

Sufistic Monotheism: Divinity in the Anthropocentric Reasoning of Ibn 'Arabi's *Wahdat al-Wujud*

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Abstract: This paper discusses the concept of divinity in the anthropocentrism of Ibn 'Arabi's *wahdat al-wujud* thought system through library research. *Wahdat al-wujud*'s anthropocentrism reasoning assumes that humans are the most perfect manifestation of God. The human body is a microcosm, whereas the universe is a macrocosm. Humans are God's creations that have the potential to receive the totality of the divine image and reflect it for the entire universe, while God's other creations can receive only a part of it. Thus, man is the totality of the divine image and reality of the universe. Humans have a noble position in the cosmos, which becomes their spirit and purpose, including their relationship with God. In the anthropocentrism of *wahdat al-wujūd*, God is not understood as far away, but as near: the human self. God is not another being but the human self. Therefore, man is required to know himself, and he will surely know his God. Without self-knowledge, humans are unable to know God.

Keywords: Anthropocentrism, *wahdat al-wujud*, divinity, Sufistic monotheism, Ibn 'Arabi

A. Introduction

Tawheed is the foundation of Islam. In Sufism, tawhid is understood not only as a theory or knowledge but also as a practice or experience. From the perspective that divides knowledge between *husuli* and *huduri*, for example, Sufis understand tawhid as the latter type of knowledge. This means that tawhid is the spiritual experience of a *tawhidi* human being with his Lord and is no longer limited to knowledge of theories of God's oneness or theories of belief in Him. In Said Aqil Siradj's assessment, non-tasawuf circles tend to understand tawhid theoretically and rhetorically, creating a clear "point-demarcation" between humans on the one hand and God.¹

Ibn 'Arabi (1165-1240) is one of the main actors and figures in the world of Sufism. Ibn 'Arabi's full name is Muammad ibn 'Ali ibn Muhammad ibn al-'Arabi al-Ṭa'i al-Hatimi. He was born in Mursia, Spain, and died in Damascus, Syria. Of course, he also understood that monotheism is far from being limited to its external meaning; rather, it can be said to have entered its niche or core meaning. He is usually known for *wahdat al-wujud* or unity of being, as a system of thought famous for the representative phrase that nothing exists except *al-Haqq* (the Truth). There is nothing in existence except Him."² He is a phenomenal and controversial figure in the world of Sufism.

In Ibn 'Arabi's system of thought, the totality of the universe is the appearance or manifestation of God (*Tajjali al-Haqq*) in this world. This concept of "the appearance of God" is famous as the theory of the universe's creation. He postulates that God is a hidden treasure,

¹ Said Aqil Siradj, "Tawhid in the Perspective of Sufism", *Islamica*, Vol. 5, No. 1, September 2010, 154.

² Ibn 'Arabi, Ibn 'Arabi, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*, ed. 'Usman Yaḥyā and Ibrāhīm Madkūr. (Cairo: al-Hai'ah al-Miṣriyyah al-'Āmmah li al-Kitāb, 1985), II: 516.

loving and longing to be known; therefore, He created the universe. Therefore, the purpose of the creation of the universe for Ibn 'Arabi is to know God: the entire universe, as the appearance of God, is a vehicle to know Him.

One of Ibn 'Arabi's thoughts was about human beings. Like his view of the meaning of the universe, Ibn 'Arabi also sees humans as the appearance of God and the vehicle for knowing God. However, Ibn 'Arabi separates humans from the universe itself. According to him, although humans are part of the universe, they are the most perfect manifestation of God. Based on the qualities and potentials that exist in man, he is God's creation with the noblest position in and among the universe. In turn, humans are both the spirit and purpose of the universe.

Starting from that narrative, this paper seeks to read the problem of divinity in Ibn 'Arabi's anthropocentrism tendency or reasoning. In Ibn 'Arabi's thought, humans are the small universe (microcosm, *al-'alam al-saghir*), which although included in the totality of the universe (microcosm, *al-'alam al-kabir*), but different from the totality of the universe. Humans are not only the most perfect creation and appearance of God beyond the universe but also play a key role in the relationship between the universe and God.

B. Method

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach to examine the concept of divinity in Ibn 'Arabi's *wahdat al-wujūd* from an anthropocentric perspective. The research is anchored in library-based analysis, with data gathered from primary sources such as Ibn 'Arabi's *al-Futuḥat al-Makkiyyah* and *Fuṣuṣ al-Hikam*, complemented by secondary sources including scholarly articles, books, and contemporary studies on Sufism and Islamic philosophy. The analytical framework employed is rooted in the principles of comparative hermeneutics, a methodological approach that involves the comparative analysis of texts or concepts to explore the influence of anthropocentric reasoning within *wahdat al-wujūd* on theological interpretation. Through a thorough textual analysis, the study aims to decipher and interpret Ibn 'Arabi's views on divine manifestation (*tajjali al-Haqq*) and the role of humans as microcosms within the broader cosmic order.

C. Result and discussion

1. Ibn 'Arabi and the *Wahdat al-Wujud* System of Thought

In general, *wahdat al-wujūd* is a label for Ibn 'Arabi's system of thought. Although scholars have concluded that the term is not found in any of Ibn 'Arabi's expressions or works, it is nevertheless prevalent. The first scholar to examine it was Ibrahim Bayyumi Madkur, whose conclusions were presented in 1965. Hermann Landolt came to the same conclusion in 1970 through his research. In essence, these conclusions confirm that the term *wahdat al-wujūd* was not Ibn 'Arabi's invention and has never been used in his works.³

Ibn 'Arabi has several expressions that correspond to the content of the idea of *wahdat al-wujūd*. For example, in *al-Futuḥat al-Makkiyyah*, Ibn 'Arabi expresses that "...This form is none other than *al-Haqq*. There is nothing in existence except Him";⁴ "Nothing appears in existence through existence except *al-Haqq*, because existence is *al-Haqq*, and He is one."⁵ and "He (*al-*

³ Kautsar Azhari Noer, *Ibn al-'Arabi: Wahdat al-Wujud in Debate* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1995), 34.

