

Sirhindi's Criticism of Wahdah Wujud

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Sirhindi's Criticism of the *Wahdat al-Wujud* in Ibn 'Arabi CourseNUNU BURHANUDDIN¹**ABSTRACT**

This article describes Sirhindi's critique of the Wahdat al-Wujud Ibn 'Arabi concept. The method used is the content analysis based on the book Al-Maktubat li-al-Imam al-Alim al-Robbani al-Mujaddid al-Sirhindi. The results of the study state that, first, Ibn 'Arabi's view of the universe as imagination clashes with the concept of creation which calls God the Creator. The mention of the concept of creation is considered very important because this idea can direct humans to the concept of retribution and punishment. Second, the experience of fana' and baqa' does not mean involvement in the divine life, but is like a dream state, like a dream of becoming a king who in reality is not a king. Third, Maqam 'abdiyyah (servitude) as the highest level among the other three stages, namely the unity of Essence (Wahdat al-Wujud), shadow (dzilliyat), and servanthood ('abdiyyat). The mention of the three stages is intended to show the truth about the Supreme Godhead, as well as mystical criticism to the Sufis which starts from the first stage (al-jam') and then stops at the second stage (farq ba'da al-jam'), and not paying attention to the stages of slavery, which asserts that God is very different from creatures. Fourth, Sirhindi's critique of Wahdat al-Wujud is complemented by the submission of the concept of Wahdat al-Shuhud which is based on the highest Sufi experience of divine transcendence and the teachings of the Prophets. Thus, the world is not one with God, nor is it in his form. God is one Essence, and the world is another in which the two will have nothing in common.

Keywords: Sirhindi, Wahdat al-Wujud, Ibn 'Arabi, Fana', Baqa'

In the history of Islamic thought, two prominent figures who have the same name, both of whom came from Andalusia. The first character was named Abu Bakr Muhammad Ibn 'Abdullah Ibn al-'Arabi al-Ma'afiri (1073-1148 AD), a hadith expert in Seville (Robson 1979). Ibn al-'Arabi, with the 'al' in front of it, had been the Qadi of the city, but later resigned from that position and devoted his attention to scholarly activities, such as teaching and writing. The second figure is Muhammad Ibn 'Ali Ibn Muhammad Ibn 'Arabi al-Thai al-Hatimi, a famous Sufi from Andalusia. The founder of monism, without the 'al' in front of it was born in Murcia, Andalusia in 1165 and died in Damascus, Syria in 1240 (Al-Maqqari 1968). The latter name, is the figure of a great scholar who is the subject of discussion in this paper. The discussion about him is very interesting because he is an important figure for Sufis who adhere to the *Wahdat al-Wujud* (unity of being) understanding. Ibn 'Arabi is known as one of the greatest Sufi masters of all time. He is the highest figure in human spiritual attainment (Hirtenstein 1999). While in Seville, Ibn 'Arab made frequent visits to Sufis and philosophers, among them Ibn Rushd (d. 595 H/1198 AD) in Cordova. In his conversation with Ibn

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Rushd, Ibn 'Arab was able to show himself as a mystic, as well as a reliable philosopher (Chittick 1989).

As a prominent mystical philosopher, Ibn 'Arab faced criticism from various circles, especially from Sufism circles and supporters of Sharia. Scholars of various styles and sects flocked to criticize and oppose the notion of *Wahdat al-wujud*. From among theologians and jurists, Ibn Taymiyah (d. 1328 AD) was a person who was very familiar with his scathing criticism of monism. Even though in fact, Ibn Taymiyah did not blindly oppose Sufism as a whole but only opposed the perpetrators of philosophical Sufism and the followers of the *tariqah* who only busied themselves with remembrance during conditions and situations of stagnation of Muslims after the Mongol army attack. On another occasion, Ibn Taymiyah praised the practice of Sufism by the original teachings (Al-'Asimi 1389).

