reflection, shadow, or resemlance, besides being fundamenal, *wujud* is positive, clear, and definite, whereas *mahiyah* is the opposite. *Mahiyah* does not exists in itself; whatever it contains is due to its association with *wujud.* In other words, contrary to Suhrawardi, Sadra asserts that *mahiyah* is a conceptualization of *wujud.* In external reality, mahiyah does not exist at all, except as one form of *wujud.* When this form of *wujud* is presented to the mind, the mind asbstracts it into *mahiyah*, while *wujud* itself remains independent of this process; it exists by itself. *Wujud* is the direct manifestation of the Absolute Reality.

The relationship between wujud and Absolute Reality leads Mula Sadra to propose the idea of *wahdah al-wujud* (the unity of existence). If it is said that wujud is singular, the question arises: does this mean that all reality apart from God is not real? Does unitiy with God imply that all creatures are God? To engage with Sadra's thought on this topci, one must first understand the earlier philosphers debates from which Sadra begins his discussion. According to the Ishraqi philosophers, the concept of *wahdah al-wujud* should be understood within the paradigm of gradation, where God radiates like light, as Suhrawardi describes.[30] This means that while God is one, His oneness is the primary root, acknowledging the existence of existence of Gradation of *wujud*. In contrast, Ibn 'Arabi asserts that there is only one *wujud*, which is the wujud of God. No reality can be named except the reality of God, and the objects that appear to exist are nothing but manifestations of God.

Although this understanding does not diminish God's trancendence, it places God as an essence that is not seperate from other "existents". At this point, God is both transcendent and immanent, uniting and sharing wujud with the universe. [31] However, in the context of Ibn Arabi, these shadow realities cannot be said to be illusory; they all exist and have *wujud,* but this existence depends on the *wujud al-Haqq.* Moreover, they partake in the being of God in their capacity as His expressions or manifestations. In Ibn 'Arabi's conception, *wujud* has an ontological meaning related to the concept of being and an epistemological meaning related to the preocess of knowing. [32] *Wujud* not only means being

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[28] Nur, *Filsafat Wujud Mulla Sadra*, 168.
[29] Nur, *Filsafat Wujud Mulla Sadra*, 174.
[30] Nur, *Filsafat Wujud Mulla Sadra*, 185.
[31] Mukhlisin Sa'ad, *Etika Sufi Ibn Al-Arabi* (Probolinggo: Mandiri, 2019), 221.
[32] Haidar Bagir, *Semesta Cinta: Pengantar kepada Pemikiran Ibn Arabi* (Jakarta Selatan: Mizan Publika, 2015), 174.

but also finding and being found, [33] as its original meaning implies. Therefore, *wujud* not only represents existence but also self-awareness; it discovers and realizes itself. This extends Ibn 'Arabi's quest for the "root of divinity". [34]

According to Mulla Sadra, concerning the unity or diversity of existence and existents, there are four possible interpretations. *First*, the unity of *wujud* and the unity of *maujud* (existents). *Second*, the diversity of wujud and maujud. *Third*, the unity of wujud and the diversity of *maujud*. *Fourth*, the diversity of *wujud* and the unity of *maujud*. Among these four possibilities, Mulla Sadra chooses the third as his philosophical position. He constructs a philosophical system based on the argument that there is unity of *wujud* on one side and gradation of *wujud* on the other. This means the One manifests itself in diversity, and diversity exists within the One.[35] However, Sadra does not contradict the Sufi belief that the unity and diversity of God negate the principle of unity. In this position, Sadra seeks to synthesize the views on the unity of *wujud* between the Ishraqi and Sufi traditions. Sadra posits a dissemination from the One *wujud* to other wujuds, interconnected in three hierarchies.[36]

At the first level, there is Pure Existence, which is existence independent of anything else. This existence has many articulations among the Sufis. Ibn Arabi refers to this realm as the absolute unseen (*gaib al-mutlaq*). Sadra asserts that this existence has no name, attributes, and cannot be comprehended by human reason, as anything with a conceptual identity is only a mental abstraction, not the true existence of that reality. Pure Existence also cannot be perceived because its existence precedes the existence of all other *wujud*s. It is pure hiddenness and absolute secrecy.[37]