⁴ Ibn 'Arabi, Ibn 'Arabi, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*, ed. 'Usman Yaḥyā and Ibrāhīm Madkūr. (Cairo: al-Hai'ah al-Miṣriyyah al-Āmmah li al-Kitāb, 1985), II: 516.

⁵ Ibn 'Arabi, Ibn 'Arabi, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*, ed. 'Usman Yaḥyā and Ibrāhīm Madkūr. (Cairo: al-Hai'ah al-Miṣriyyah al-Āmmah li al-Kitāb, 1985), II: 516.: 517.

Haqq) is one in existence, because the attribute of visible things that are possible-existence (*al-mumkinat*) is nothingness. All that is possible existent has no existence even though it is visible to the seer.”⁶ In the *Fuṣuṣ al-Hikam*, he also states that “There is no likeness in existence and no contradiction in existence, because existence is essentially one, and something does not contradict itself.”⁷

In Ibn 'Arabi's system of thought, *wahdat al-wujud* is an ontological concept. This is *al-Haqq* or God. God is one in being. There is only one being, namely God; there is no being other than Him. The universe, or everything that is possible to exist (*al-mumkinah*), although it can be seen, has the attribute of nothingness. The universe does not exist; only God exists; hence, existence is one-only God. In other words, *wahdat al-wujud* or unity of being means that there is only one being, namely God; there is no being other than Him.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr explains *wahdat al-wujud* in a succinct but quite straightforward expression. According to Nasr, *wahdat al-wujud* means the oneness of reality, only Absolute Reality; there is no reality except Absolute Reality. The universe is not God, but the reality of the universe is none other than the Reality of God, because there are no other realities except the reality of God. The visible universe is neither a separate reality from God's reality nor any other reality than God's reality. The reality of the universe is none other than the Reality of God, because there are no other realities except the reality of God.⁸

In monotheism, *wahdat al-wujud* is a manifesto. This is the assertion that there is nothing but God; only God exists. There is no reality except the Absolute Reality, or no existence except for God. Only God exists; only God has reality; nothing exists except for God. Therefore, denial of the main idea can reduce the quality of faith. As Nasr said, believing in the order of reality as a separate part of the Absolute Reality or believing in the existence of other realities besides the reality of God can lead to the great sin of shirk.⁹

The main pillar of the *wahdat al-wujud* system is *tajjali al-Haqq* (the manifestation of God). The concept of *tajjali* occupies an important and fundamental position in Ibn 'Arabi's thought. According to Su'ad al-Hakim, the concept of *tajjali* is the pillar of Ibn 'Arabi's *wahdat al-wujud* philosophy, even the entire building of Ibn 'Arabi's thought is infiltrated by this concept.¹⁰ Izutsu also considers the concept of *tajjali* as the totality of Ibn 'Arabi's philosophy as well as the axis of his thought: the basis of his worldview that no part of his system of thought can be understood without referring to *tajjali*.¹¹

Tajjali can be interpreted as self-disclosure, self-revelation, self-manifestation, or theophany.¹² According to Su'ad al-Hakim, Ibn 'Arabi uses *tajjali* synonymously with several words, such as *al-faid* (emanation, emanation, bestowal), *al-zuhur* (emergence, appearance,

⁶ Ibn 'Arabi, Ibn 'Arabi, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*, ed. 'Usman Yaḥyā and Ibrāhīm Madkūr. (Cairo: al-Hai'ah al-Miṣriyyah al-'Āmmah li al-Kitāb, 1985), III: 290.

⁷ Ibn 'Arabi, *Fuṣūṣ al-Hikam* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1980), 92. See also Dzulfikar Akbar Romadlon, et al, "Ibn 'Arabi's Wahdatul Wujud and its Relation to Af'al 'Ibād", *Tsaqafah* vol. 16 no. 2, November 2020, 183.

⁸ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Three Major Schools of Islamic Philosophy: Ibn Sina, Suhrawaradi, and Ibn 'Arabi* (Yogyakarta: Ircisod, 2014), 194.

⁹ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Three Major Schools of Islamic Philosophy: Ibn Sina, Suhrawaradi, and Ibn 'Arabi* (Yogyakarta: Ircisod, 2014), 194.

¹⁰ Su'ād al-Hakīm, *al-Mu'jam al-Ṣūfī: al-Hikmah fī al-Hudūd al-Kalimah* (Beirut: Dandarrah, 1981), 258.

¹¹ Toshihiko Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism: A Comparative Study of Key Philosophical Concepts* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), 152.

¹² Kautsar Azhari Noer, *Ibn al-'Arabi: Wahdat al-Wujud in Debate* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1995), 57.

birth), *al-tanazzul* (descent, descent), *al-fath* (opening).¹³ In particular, Ibn 'Arabi's concept of *tajjali* is also his thought on the theory of the creation of the universe. The process of creating the universe is synonymous with *tajjali*.¹⁴

In the theory of the creation of the universe, there is a popular saying that "I (God) am a hidden treasure (*kanz makhfi*). So I long to be known. Therefore, I created creatures, so that through Me they may know Me."¹⁵ This expression is often regarded as a prophetic tradition, but most hadith scholars do not recognise it as such. In Ibn 'Arabi's judgment it is authentic or valid as a hadith based on *kashf* (an encounter with the Prophet in the imaginal realm) and indeed not based on *naql* or *sanad* (transmission) of the hadith.¹⁶

In that expression, *kanz makhfi* or hidden treasures are the hidden or mysterious Essence of God (*al-Haqq*); *azali*, *qadim*, without laws (*al-ahkam*), links (*al-nusub*) or relations (*al-idafat*). At this level, God is transcendent and impossible to see, know, or approach. At this level, there is a love or longing to be known; thus, God created the universe, and in terms of His Names and Attributes manifesting themselves in the universe, He can be known.¹⁷ This is the reason for the creation of the universe itself. In other words, the creation of the universe is due to God's love and longing to be known, or it is God's will to be known by the universe itself.