Among the commentators came the names Ibrahim al-Biq'a'i (d. 1480 AD) and al-Dzahabi emerged (Al-Zahabi 1976, II: 411), from among the Sufis the great name al-Simnani emerged (d. 1336 AD), and Ahmad Sirhindi and Syah Waliyullah who were keen to criticize the notion of the unity of being (Habib 1960). Other names such as al-Khayyat (d.811/1408), Ali al-Qari, and Jamaluddin Ibn Nuruddin considered Ibn 'Arab to have strayed from the path of truth (Al-Qarrani 1986). However, few contemporary historians have met him; such as Ibn Misd (d.633/1234), Ibn al-Najjar (w.643/1245), Ibn al-Abbar (w.658/1268), and al-Tadil (d.627/1230) did not write anything that detrimental to Ibn Arabi (Parman & Marni 2021). Among the figures who opposed Ibn 'Arabi's monism, those who responded most seriously to Ibn 'Arabi's philosophical Sufism were Ibn Taymiyyah, who represented the Fuqaha-Mutakallimin, and Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi, who represented Sufi orders and tarekat adherents.

Saad (2006) has conducted a study on Ahmad Sirhindi's thoughts, with the title *Menggempur Tasawuf Heterodeks, Studi Ahmad Sirhindi dan Ibn Taymiyah tentang Wahdat al-Wujud*. According to Saadi, Sheikh Sirhindi views the belief in *Wahdat al-Wujud* is not objective, but a subjective phenomenon, where subjectivity lies in the emergence of the idea itself. Sheikh Sirhindi criticized the subjectivity of *Wahdat al-Wujud* initiated by Ibn 'Arabi, although that did not prevent him from appreciating Ibn 'Arabi's contribution to Sufism as a whole (Saad 2006). Muhsin Labib researched the thought of Sirhindi Sufism with the title Sirhindi Sunni Sufism 'Forced Marriage' Monism and Ash'ariyah Theology. Labib sees that Sirhindi's criticism of Ibn 'Arabi is not based on a strong methodology where this mystical construction of Ibn 'Arabi strengthened by Mula Sadra will be difficult to penetrate by thinkers who do not have a basic understanding of mysticism and philosophy (Labib 2012).

Izomiddin's study entitled *Hubungan antara Tasawuf dan Syariat Perspektif Pemikiran Ahmad Sirhindi*, describes the national policy in developing the eclectic teachings of Sultan Akbar in India, which is popularly known as '*Din Ilahi*'. This teaching is a mixture of various religions that are packaged in the policy of actualizing Islamic teachings in the life of the nation. On the other hand, the deviation of Sufism teachings in India at that time forced Sirhindi to criticize the polytheistic teachings of Sufism which were claimed to be a religious practice protected by the state (Izomiddin 2014). Then Humayun Abbas Shams and Abdul Quddus Suhaib describe Sirhindi's criticism of the eclectic teaching of '*Din Ilahi*' which was initiated by Sultan Akbar as an act of heresy that contradicts the Sunnah of the Prophet. Sheikh Sirhindi, elaborated on the obligations of the rulers who must give place to the continuity of sharia and nature as two things that cannot be separated, while giving high appreciation to Sirhindi who opposes *Wahdat al-Wujud*'s belief that believes in the oneness of Allah Almighty and the death of all creatures, except Him (Shams & Suhaib 2022) This article is different from the studies above, because it explores Sheikh Sirhindi's view on the weakness of the *Wahdat al-wujud* concept which was initiated by Ibn 'Arabi. This study is also an alternative to the thought of *Wahdat al-*

Shuhud which is the concern of Sirhindi in the book *al-Maktubat li-al-Imam al-Alim al-Rabbani al-Mujaddid al-Sirhindi*.