The second hierarchy in Mulla Sadra's ontology is the *wujud* that depends on other existences. This *wujud* is limited and characterized by attributes that are added to it, described by finite aspects such as intellect, soul, body, and so on. The third hierarchy is the Absolute *wujud* in its diffusion, whose generality cannot be obscured by its universality because *wujud* is pure generality, unlike the universal, which exists in potentiality and thus requires a medium to become actual and concrete. The Oneness of *wujud* is not one in the arithmetic sense but is a reality that permeates all "possible temples" without being confined to specific descriptions or limitations (such as temporal—new, eternal, initial, perpetual—or qualitative boundaries, such as perfect or imperfect).[38]

At the first level, *wujud* is viewed as *la bi shart*, *wujud* in its unconditional state, transcending any determination. At the second level, *wujud* touches the conditional realm. This realm necessitates certain determinations and causes it to descend through the chain of *wujud*. At the third level, *wujud* is seen as *bi shart la*; Sadra regards this realm as the reality of unity (*ahadiyah*) on one side and the sacred intellect (*nafs al-aqdas*), which allows the divine names to enter the domain of differentiation (*wahidiyyah*), on the other. In this

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[33] Haidar Bagir, *Semesta Cinta: Pengantar kepada Pemikiran Ibn Arabi.*, 175.

[34] William Chittink, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn Arabi's Methaphysics of Imagination* (Albany: Suny Press, 1989), 38.

[35] Ṣadr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Shirāzī, *al-Ḥikmah al-Muta'āliyah fī al-Asfār al-'Aqliyyah al-Arba'ah*, vol. 1 (Qum: Maktabah al-Muṣṭafā, n.d.), 71.

[36] Nur, *Filsafat Wujud Mulla Sadra*, 188–89.

[37] Nur, *Filsafat Wujud Mulla Sadra*, 188–89.

[38] Nur, *Filsafat Wujud Mulla Sadra*, 190.

manner, Sadra attempts to synthesize previous views on the unity of the deepest and most hidden reality.[39]

Furthermore, Sadra's philosophy of *wahdah al-wujud* is directly related to his concept of the gradation of existence. This concept has undergone a long process since ancient Greek times up to Mulla Sadra. However, Sadra made two significant changes. *First*, he established the principle of gradation in *wujud*, not in essence as Suhrawardi understood it. This aligns with Sadra's principle that the most fundamental reality is *wujud*. *Second*, Sadra posits that the gradation of *wujud* occurs systematically because existence is not static but continuously changing. Essentially, gradation or *tashkik* means "becoming more or less," or "increasing or decreasing." According to this understanding, the state of various entities at all levels can be characterized as earlier or later, more perfect or less perfect, stronger or weaker.[40]

Sadra's concept of the gradation of *wujud* is an effort to explain that *wujud* is singular on one side but plural on the other. The paradigm of the gradation of existence views that *wujud* is manifold, and diversity is a consequence of *wujud* itself. The singular *wujud* manifests in various entities, structured according to the perfection and strength of these entities. Based on this gradation of *wujud*, Sadra rejects the existence of monistic existentialism. He critiques the Sufis who argue that there is only one *wujud*, that of God, while everything else is merely illusory. Sadra's well-known principle, that the simple reality is everything, posits that God, as the single and simple reality, is existence. There is diversity within unity.[41]

While everything that exists is within God, because God is the Perfect *wujud*, this does not imply that all creations are parts of God (since He is simple) nor that all creations are illusions and not real. Conversely, according to Syaifan Nur, this should mean that all creations are utterly dependent on God and distinguished from Him because of their diversity. Syaifan Nur states: The assertion that all creations are within God's domain avoids misunderstanding more than saying God is within all creations, which is the formal paradigm of pantheism.[42] Although this statement may still leave a pantheistic impression, it aims to emphasize God's transcendence over all creations. Ultimately, all of Mulla Sadra's philosophical concepts of existence intertwine, creating a coherent principle that explains reality and the existence of God.