The creation of the universe is *tajjali* (manifestation). *Tajjali al-Haqq* is God's self-appearance into the universe. Therefore, the universe is the locus or place of His self-appearance (*majla*) and would not exist without *tajjali*. *Tajjali* means entification (*ta'ayyun*), the process of God's absolute mysterious self-appearance in concrete form. *Tajjali* occurs in predetermined concrete forms, an infinite number of which are neither the same nor repeated. *Tajjali* occurs continuously without ceasing (*al-da'im alladzi lam yazal wa la yazal*).¹⁸

Tajjali is a gift from God that has been decreed from the beginning, cannot be hindered or changed, and occurs continuously. This implies that *tajjali* is a constant. God's *tajjali* into each thing is in accordance with the level of readiness (*isti'dad*) of each thing itself. This readiness is like the ability or capacity to receive God's *tajjali*. In receiving God's *tajjali*, each thing has different readiness, as well as unique characteristics and situations, so the capacity of each is also different.¹⁹

A simple analogy to illustrate God's *tajjali* is the sunlight. In the event of sun irradiation, there is a relationship between the sun as the one who gives the light, other objects as those receiving the light, and the sunlight itself. When the condition of the objects receiving the light is different, the effect received or caused will certainly be different as well, even though the sun that gives the light is only one and not different, and the light that is emitted is also the same. For example, sunlight is a positive factor for plants, but for water, sunlight is a negative factor, even though the sun and rays are the same. This difference is certainly not because of the different sun or light but because of the different conditions of the objects themselves. In the context of God's *tajjali*, this state can be likened to the readiness (*isti'dad*) to receive God's *tajjali*.

¹³ al-Su'ād al-Hakīm, *al-Mu'jam al-Ṣūfī: al-Hikmah fī al-Hudūd al-Kalimah* (Beirut: Dandarrah, 1981), 257.

¹⁴ Kautsar Azhari Noer, *Ibn al'Arabi: Wahdat al-Wujud in Debate* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1995), 58.

¹⁵ Ibn 'Arabi, *al-Futūḥāt*, II: 399.

¹⁶ Kautsar Azhari Noer, *Ibn al'Arabi: Wahdat al-Wujud in Debate* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1995), 150.

¹⁷ Kautsar Azhari Noer, *Ibn al'Arabi: Wahdat al-Wujud in Debate* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1995), 58.

¹⁸ Kautsar Azhari Noer, *Ibn al'Arabi: Wahdat al-Wujud in Debate* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1995), 58-59.

¹⁹ Kautsar Azhari Noer, *Ibn al'Arabi: Wahdat al-Wujud in Debate* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1995), 60.

God's *tajjali* is also explained as *al-faid*: the emanation or emanation of God. The process of God's *tajjali* is presumed to occur at two levels. First, *al-tajjali al-dzati*, also called *al-tajjali al-ghaibi* or *al-faid al-aqdas*, is the first level of *tajjali*. Second, *al-tajjali al-wujudi*, also known as *al-tajjali al-syuhudi* or *al-faid al-muqaddas*, is the second level of *tajjali*. The logical assumption is that the first type is existentially prior to the second; however, this is not the case but is merely a logical assumption.

At the first level, *tajjali dzati*, God appears to Himself, so there are permanent entities (*al-a'yan al-tsabitah*) or potential forms. The existence of these entities is limited to potential (*bi al-quwwah*) not actual (*bi al-fi'l*); and in God's science (*al-'alam al-ma'qul*) not yet in the real world (*al-'alam al-mahsus*). Permanent entities are the forms of appearance of the Names of God at the level of ontological possibility. These permanent entities remain unchanged, providing "azali readiness" for the second level of *tajjali*.²⁰

At the second level, *tajjali wujudi*, God appears in the form of existential diversity and as sensory entities. This *tajjali* occurs when the "azali readiness" is accepted by something that becomes the locus of God's appearance. At this stage, *al-Haqq* reveals Himself in infinite ways. Permanent forms (*al-a'yan al-tsabitah*) manifest into sensory forms (*al-a'yan al-Hissiyyah*); from the unseen to the real, from God's knowledge (*al-'alam al-ma'qul*) to the real (*al-'alam al-mahsus*), from potentiality (*bi al-quwwah*) to actuality (*bi al-fi'l*), from oneness to diversity, from inner to outer.²¹

Prior to *the tajjali*, God's oneness is absolute, with no potential or actual diversity. This oneness is termed *aHadiyyat al-aHad* (the one). At the first level of *tajjali*, God's oneness remains, although there is already the potential for diversity. Diversity is still potential and not actual; what exists is the oneness of God. Diversity exists only in the intellect (*al-ma'qul*) and has not yet manifested in the senses (*al-mahsus*). This oneness is termed *al-HwaHidiyyah* (unity) by at the second level of *tajjali*, the diversity that was previously potential, becomes real.