The Concept of *Wahdat al-Wujud* Ibn 'Arabi

The concept of *Wahdat al-Wujud* which was initiated by Ibn 'Arabi is a very popular Sufism among philosophical Sufis, even though Ibn 'Arabi never put it forward. However, it is suspected that a prominent Sufism critic named Ibn Taymiyah attributed the term to Ibn 'Arabi (Al-Hakim 1981). This is because Ibn 'Arabi put forward the concept of God and the world as one being, the relationship between God and the world is not a causal relationship (Khaliq and makhluq) as the Mutakallimins believed, or the relation of The One Almighty God and all its emanations as the neo-Platonist philosophers thought. Such a relationship mentions a dualism between God and the world which contradicts the view that Being is one (Ansari 1986).

There are three ontological categories contained in the concept of Ibn 'Arabi, first, the Absolute Being, namely Allah the Creator; second, a Finite Being which cannot exist by itself but must require the Absolute. This Finite Being is the material world with all that is in it; and thirdly, the Being of God and the world, at the same time it is neither God nor the world, both existence and non-existence. This third category is called 'The Most Compassionate Breath' (*Nafs al-Rahman*), or 'The Reality of All Realities' (*Haqiqah al-haqaiq*), 'permanent entities' (*al-a'yan al-tsabitah*), 'Hakikat Muhammad' (*al-Haqiqah al-Muhammadiyah*), and 'perfect man' (*al-Insan Kamil*). Before everything that exists in the world becomes concrete (*mawjudat*), then all concepts originate from this form. Ibn 'Arabi's conception of *Wahdat al-Wujud* which forms the basis for his cosmological terms, is that the entire nature of the cosmos is part of the name and nature of God. Still according to Ibn 'Arabi, in fact there is only one being, one reality, and all existing entities (*mawjudat*) are just a reflection of the names and attributes of God on the mirror of non-existence. Ibn 'Arabi explains that the essence of the substance of the universe is the breath of God (*nafs al-Rahman*) which is the substance that underlies everything and is exhaled into permanent entities (*al-a'yan al-tsabitah*). Ibn 'Arabi said: those who want to know the breath of God should know the universe first, because whoever knows himself will know his Lord. *Nafs al-Rahman* is the substance in which material and spiritual forms develop. The case of Adam (who was given this *Nafs al-Rahman*) is one of the symbols of the creation of nature (the cosmos). Thus, this third category is the link between the Absolute God and the material world (Hussaini 1997).

The implication of this basic principle is to place God as the subject of all things, even if the subject is distinctly different, both human and non-human. So, God is the Knower and the known, the Powerful and the ruled, the Willing and the willed. God is also understood as actions, ideas and experiences that are done, believed or experienced. Thus, God is both immanent and transcendent. This concept not only received support, but also became the target of criticism from classical scholars, such as Ibn Taymiyah and even from among the Sufis themselves. Among the Sufis, the figure who most seriously criticized the teachings of *Wahdat al-Wujud* was Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi.

Biography of Ahmad Sirhindi

Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi was born in Sirhind, northwest of New Delhi, which is now the state of Punjab, Pakistan. He was born on Friday the 4th of Shawwal 971 H, coinciding with May 26, 1564 AD. Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi comes from a family with a long educational genealogy, with a lineage that can be traced back to Caliph Umar Ibn al-Khattab (Ansari 1986). His first education was obtained from his father, Sheikh Abdul Ahad (1521-1598) until he managed to memorize the entire contents of the Qur'an. Sirhindi was then sent to Sialkot, which is now Pakistan, to study logic, philosophy and kalam from Mullah Kashmiri (d. 1609), who was known as a follower of the rational school.

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After that he studied hadith with Sheikh Ya'kub Sharfi (d. 1594), a commentator on Sahih Bukhari and a member of the Sufi Kubrawiyyah. The rest, he studied interpretation and hadith at Qadi Bahlul Badakhshani (Hasan 2010). At the age of 17, Sirhindi had completed his education, and then returned to his hometown.