Sufistic Monotheism: Sirhindi's Critique of the Concept of *Wahdah al-Wujud* and Sadra's Construction of Monotheism

Monotheism (tauhid) in Sufi literature, according to Abdul Haqq Ansari, has four levels of meaning. *First*, the faith and belief in the oneness of God. *Second*, the discipline of life both outwardly and inwardly based on the belief in the oneness of God. *Third*, the experience of unity and unification with God. *Fourth*, theosophy or philosophical construction of reality based on mystical experience.[43] In the context of theologians or Shariah scholars, the meaning of monotheism moves only within the first and second levels and considers the

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[39] Nur, *Filsafat Wujud Mulla Sadra*, 190

[40] Nur, *Filsafat Wujud Mulla Sadra*, 198.

[41] al-Shirāzī, *al-ḥikmah al-Muta'āliyah fī al-Asfār al-'Aqliyyah al-Arba'ah*, 1:71–73.

[42] Nur, *Filsafat Wujud Mulla Sadra*, 201.

[43] Muhammad A. Ansari, *Sufism And Sharī'ah: A Study Of Shayk Aḥmad Sirhindī's Effort To Reform Sufism* (London: Islam Foundation, 1986), 101.

subsequent levels to have no genealogical roots in the teachings of the Quran and hadith.[44] At this point, to reach the third and fourth levels, Sufis build a philosophical framework not only from Quranic texts but also—what gives Sufi epistemology its distinctive character—based on intuitive experience. In Sadra's context, he constructs knowledge based on *kashf* (mystical unveiling), which does not contradict rational thought or the Quranic text. This type of philosophy is termed *hikmah al-muta'aliyah* (transcendent wisdom).

The experience of unity and unification, or what can be translated as witnessing the oneness of existence, is called *tauhid shuhudi*. The philosophical interpretation of this experience is called *tauhid wujudi* (*wahdah al-wujud*). All four interpretations, including those by Mulla Sadra, are anchored in the doctrine of *tauhid* (monotheism) as the core paradigm of Islam. Several important points in Sadra's philosophy can elucidate the position of the doctrine of tauhid. Sadra is known as a philosopher who advocates for *asalah al-wujud*, which means that nothing in the external world is real except *wujud*. However, this *wujud*, as the foundation of reality, can never be captured as a conceptual reality, because when *wujud* has changed to the conceptual level, it is no longer pure *wujud*. In this context, God's *wujud* can be seen as the most fundamental reality, especially when related to *wahdah al-wujud*.

The view of *wujud* as the most fundamental reality renders *mahiyah* (essence) secondary. *Mahiyah*, unless "illuminated" by the light of *existence*, cannot be identified as something that exists or does not exist.[45] Meanwhile, *wujud* is real in itself, due to its connection with the Creator (*al-Ja'il*). At this point, indirectly, Sadra posits that the Creator is the first reality that creates all *wujud* outside the Creator, and those *wujud* become positively possible—unlike *mahiyah*—because they are directly connected to the Creator. Notably, Mulla Sadra arrived at this thesis after gaining *kashf* (mystical knowledge); before that, he was aligned with Suhrawardi, who posited that the most fundamental reality is *mahiyah*.[46] This thesis, therefore, is built upon intuitive experience after being previously grounded in reason.

Furthermore, Sadra's position on tauhid can be seen from the concept of *wahdah al-wujud*. However, to understand the complete framework of Sadra's paradigm, it is necessary to present the critique of the concept of *wahdah al-wujud* as a counter-narrative to affirm Sadra's position amidst the controversy surrounding *wahdah al-wujud*. Ahmad Sirhindi is one notable critic of Ibn 'Arabi's *wahdah al-wujud*, and the first point he highlights is that the Prophet never taught that existence is singular; rather, he taught that God is One. The Prophet did not teach that no existence exists except God's existence, but rather that there is no God but Allah. Sirhindi uses common theological views that the world is real and exists; it is an entity other than God and indeed different from God; and God is completely transcendent, not sharing existence with the world. Hence, Sirhindi argues, the fundamental premise of religion is duality, not *wahdah al-wujud*.[47]

The second point Sirhindi emphasizes is that the unity of *wujud* justifies idolatry. If philosophy and Sufism identify the world as a manifestation of God, then the worship of any object in the world includes worship of God, or at least a manifestation of God.