Another important problem in understanding Ibn 'Arabi's *wahdat al-wujud* is the ontological relationship between God and His creations. If in the *wahdat al-wujud* system it is believed that reality is single, there is no form except God, what is the relationship between God (*al-Haqq*) and creation (*al-khalq*)? For Ibn 'Arabi, existence has only one reality. This reality can be viewed from two perspectives: on the one hand, reality can be referred to as the truth, the subject, and the creator. Conversely, reality can be referred to as creation, object, and creature.²² According to him, God (*al-Haqq*) and creation (*al-khalq*) are two faces of the unity of being or reality.²³

As in Ibn 'Arabi's theory of creation, the process of creating the universe is *tajjali al-Haqq*: God is the creator, and the creature is the created one. Therefore, the ontological relationship between God and creation is that of a Creator and His creation. God as the creator is the ultimate being, and creation or everything other than God is non-existent, merely the appearance of God. In this relation, there is a famous thought of Ibn 'Arabi with the phrase "He and not Him" (*huwa la huwa*). This thought is especially important to explain the status or position of *al-khalq* or creatures that are believed to be non-existent. In this case, creatures have two different aspects: the divine aspect as the appearance or manifestation of God and the aspect of creatureliness as creation. In the divine aspect, the creature as the appearance of

²⁰ Ibn 'Arabi, *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1980), 9.

²¹ Ibn 'Arabi, *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1980), 9.

²² Ibn 'Arabi, *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1980), 8.

²³ Ibn 'Arabi, *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1980), 26.

God (*tajjali* al-Haqq) is God (*huwa*). However, from the aspect of creatureliness, creatures are not God (*la huwa*).²⁴

Another concept for reading Ibn 'Arabi's *wahdat al-wujud* system is *tanzīh* and *tašbīh*. *Tanzih* literally means to cleanse or purify, and *tasybih* means to liken or make something similar.²⁵ This concept is important because the idea of the unity of reality or being in Ibn 'Arabi's *wahdat al-wujūd* system is often misunderstood as polytheism or as equating God and nature. Therefore, to prevent misunderstandings or clarify the understanding of this concept, it also needs to be read by the reader.

In Ibn 'Arabi's thought, *tanzih* and *tashbih* are a unity that cannot be separated, let alone contrasted, and must be combined. The correct approach is to give equal emphasis to both when combining them.²⁶ Ibn 'Arabi's thoughts on *tanzih* and *tashbih* are in line with his doctrine or expression "He and not Him" (*huwa la huwa*). The answer to the question of whether nature is identical to God is in accordance with this statement. First, the answer is positive; that is, nature is identical to God. Second, the answer is negative; that is, nature is not identical to God. The first answer emphasises *tasybih*, while the second emphasises *tanzih*.²⁷

The emphasis on the combination of *tanzih* and *tashbih*, rather than one or the other, is a logical consequence of the *wahdat al-wujud*'s basic doctrine of the unity of being or reality. As mentioned, creation (*al-khalq*) has two aspects: the divine aspect and the divine aspect. The divine aspect emphasises that creation is God's *tajjali* and cannot be separated from Him, as He is the creator of all things. In addition, the single reality in the *wahdat al-wujud* system has two faces: God and His creation. Ultimately, God (*al-Haqq*) is the Creator, and creation is God's *tajjali*. The Absolute Reality is God, and the reality of creation is neither its own reality nor any other reality except the Absolute Reality or divinity itself. Therefore, the choice or emphasis on one of the aspects of *tanzih* and *tashbih* will certainly feel anachronistic and inconsistent and should be combined.

2. Ibn 'Arabi's *Wahdat al-Wujud* and the Reason of Anthropocentrism

Ibn 'Arabi's view of human beings almost always points to the concept of the perfect human being (*al-insan al-kamil*), rather than to concrete human realities in general. This concept is the essence of Ibn 'Arabi's Sufism, closely related to the doctrine of *wahdat al-wujud*, which serves as its metaphysical foundation. His conception of man is that of what man should be: the ideal of man, the ideal man, or the perfect man. He consistently asserts that the essence of man is to be perfect. In fact, he also sets a standard or measure (*Hadd*) that is unique to humans; it is not a human being if it does not conform to this unique standard, but rather an animal with a human form.

Ibn 'Arabi's conception of man is intertwined with his thoughts on the nature and position of man within the universe (*fi al-'alam*) and between universes (*bain al-'alam*). Man is the small cosmos (microcosm, *al-'alam al-saghir*), and the universe is the large cosmos (macrocosm, *al-'alam al-kabir*). Humans are little people (*al-insan al-saghir*) and the universe is big people (*al-insan al-kabir*). The nature and position of man, as formulated by Ibn 'Arabi, are both the modality and the reason why man needs to become perfect.

²⁴ Ibn 'Arabi, Ibn 'Arabi, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*, ed. 'Usman Yaḥyā and Ibrāhīm Madkūr. (Cairo: al-Hai'ah al-Miṣriyyah al-'Āmmah li al-Kitāb, 1985), II: 160.

²⁵ Kautsar Azhari Noer, *Ibn al-'Arabi: Wahdat al-Wujud in Debate* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1995), 87.

²⁶ Ibn 'Arabi, *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1980), 181.

²⁷ Kautsar Azhari Noer, *Ibn al-'Arabi: Wahdat al-Wujud in Debate* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1995), 89.

In Ibn 'Arabi's system of thought, the universe is the appearance of God (*tajjali al-Haqq*) or His mirror (*mir'ah*).²⁸ The universe has an infinite variety of forms and structures within it. Every part of the universe is the locus of God's appearance (*majla, mazhar*). God is One; His appearance or reflection varies according to the diversity of these loci in the universe. The clarity of God's appearance or mirror-image in a part of the universe depends on the quality of that part: the cleaner or clearer it is, the clearer and more perfect the appearance of God it reflects.

Humans are the most perfect reflection of God. Man-in the sense of the ultimate or perfect man is the locus of God's most perfect manifestation. Humans can reflect the names and attributes of God in their entirety, whereas other creatures can only reflect certain aspects. Humans as microcosms rival the universe itself. As a mirror of God, humans are the cleanest and clearest mirrors, while other creatures in the universe are opaque mirrors. The reflection or appearance of God in humans appears perfect or in totality, while in other creatures, it appears blurry, limited to pieces per part, or partial.