His father, Sheikh Abdul Ahad was a well-known Chisthiyah trustee, who was sworn in by Sheikh Abdul Quddus of Gangoh (d. 1583), who was known for his ecstasy and adherents of *Wahdat al-Wujud*. Sheikh Abdul Ahad was also a believer in the doctrine of *Wahdat al-Wujud*, but as Sirhindi says, his father was not a blind follower of that doctrine (Sirhindi n.d.). So, Sirhindi learned Sufism from his father, and then did the *suluk* (the path of Sufi formation). After Sheikh Abdul Ahad died, Sirhindi performed the pilgrimage to Mecca. On his way, in Delhi, he was introduced to Khwajah Abdul Baqi (1563-1603), who was the first Naqshbandi leader who had just arrived in India. Sheikh Khwajah is known as a devout follower of sharia, especially in his *suluk*. Within a few days, Sirhindi was attracted and then took allegiance to him. In a short time, about two and a half months, he got the Naqshbandi *nisbat*, and achieved real self-annihilation (*fana' al-haqiqi*, real self-annihilation), or absolute union (*jam' al-jam*, absolute union). Sirhindi continued his *suluk* until he reached the stage of post-union separation (*farq ba'da al-jam'*, post-union separation), a stage which Khwajah considered as the pinnacle of human achievement and the stage of perfection (*maqam al-takmil*).

Sirhindi's motivation was to study Sufism in greater depth, *Suluk* and various Sufistic issues which were inspired by the social conditions that surrounded it. During his lifetime, the Muslim community in the Indian subcontinent was going through a critical stage of their religious life. Here the Sirhindi even fought against King Akbar (Habib 1960), the Mughal King of Delhi, who passed the controversial policy of a law known as *Din Ilahi* in 1582 (Isnaini 2020). *Din Ilahi*, is a new religion declared by King Akbar which is a religion formed from the concept of syncretism (Nur 2014), which mixes various beliefs, rites, and practices originating from Hinduism, Zoroasterism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam. *Din Ilahi* seeks to promote religious tolerance, although in reality it is more detrimental to Muslims. One of the efforts made by King Akbar was the establishment of the *Ibadat al-Khana* (Council of Prayer) at Fatehpur Sikri in 1575. Meanwhile, under the guise of Sufism, the Sufis spread various beliefs and practices among the people who had been contaminated by *shirk* behavior (polytheistic). Likewise, the scholars at that time tended to boast about their habits in order to justify non-Islamic practices, when they should have been the guardians of religious teachings (Nizami 1957).

The challenges posed by Sufism leaders regarding the teachings of Islam are no less dangerous. They have developed a wrong view of Sufism and its relation to the *Shari'ah*. They think that *Shari'ah* is empty because they can find it through Sufism and *Tariqah*. They did not hesitate to exchange revelation for intuition, nor could they detach the doctrine of monotheism from the doctrine of *Wahdat al-wujud* which was developed by Ibn 'Arabi. This situation prompted Sirhindi to discuss the nature of Sufism, which Annemarie Schimmel called that mysticism contains something mysteries, not to be reached by ordinary means or by intellectual effort, a study of *mysteries* (Schimmel 1975) with various levels of mystical experience, status, and the unified nature of experience, as well as the adequacy of the *Kashf* method as a scientific tool, and so on.

Sirhindi's Objection Against *Wahdat al-Wujud*

The Work Area of Sufism

The first issue that needs to be known to enter the realm of Sirhindi thought is an explanation of the meaning of Sufism itself. What is Sufism? There are three answers formulated to respond to this

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question. First, the main concern of Sufism is on the state of one's mind and soul, and not outward behavior. He is more concerned with virtues such as patience, trustworthiness and sincerity; feelings such as fear, aversion and love; attitudes such as humility, calm, and withdrawal from the world; and pay attention to practices such as hunger, remembrance and meditation, all of which will lead to a calm soul (Al-Sarraj 1969). Regarding this state of mind and soul, Abu al-Husain al-Nuri (d.907 AD), a Sufi and friend near al-Junayd, stated that Sufism is not an outward movement (*rasm*) or knowledge (*'ilm*), but it is a virtue (*khulq*) (Al-Sarraj 1969). Al-Junayd (w.909) defines Sufism as submission to Allah, and not for any other purpose (Al-Qushayri 1972). While al-Tustari (d. 987) formulated Sufism by eating little to seek peace in Allah and withdrawing from crowded associations. This formulation is in line with the pattern of his life which leads an ascetic life, fasts a lot, eats little and doesn't even eat for decades (Al-Tustari 2011).