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[44] Muhammad A. Ansari, *Sufism And Sharī'ah: A Study Of Shayk Aḥmad Sirhindī's Effort To Reform Sufism.*, 114.

[45] al-Shirāzī, *al-Ḥkmah al-Muta'āliyah fī al-Asfār al-'Aqliyyah al-Arba'ah*, 1:77.

[46] Nur, *Filsafat Wujud Mulla Sadra*, 180.

[47] Ansari, *Sufism and Sharī'ah*, 104.

According to Sirhindi, this clearly contradicts the most fundamental principle of tauhid itself. Additionally, this doctrine denies the existence of evil. As manifestations of God, the Absolute Good, everything is good. This again contradicts the prophetic mission, which aims to eliminate forms of evil.[48] From this perspective, even the prophetic mission seems insignificant.

Furthermore, Sirhindi considers the epistemological viewpoint of *wahdah al-wujud* as a subjective phenomenon. This belief arises in various ways. Sufis understand the phrase "there is no God but Allah" to mean "there is no existence except Allah." They repeat this phrase and meditate on it. As a result of repetition, meditation, and reflection, Sirhindi argues, this phrase fills their minds and, after constant repetition, becomes their imagination and belief.[49] In other words, Sirhindi implies that Sufis see the vision of tauhid as they wish to see it. They believe in something because they want to believe it. This epistemological issue, according to theologians, is very problematic.

A specific critique Sirhindi directs at Ibn Arabi is regarding the spread of *wahdah al-wujud*. He argues that this concept is a new construct in the history of Sufism, with no figures before Ibn Arabi proposing this concept. Sufis more often discussed and explored the concept of *tauhid shuhudi* rather than *tauhid wujudi*. Indirectly, Sirhindi holds Ibn Arabi responsible as the main architect of the doctrine of *wahdah al-wujud*. This point, if viewed historically, is problematic because figures like al-Hallaj had similar principles. Moreover, the term *wahdah al-wujud*, which is the target of Sirhindi's critique, was not directly used by Ibn Arabi in his philosophical system. The term was attributed to Ibn 'Arabi because his philosophical principles align with the concept of *wahdah al-wujud*.[50]

The third critique regarding the epistemology of the Sufis indirectly suggests that they base their knowledge on imagination. However, they use *irfani* epistemology: knowledge obtained through divine unveiling (*kashf*) following spiritual practices. Imam Qushairi views '*irfan* as the highest level of knowledge—higher than *bayan* (exposition) and *burhan* (demonstration)—acquired through direct witnessing.[51] Theoretical '*irfani* reasoning is clearly different from imagination. Sufis must go through a series of efforts to achieve *kashf* knowledge, including Ibn Arabi and Mulla Sadra. Both figures even consider *irfani* epistemology as the most important foundation in their philosophy. This means that Sirhindi's critique of epistemology seems hasty and premature, neglecting the '*irfani* epistemology.

An important thesis to examine in detail is Sirhindi's critique on the implications of the *wahdah al-wujud* view, namely that if all entities other than God are considered as God, then the worship of nature can be justified because it is a manifestation of God. This critique is directed at Ibn Arabi, who indeed holds the view of the unity of *wujud*. According to this view, there is no *wujud* other than God's *wujud*, and all reality is merely a shadow of God. On one side, Islam upholds the theology of tauhid, the belief in one God. This concept reflects the transcendent position of God, separate and beyond the created world. On the other side, Islamic theology, when viewed from a Sufi perspective, also embraces

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[48] Ansari, *Sufism and Sharī'ah*, 108

[49] Ansari, *Sufism and Sharī'ah*, 108

[50] Sa'ad, *Etika Sufi Ibn Al-Arabi*, 71.