As in Ibn 'Arabi's concept of *tajjali* or theory of creation, creatures in this world have different readiness (*isti'dad*) to receive the appearance of God (*tajjali al-Haqq*). This difference in "readiness" also results in a difference in the quality of God's reflection or appearance in those creatures; the greater the "readiness" of a creature, the higher the quality of God's reflection or appearance to it. Owing to this difference, the beings occupy different positions. The greater the "readiness" of a being that corresponds to the quality of God's reflection or appearance on it, the more excellent its position, and vice versa. Thus, there exists a hierarchy of primacy (*tafadul*) among all beings.

Hierarchically, mineral objects (*al-jamadat*) have the least readiness, so they are at the lowest position. Above them are plants (*al-nabat*), which have greater readiness than mineral objects; therefore, plants have a higher position than mineral objects (*al-jamad*). The above plants are animals (*al-Hayawan*), which have greater readiness than plants; therefore, animals have a higher position than plants. Above it again is the peak man (*al-insan*), who has the greatest readiness than the others, so that the quality of reflection or appearance of God to him is the most perfect.²⁹ Creatures hierarchically have different positions based on their respective "readiness" to be a mirror or receive God's appearance, which also results in the quality of God's reflection or appearance.

By virtue of their readiness (*isti'dad*) to be God's mirror or appearance, human beings are the most perfect creatures, ranking higher than other of God's creatures. This is because humans have the greatest "readiness" to receive God's appearance or to be God's mirror compared to other creatures, so the quality of God's reflection or appearance to them is the most perfect. When other creatures can receive only a partial name or attribute of God, humans can receive the totality of God's name and attributes.

Humans were created by God in His image. This is based on a Prophetic Hadith that says, "Indeed, God created Adam in the image of God."³⁰ The creation of man in the image of God is God's gift to man, a proof of the privilege and glory of man compared to other creatures and the universe itself.

²⁸ Kautsar Azhari Noer, *Ibn al'Arabi: Wahdat al-Wujud in Debate* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1995), 126.

²⁹ Kautsar Azhari Noer, *Ibn al'Arabi: Wahdat al-Wujud in Debate* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1995), 127.

³⁰ Ibn 'Arabi, *Ibn 'Arabi, al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*, ed. 'Usman Yaḥyā and Ibrāhīm Madkūr. (Cairo: al-Hai'ah al-Miṣriyyah al-Āmmah li al-Kitāb, 1985), II: 67.

In the Hadith, “Adam” is understood not only in the sense of the “historical Adam” as the father of mankind or the first man, but also in its universal meaning as the essence of humanity.³¹ In addition, the name of God used in the hadith is *lafẓ al-jalalah* “Allah.” “Allah” is *al-ism al-jami'*, the name of God that includes all names of God. The use of the name of God in the form of *lafẓ al-jalalah* “Allah” is a sign that humans are created according to the *ṣurah* of all the names of God, because *lafẓ al-jalalah* “Allah” is the name of God that includes all divine names (*al-asma' al-ilahiyyah*). Thus, all divine names are attached to humans, without exception.³²

In addition to humans, William C. Chittick, the universe is also a creation created in the divine image (*ṣurah al-ilahiyyah*). On the one hand, human beings as microcosms and the universe as macrocosm have similarities, but on the other hand, they are clearly different from each other. The similarity is that both humans and the universe were created by God in a divine image. The difference is that humans can reflect God's names and attributes in their entirety, whereas the universe can reflect God's names and attributes in part.³³ The similarities between the two make humans and the universe closely related. This difference gives humans a different position and status in the universe.

Man is endowed by God with the attribute of perfection and made perfect to receive all the names of God. Therefore, human nature is the divine presence (*al-Hadrah al-ilahiyyah*) or the totality of divine names. In line with this, Ibn 'Arabi refers to humans as the totality of the realities of the universe.³⁴ That is, man can encompass the various realities that exist in the universe; everything that exists in the universe can be found in humans.³⁵ This implies that humans are ready to accept the names of God in their entirety.

On another occasion, Ibn 'Arabi referred to human beings as prototypes that contain the attributes of divine presence (*al-Hadrah al-ilahiyyah*): the essence, attributes, and actions of God. This is in line with the Prophetic tradition above, where the meaning of “*ṣurah Allah*” according to Ibn 'Arabi, is divine presence. God endowed this noble miniature with the totality of divine names and realities that exist in the universe.³⁶ While other creatures can receive only some of God's names, humans are endowed by God to receive all of them. Therefore, he is also sovereign over the totality of the realities of the universe, which are scattered throughout the universe. It seems natural that they can be found in humans as well.

In relation to the universe, humans are both the spirit (*ruh*) and goal (*maqṣud*) of the universe (*al-'alam*).³⁷ The significance of human beings in the universe is like that of the spirit in the body. Without humans, the universe would decay like a spiritless, lifeless body. The perfection of the universe is also with humans, like the perfection of the body and spirit of the universe. When the universe is analysed without humans, it is devoid of meaning, like a corpse

³¹ Kautsar Azhari Noer, *Ibn al-'Arabi: Wahdat al-Wujud in Debate* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1995), 127.

³² Ibn 'Arabi, Ibn 'Arabi, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*, ed. 'Usman Yaḥyā and Ibrāhīm Madkūr. (Cairo: al-Hai'ah al-Miṣriyyah al-'Āmmah li al-Kitāb, 1985), II: 124.

³³ William C. Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds, Ibn al-Arabi and the Problem of Religious Diversity* (Albany: Suny Press, 1994), 58

³⁴ Ibn 'Arabi, Ibn 'Arabi, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*, ed. 'Usman Yaḥyā and Ibrāhīm Madkūr. (Cairo: al-Hai'ah al-Miṣriyyah al-'Āmmah li al-Kitāb, 1985), II: 67.