Second, Sufism is intended as a search for knowledge, enlightenment or *ma'rifah* (gnosis). The *makrifat* view of the Sufis is very popular. Ma'ruf al-Karkhi (d. 815 AD) mentions Sufism as recognizing the divine reality, or taking the essence and leaving what is in the hands of creatures (Hafiu 2012). Third, Sufism is the experience of mortal and *baqa'*. Al-Junayd Al-Bagdadi called Sufism as a state of death in you and life in Him. He also said, when a servant experiences *makrifah*, human nature will disappear and only Allah exists, because Allah has taken over from His servant (Kamba 1994). This is called *makrifat*, as Ali bin Talib replied when asked about *makrifat*, "I know Allah because of Allah and I know what is not Allah from the light of Allah." (Al-Hujwiri 2015). A student of al-Junayd named al-Syibli (d. 946) defines Sufism as emptying of the perception of the world (Al-Qushayri 1972). Meanwhile, Abdul Rahman Jami' (d. 1492 AD), a commentator on Fusus al-Hikam, formulated *walayat* Sufism means temporary (mortal) humans, and immortality (*baqa'*) in Him (Burhanuddin 2020). This last definition is the definition of Sufism used by Ahmad Sirhindi. He then formulated: "*walayat tasawuf means fana' and baqa'*". With this formulation, Sirhindi argues that the main element of Sufism is the experience in *fana'* and *baqa'*, and not the knowledge that goes with them, whose nature and value are perceived differently by different Sufis (Ansari 1986). Disclosure of Sufism as a *fana'* and *baqa'* are crucial to Sirhindi's argument about the nature and status of the experience of oneness. This in turn will determine the dividing line between the understanding of the adherents of *tauhid wujudi* and *tauhid Shuhudi*.

The Single Actor Concept

Sirhindi's criticism of the *Wahdat al-Wujud* concept initiated by Ibn 'Arabi is not easy to discuss. That's because the interpretation of Sirhindi's view of the concept of *Wahdat al-Wujud* is quite complicated to understand. On the one hand, Sirhindi states that the world exists independently as God's creation (*al-alam mawjudun fi al-kharij bi ijadi al-Haq*) (Sirhindi n.d.) and on the other hand Sirhindi says that nature's existence is imaginary, although it exists with certain stability (Sirhindi n.d.). There is also difficulty in understanding the terminology used by Ibn 'Arabi and Sirhindi about the nature of *a'yan tsabitah* (the idea of everything before creation) and creation itself. Even when they both use the terms shadow (*zill*), nothing (*ma'dum*) and illusory (*mawhum*) each conveys different meanings (Saad 2006). Despite of all that, Sirhindi mentions his disagreement against Ibn 'Arabi regarding the concept of *Wahdat al-Wujud* which can be seen from the following arguments.

First, Ibn 'Arabi's view of the phenomenal world as imagination, not reality. Ibn 'Arabi rejects the independent existence of the world by calling it a being that exists in the minds of ordinary people only. According to Sirhindi, the mention of the universe or the world as imagination clashes with the concept of creation which calls God the Creator. For Sirhindi, the universe has an independent existence, even though its form is not the same as the Divine Being. The mention of the

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universe as an independent being is seen as very important because this idea can direct humans about the concept of retribution and punishment (Sirhindi n.d.). In other words, the universe is real, therefore humans get rewards or punishments for what they did in the universe. In the context of this independent existence, Sirhindi takes a middle position between the scholars who argue that the world exists in real terms, and the opinion of Ibn 'Arabi who says that the world does not have any form (Sirhindi n.d.).