[51] Muḥammad 'Ābid Al-Jābirī, *Bunyah al-'Aql al-'Arabī* (Beirut: Markaz Dirāsah al-Wiḥdah al-'Arabiyyah, 1994), 251; Abdul Mukti Ro'uf, *Kritik Nalar Arab Muhammad 'Abid Al-Jabiri* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2018), 107.

the idea of the oneness of all reality, or—in Haidar Bagir's expression—*monorealism*. In other words, although it does not diminish God's transcendence, this theological understanding places God as an essence that is not separate from other beings. More specifically, other beings, which essentially originate or are created by Him, are manifestations of God's *wujud* as well. Therefore, besides being transcendent, God is also immanent (*tashbih*), united and sharing *wujud* with the universe.[52]

In this context, Mulla Sadra no longer adopts the mono-existentialism view like Ibn Arabi. To explain this concept, one must start from the idea of *wahdah al-wujud*, which according to Sadra should be understood as the oneness of *wujud* and the diversity of *maujud*. Sadra explains this existence in a hierarchy, the first being Pure *Wujud*. This *wujud* does not depend on other existences because it is the first *wujud*, completely free from determination; in Islam, this *Wujud* is Allah. The second *wujud* is the one whose existence depends on other existences. This *wujud* is conditioned by determinations, causing it to descend in the chain of *wujud*. The third existence is Absolute *Wujud* in its diffusion. On one side it is the reality of *Ahadiyah* (the state of being one), and on the other side *Wahidiyyah* (the state of being unified).

In the realm of Absolute Existence in diffusion, it should be viewed from the idea of *tashkik al-wujud*, that *wujud* is both constant and changing simultaneously. In this regard, *wujud* is considered something both ambiguous and unique. Kusen explains that understanding this concept can use the analogy of an apple. Before ripening, an apple can be green, then turn red when ripe. From an *wujudiyah* perspective, the apple does not change, but from the aspect of appearance, it clearly changes. Similarly, in the context of the *wujud* of God, angels, jin, humans, and devils. These entities are united by one thing, namely *wujud* itself, but they have different degrees. All these existences are the same, differing only in degrees.[53]

Tashkik al-wujud is the basis for explaining both monism and pluralism. Existence is many, not one. And diversity is nothing but a consequence of existence itself. Within this principle lies unity and difference simultaneously. That is why it is unique. Based on *tashkik al-wujud*, Sadra rejects the existence of existential monism. Like Sirhindi, Sadra criticizes the thoughts of earlier Sufis who viewed *wujud* as solely returning to the reality of God, while the others are mere shadows. For Sadra, the *wujud* of God and the existence of *wujud* stand in their respective domains. All existences besides God cannot be seen as mere shadows. Therefore, Sirhindi's critique does not apply to Mulla Sadra. As an advocate of *tashkik al-wujud*, Sadra's concept of Sufistic tauhid indirectly aligns with the theological paradigm, despite having a *sufism* character.

D. Conclution

The concept of tauhid (oneness of God) can still be found in the complex philosophy of existence of Mulla Sadra. Sadra indeed does not specialize his philosophy of existence within the frame of tauhid, as he responds to various articulations of the philosophy of existence from his predecessors. However, the philosophy of existence in Islam cannot be separated from the aspect of divinity, as the most Absolute existence is God Himself. This includes Mulla Sadra's philosophy of existence aimed at explaining how to understand the

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[52] Bagir, *Semesta Cinta: Pengantar kepada Pemikiran Ibn Arabi*, 221.
[53] Kusen, "Menurunkan Konsep Ontologi Mullâ Shadrâ Ke Dalam Filsafat Ketuhanan," 192.

existence of the universe as existing within the domain of God's existence. Sadra's three main these are the principle of existence (*asalah al-wujud*), which states that the most fundamental basis of reality is existence, not essence. The next philosophy is the unity of existence (*wahdah al-wujud*), the understanding that all creation exists within the domain of God's existence but stands alone as separate existences from God. Lastly, there is the differentiation of existence (*tashqiq al-wujud*), the view that each existence has both similarity and difference.

The articulation of *wahdah al-wujud* has received harsh criticism, among others, from Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi. He says that the unity of existence brings serious implications because it legitimizes the worship of all entities other than God. Sadra's philosophy of existence, at this point, does not fall within Sirhindi's criticism because Sadra does not assume that God and all His creations are in absolute unity. God is in the transcendent realm and gives gradation of existence to non-divine entities, and these entities have independent existence; in the context of humans, they even have will. Thus, Sadra's philosophy of existence is within the corridor of tauhid, but indeed the articulation of philosophy and Sufism requires complex articulation, as it is based on spiritual experience.

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