³⁵ Abdul Kadir Riyadi, *Anthropology of Tasawwuf: Discourse on Spiritual Man and Knowledge* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 2017), 31.

³⁶ Ibn 'Arabi, *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1980), 199.

³⁷ Ibn 'Arabi, Ibn 'Arabi, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*, ed. 'Usman Yaḥyā and Ibrāhīm Madkūr. (Cairo: al-Hai'ah al-Miṣriyyah al-'Āmmah li al-Kitāb, 1985), II: 67.

without a spirit. The universe has no meaning without human beings, like a body without a spirit.

The universe as a whole macrocosm in its infinite distribution is passive and unconscious. Meanwhile, humans, like microcosms, are active and aware. Humans can recognise and manage the universe, whereas the universe cannot recognise or manage them. This highlights the significance of humans as the spirit of the universe. Humans can exist in the universe by providing a purpose or intention for the universe. Without humans, the universe has no purpose; with humans, it has a purpose.

The importance of humans as the spirit and purpose of the universe is supported by God's gift to humans in the form of the submission (*taskhir*) of the universe (*ma fi al-samawat wa ma fi al-ard jami'a*).³⁸ This gift makes human beings in and among the universe not equal but superior to other beings. It also gives humans the ability to not only know the universe but also to manage it. If the universe is like a sleeping body without humans, it becomes a conscious and active body with them.

In the doctrine of *wahdat al-wujud*, the purpose of the creation of the universe is to know God: the universe was created by the reflection or appearance (*tajalli*) of the divine. The universe is a mirror of God, and humans are the most perfect reflection of Him. As a mirror of God, the universe without humans would be a blurry mirror, like a body without a soul. The existence of humans allows nature to become a clear reflection of God. Thus, the significance of human existence in the universe is correlated with the purpose of its creation. With humans, the universe will be able to become a clear mirror of God, so that the purpose of the creation of the universe will be realised more perfectly than it is now.

In addition to being the spirit and *maqṣud* of the universe, man is also privileged by God with the gift of *khilafat* (*al-khilafah*); thus, he is a *khalifah* (caliph) of God. Even as an affirmation, God commands other creatures to pay homage to human beings. This is because man is God's creation that contains the attributes of divine presence (*al-hadrah al-ilahiyyah*): God's essence, attributes, and deeds; the totality of divine names. This grace is not given to any other creature except humans, because only humans have the potential to receive the totality of the divine names, while other creatures have the potential to receive only some.

For Ibn 'Arabi, human beings as caliphs - in relation to the creatures under their caliphate—are always required to present themselves in the image (*surah*) of God who gave the gift of caliphate. The ability to display this divine image is like the condition of the caliphate. Among God's creations, only humans have this potential: humans have the potential to display the totality of the divine names, while other creatures have the potential to display only some of the divine names. When humans cannot present themselves in the image of the Giver of the gift of the caliphate, they are no longer God's caliph.³⁹

The importance of human beings is illustrated by Ibn 'Arabi using several metaphors, one of which is that he likens man to God as eye-seed to the eye. According to him, the term *insan* means not only “human” but also “eye-seed.” In this analogy, it is assumed that God sees His creations through humans, who are like the apple of His eye, and then shows mercy to them.⁴⁰ Here, man is an intermediary between God, who sees, and the universe, which is observed. As the highest creature, humans are the most capable of knowing God's perfection.

³⁸ Ibn 'Arabi, *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1980), 199.

³⁹ Ibn 'Arabi, *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1980), 55; Ibn 'Arabi, *Ibn 'Arabi, al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*, ed. 'Usman Yaḥyā and Ibrāhīm Madkūr. (Cairo: al-Hai'ah al-Miṣriyyah al-'Āmmah li al-Kitāb, 1985), I: 263.

⁴⁰ Ibn 'Arabi, *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1980), 50.

Ibn 'Arabi also likens human beings to *fass al-khatam* or God's "seal" on the universe. Technically, the term he uses is *fass*, which means a stone or the eye of a ring; it is usually an object of a certain authority and is attached to possessions as a sign of ownership and security. The existence of human beings as God's "seal" for the universe means that God guards the universe through human beings, just as the owner of a "seal" guards his possessions.⁴¹

In its active meaning, man as God's "seal" for the universe also means that man's position is a security for the universe, which he will maintain and preserve as a mandate from God. Therefore, the position of man as God's "seal" for the universe is closely related to the position of man as God's caliph. That is, God made man the khalifah of God so that man becomes the caretaker and preserver of the universe, as a task from God that must be fulfilled.

In Ibn 'Arabi's thought, the construction of man is the perfect man or the ultimate man, and the other is not a man at all. In other words, for Ibn 'Arabi, human beings are perfect, while others are not. This assumption is based on several premises. First, Ibn 'Arabi categorises humans dichotomously into perfect and animal humans. The animal man is an imperfect human being in this world and is a rational animal (*hayawan natiq*) that does not reach the human level of rationality. He is human only in appearance, but not in essence.⁴² Second, the measure of a human being (*Hadd al-insan*) for Ibn 'Arabi is the divine image or picture of divinity (*al-surah al-ilahiyyah*); when this measure is absent, a person is not a human being but merely an animal that resembles the external form of a human being.⁴³ In this context, *al-surah al-ilahiyyah* is an inherent criterion for a perfect human being.

Humans should always strive to be perfect or the human beings they should be. Being a perfect human being is the highest aspiration of human beings and should always be pursued by them. Being a perfect human being is not only possible but also mandatory. Anyone who does not do so can be considered inhumane. For this reason, Ibn 'Arabi practically provides guidance so that humans always do *al-takhalluq bi akhlaq Allah* or have morals like God's morals.