Regarding the concept of *Wahdat al-Wujud*, Sirhindi defines it as perceiving the Being is only one, assuming that everything other than Allah is non-existent (*ma'dum*), and viewing the other, even though it is believed to be non-existent, as the appearance of the manifestation of The One (Sirhindi n.d.). According to Sirhindi, belief in a Single Being is a subjective view, where subjectivity lies in the emergence of the idea itself. There are two ways how that belief arises. Some of the Sufis began with a priori belief in the idea. They are forced to understand the sentence *La Ilaha Illa Allah* (there is no god but Allah) with the meaning *La Mawjud Illa Allah*, there is nothing but Allah. They repeat the sentence and reflect on it, so that it dominates the mind and becomes something permanent in their imagination (Sirhindi, n.d.). The second way adopted by the Sufis is through the path of love. They begin with remembrance and contemplation free from the idea of a Single Being, then reach the stage of the heart (*maqam al-qalb*) by their efforts or by the abundance of God's grace and are fully absorbed in passionate love for God. At this stage the Sufis can see the beauty of *Tawhid Wujudi*, due to their burning love for God who removes everything from their sight. Because everything other than God has been removed from their sight, they do not see or experience anything other than God. This has implications for the denial of the existence of anything other than Him. That is why, said Sirhindi, belief in a Single Being is only a matter of subjective feelings (Sirhindi, n.d.).

Second, the doctrine of *Wahdat al-Wujud* is not monotheism taught by the apostles. The Apostles never taught that Substance is One; which they teach that Allah is One. According to Sirhindi, the religion of the Apostles stood on the foundation of duality (*tsunaiyyat*), and not on the identity between God and the world. He separates the creature from the Creator, the servant of his Lord, and never says that the Creator is the creature, or that God is the servant. The Apostles never neglected the knowledge, will, power, actions and experiences of humans or other creatures, and then made them as a predicate of God alone. The Apostles never stated, that there is only One Actor, or One Substance, or One Subject (Ansari 1986). The argument of the *Wujudi* about the Sole actor is based on the verse of the Qur'an, as follows: "Indeed you do not throw (a pinch of dust) when you throw, but God throws it" (*Al-Anfal* 8:17). According to Sirhindi, if it is understood more deeply, the Single Actor doctrine based on the verse above is actually still a cliché and blurred. Because this verse does not completely deny the act of the Apostle (in throwing), but only denies the effect on the destruction of the enemy which was solely caused by the throw. This means that the real cause of the effect is not solely the action of the Apostle, but there are. According to Sirhindi again, the content of the verse *al-Anfal* 8:17 must be understood according to the understanding of the Prophet's hadith, that "It is not a believer who destroys an amanah." (Ahmad ibn Hanbal 1978). The meaning of this hadith is not meant by someone who breaks the trust as an unbeliever or a true disbeliever, but rather his faith is weak and ineffective. That is, the hadith only denies the effectiveness of faith, and does not deny faith itself. Likewise with the verse above which denies the effectiveness of the Apostle's actions (in throwing), not in the context of denying the action (throwing) itself.

Third, the belief in a single actor implies that there is one will. Therefore, whatever is chosen or carried out by a person, then in reality is chosen and carried out by God. According to Sirhindi, belief in a single actor is a product produced when drunk. This belief represents a view of

determinism (*jabariyyah*) and neglects human responsibility (Sirhindi n.d., I: 41). Then, what is the meaning of the proposition man knows or wills? Since man is a limited special manifestation of Essence or God, he knows or wills that God knows and wills not as an infinite. Thus, man is God in His manifestation form. The object of human knowledge is God as well as the distribution of God's manifestations. Therefore, the proposition 'man knows' is the same as 'God knows'. In other cases, the knower is God, either as infinite God or God in manifestations. He is finite, and the known object is the same, either such God or God in a certain form (Ansari 1986).