Takhalluq here is represented in several attitudes. First, affirming God's existence: the belief that there is nothing in existence except God, His names, and His deeds, while simultaneously affirming nothingness (*'adam*) as the original nature of humans. Second, it affirms the attributes of God that potentially already exist in humans while simultaneously denying the attributes of humanity. Third, the actualisation of God's names that potentially already exist in humans.⁴⁴

In addition, humans must always have a sense of servitude (*Ubudiyyah*). Servitude is an absolute requirement for getting closer to God. Humans cannot succeed in getting closer (*taqarrub*) to God except through this. In this regard, Ibn 'Arabi warns that for humans who wish to draw closer to God, *Ubudiyyah* is like a homeland that cannot be left behind, whereas *Rububiyyah* is a taboo that cannot be occupied by humans. Human perfection depends on *Ubudiyyah*: absolute servitude entails absolute obedience to one's Lord.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Ibn 'Arabi, *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1980), 50.

⁴² Ibn 'Arabi, Ibn 'Arabi, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*, ed. 'Usman Yaḥyā and Ibrāhīm Madkūr. (Cairo: al-Hai'ah al-Miṣriyyah al-'Āmmah li al-Kitāb, 1985), III: 296.

⁴³ Ibn 'Arabi, Ibn 'Arabi, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*, ed. 'Usman Yaḥyā and Ibrāhīm Madkūr. (Cairo: al-Hai'ah al-Miṣriyyah al-'Āmmah li al-Kitāb, 1985), III: 154.

⁴⁴ Kautsar Azhari Noer, *Ibn al-'Arabi: Wahdat al-Wujud in Debate* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1995), 138-139.

⁴⁵ Ibn 'Arabi, Ibn 'Arabi, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*, ed. 'Usman Yaḥyā and Ibrāhīm Madkūr. (Cairo: al-Hai'ah al-Miṣriyyah al-'Āmmah li al-Kitāb, 1985), I: 362.

Takhalluq and *Ubudiyyah* are two integral concepts that are not separate. *Takhalluq* is simultaneously *Ubudiyyah*, and *Ubudiyyah* is simultaneously *takhalluq*. *'Ubudiyyah* is servitude, the recognition of man as a full servant of God, and the readiness to submit, obey, and surrender to Him. *Takhalluq* is the “filling” of the human self with God; the human self becomes non-existent and there is only God, while actualizing the names and attributes of God that potentially exist in humans.

3. Divinity and the Anthropocentrism of *Wahdat al-Wujud*

Ibn 'Arabi argues that the standard or measure (Hadd) of a human being is the divine image (al-*ṣurah al-ilahiyyah*); whoever does not have this standard is not a human being, but an animal (*Hayawan*) whose form resembles the human form. He even dismisses the description of humans in general as thinking animals (*homo sapiens*, *Hayawan natiq*). According to him, the ability to think (*al-nutq*) belongs to and applies to the whole of nature and is not a unique human ability; rather, the standard or measure of the uniquely human is the divine image (al-*ṣura al-ilahiyya*). When this divine image is present in a person, they are human; when it is absent, they are not.⁴⁶

Ibn 'Arabi's formulation implies that the human being he affirms as human is a human being who has a unique standard of humanity in the form of a divine image. What about concrete humans who do not have such unique standards? For Ibn 'Arabi, he is not a human being but an animal whose form resembles that of humans. Thus, the divine image (al-*ṣurah al-ilahiyyah*) for humans is not only a goal but more than that it is a necessity. Without that image, man is not a human being but merely an animal whose form resembles that of a human. Thus, true humanity is divinity and the divine image. Those who are devoid of it are not humans.

By this standard, Ibn 'Arabi categorizes humans dichotomously into two: perfect humans (*al-insan al-kamil*) and animal humans (*al-insan al-hayawani*). The perfect human being is one who is outwardly a creature (*khalq*) and inwardly divine (*haqq*). The perfect human being is a human being in the true sense, in accordance with human nature and ideals. This human being is Khalifah of God. Ideally, man is God's vicegerent, but not every human being can be God's vicegerent; only the perfect human being is qualified.⁴⁷

Since the division is dichotomous, in addition to the perfect human type, there is the animal-human. According to Ibn 'Arabi, the imperfect human being is an intelligent animal (*hayawan natiq*). The animal man does not rise to the level of human beings (*Homo sapiens*). Even if he can be called a human being, it is only in appearance, not in essence. The animal man is devoid of all human capabilities. His comparison with a perfect human being or a human being should be like the comparison of a dead body with a living human being.⁴⁸

The image of the perfect human being as a human being who is outwardly a creature and inwardly God is actually the same as the measure of humanity with a divine image. This means that divinity exists in humans, and its absence degrades humanity. In the outer dimension, humans are creations, just like all of God's creations in the universe. However, in his inner dimension, man is different; he is a complete human being. It is in this inner quality

⁴⁶ Ibn 'Arabi, Ibn 'Arabi, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*, ed. 'Usman Yaḥyā and Ibrāhīm Madkūr. (Cairo: al-Hai'ah al-Miṣriyyah al-'Āmmah li al-Kitāb, 1985), III: 154.

⁴⁷ Ibn 'Arabi, Ibn 'Arabi, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*, ed. 'Usman Yaḥyā and Ibrāhīm Madkūr. (Cairo: al-Hai'ah al-Miṣriyyah al-'Āmmah li al-Kitāb, 1985), III: 296.

⁴⁸ Ibn 'Arabi, Ibn 'Arabi, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*, ed. 'Usman Yaḥyā and Ibrāhīm Madkūr. (Cairo: al-Hai'ah al-Miṣriyyah al-'Āmmah li al-Kitāb, 1985), II: 441.

that man is distinguished from other creations, elevated among them, and becomes a leader as God's Khalifah.

Ibn 'Arabi emphasized that humans need to always do *al-takhalluq bi akhlaq Allah* or behave with God's morals. Takhalluq is represented in several attitudes. *First*, affirming God's existence: the belief that there is nothing in existence except God, His names, and His deeds, as well as affirming nothingness (*'adam*) as the original nature of humans. *Second*, it affirms the attributes of God that potentially already exist in humans while simultaneously denying the attributes of humanity. *Third*, the actualisation of God's names that potentially already exist in humans.⁴⁹

The consequence of *takhalluq* is the affirmation of God in human beings. This will establish a conviction in man that there is no being except God. Everything that exists in man is absent; what exists is God. The higher the quality of that belief, the higher the degree of human existence. Awareness of God's existence is the foundation of human perfection. He must be able to actualise this awareness into attitudes, in the form of the realisation of God's attributes and names in the praxis of his life.

The goal of practicing morality with God's morals is not to become God or a demigod. Rather, it is to bring the image of God into humans. Therefore, in this practice, humans are simultaneously required to be consistent in their awareness of servitude (*Ubudiyah*). This awareness is a prerequisite for the presence of God's image in man, without which man cannot be *taqarrub* to his Lord. Not surprisingly, Ibn 'Arabi compares it to a human homeland that cannot be abandoned; it must always be occupied, and when it is abandoned, it loses its identity.⁵⁰

Human consciousness as a servant is human identity. With this awareness, humans can have morals like God's, so they can bring the totality of God's image into themselves. This construction is in line with the well-known expression, especially in the Sufi world, that a person who does not know himself will not know God. Humans who do not know themselves are blocked from knowing others, including God.⁵¹ To know God, humans must know themselves. By knowing and realising his identity, man can know his God.⁵²

In the theory of creation, Ibn 'Arabi asserts that the universe was created because of God's love or *mahabbah* to be known by His creations:⁵³ This is the purpose of the creation of the universe. In Sufism, *mahabbah* is the pinnacle of a Sufi's knowledge. Here, God's and human wills meet, link, and merge. God's will is the desire to be known so as to create or reveal Himself to the universe, while human will is the return to God.⁵⁴

Ibn 'Arabi's system of thought also postulates that the entire universe is the appearance of God (*tajjali al-Haqq*) or His mirror (*mir'ah*). Every part of the universe is the locus of God's appearance (*majla*, *mazhar*). Human beings are the most perfect mirror and

⁴⁹ Kautsar Azhari Noer, *Ibn al-'Arabi: Wahdat al-Wujud in Debate* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1995), 138-139.

⁵⁰ Ibn 'Arabi, Ibn 'Arabi, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*, ed. 'Usman Yaḥyā and Ibrāhīm Madkūr. (Cairo: al-Hai'ah al-Miṣriyyah al-Āmmah li al-Kitāb, 1985), I: 362.

⁵¹ Abdul Kadir Riyadi, *Anthropology of Tasawwuf: Discourse on Spiritual Man and Knowledge* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 2017), 18.

⁵² Abdul Kadir Riyadi, *Anthropology of Tasawwuf: Discourse on Spiritual Man and Knowledge* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 2017), 41-42.

⁵³ Ibn 'Arabi, Ibn 'Arabi, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*, ed. 'Usman Yaḥyā and Ibrāhīm Madkūr. (Cairo: al-Hai'ah al-Miṣriyyah al-Āmmah li al-Kitāb, 1985), II: 399.

⁵⁴ Abdul Kadir Riyadi, *Anthropology of Tasawwuf: Discourse on Spiritual Man and Knowledge* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 2017), 42.

locus of God's appearance.⁵⁵ Humans have the highest “readiness” to receive God's appearance or manifestation in the creation of the universe than any other beings. Among other creations, only humans can receive the appearance of the totality of God's names perfectly.

In this reasoning, the universe needs to be understood as a vehicle to know God, and when humans are declared as the most perfect appearance of God, they are the most perfect vehicle to know God.⁵⁶ In its active dimension and in relation to the purpose of the creation of the universe, it must also be understood that man, as the most perfect appearance of God, more than any other creation, is the creation that can best realise the purpose of the creation of the universe, know God best, and praise God most perfectly.

As the caliph of God and the spirit of the universe, the important role of humans in the realisation of the purpose of the creation of the universe is not only for themselves but also for the universe. Humans can activate the universe and move it in accordance with the purpose of the creation of the universe to praise and know God. Here, the important role of humans is no longer limited to themselves but extends to the universe in the context of realising the purpose of creation.

D. Conclusion

Humans are the spirit, axis, or pillar of the universe. With human beings, the universe becomes alive and purposeful, active in the realisation of its created purpose, and preserved. Without him, the universe is like a dead body without orientation, meaninglessly passive, and unsustainably destroyed. The importance of human beings is a consequence of their nature as creations of the divine (*al-ṣurah al-ilahiyah*).

The essence of man is divine presence (*al-hadrah al-ilahiyah*), which is man's potential to receive the appearance of the totality of God's names and his ability to display the totality of these names for and within the universe. This quality also positions man as God's caliph and determines his worthiness as God's caliph. This is the perfect man, the man he should be. Anyone who is not like that is not a human being but an animal whose form resembles that of a human being.

In the anthropocentrism of *wahdat al-wujud*, God is not understood as distant but as close to humans. God is not the other but rather the human self. Therefore, humans must know themselves, and they will certainly know God. Without self-knowledge, humans are unable to know God.

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⁵⁵ Kautsar Azhari Noer, *Ibn al-Arabī: Wahdat al-Wujud in Debate* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1995),126-127.

⁵⁶ Abdul Kadir Riyadi, *Anthropology of Tasawwuf: Discourse on Spiritual Man and Knowledge* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 2017), 19.

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