This understanding implies that the subject of all these things is God. God is the Knower and the known, the Almighty and the object of power at the same time, the Will and the willed, the Mover and the driven, and so on. If this is the picture, then worship of various objects will be equated with worship of God, because all those worshiped are manifestations of God. God is also the executor of all good and bad actions, the holder of all good and bad beliefs. This means, the concept of a Single Substance has ignored the existence of evil. As a manifestation of God, which is absolute goodness, of course everything must be in good condition; it is only bad concerning something outside of itself. In fact, disbelief and apostasy is not bad thing. In reality, disbelief and apostasy are good in themselves, and bad or bad only exists when compared to faith and Islam (Ansari 1986). This kind of thinking is contrary to the basic mission of the Apostles which aimed to keep people from worshipping idols. and apostasy.

Fana' and *Baqa'*: The Lowest Mystical Experience

Fana' and *Baqa'* are two sides of the same experience. *Fana'* is the denial of the mystical, that is, the denial of his will, his own qualities, and his self-awareness. In this context, the Sufis refer to several meanings such as nothingness (*fana'*), negation (*mahw*), dissolution (*idmihlal*) and unconsciousness (*ghaybah*). From another angle, *baqa'* is an effort to get closer to God, that is, to unite with His will, to absorb His attributes, and finally to His existence. At this level the Sufis mention the terms meeting (*wishal*), uniting (plural), unification (*ittihad*), unity (*tawhid*) and identity (*'ainiyyah*) (Sirhindi n.d.).

According to Sirhindi, the experience of *fana'* and *baqa'* does not mean involvement in the divine life. When the Sufi negates himself and (feels) one with Him, then what happens is no different from a dream. If in a dream someone sees himself as a king, then in reality he is not a king. Likewise, if a Sufi feels one with God, then he is never really one with Him (Sirhindi n.d.). To strengthen his analysis of the problem of *fana'* and *baqa'*, Sirhindi then details his spiritual experience which is quite interesting. The following is a record of his experience (Sirhindi n.d.):

I have believed in *Tawhid Wujudi* (*Wahdat al-Wujud*) since I was a child. My father himself was a follower of this doctrine and used to carry out spiritual practice based on the line of existence. In addition, my father was also able to maintain his spiritual personality, namely an unlimited state (*martabah bi kaif*) As people says, the son of a lawyer is half a lawyer. So, I also know the doctrine well, and live it. When Allah brought me to Sheikh Baqi Billah and taught me the Naqshbandiyyah *tariqah* and supervised my development, the Unity of Essence (*Tawhid Wujudi*) also immediately entered into me. I immediately followed this *tariqa*. I was completely absorbed in the experience and the ideas that accompanied it. There was a difficult experience that was not inspired by me. I was introduced to the strong ideas of Sheikh Muhyidin Ibn 'Arabi and was blessed with the experience of divine self-illumination (*tajalli dzati*), which according to the author of *Fusus* is peak spiritual experience. More than that, nothing else exists, according to him, except that it is not pure non-being. I also tried to understand the details of the truth of the *tajalli* which the Shaykh considered that it was only

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the privilege of the head of *auliya*. I was very absorbed in that monotheism, and very drunk with it.

Sirhindi then suggests the next stage of his mystical development, as follows (Sirhindi n.d.):

"The following period I experienced new visions that dominated my consciousness. At first, I was reluctant to change my attitude towards *tawhid wujudi* out of respect, rather I belittled the doctrine. Later I was influenced to revisit the doctrine. I had the vision that *tawhid* embodied is the lowest dignity, and I then wanted to move towards the level of *dzilliyat*, (i.e., the vision that everything is only a shadow of God, and therefore different from Him). But I was reluctant to move because many Sufis were satisfied and stopped there. Then I entered into the stage of *dzilliyat*, which then I realized that the world is only a shadow.

Actually, Sirhindi hopes not to move from the *dzilliyat* stage, because he is close to *Wahdat al-Wujud*, which for him is still a symbol of perfection. Still according to him, *"with His pure compassion and love, I then rose to the stage of 'abdiyyat (the vision that humans are nothing but servants of Allah, and everything is His creation, and He is absolute and different from the world). I feel the greatness of that level and feel how glorious that height is. I ask forgiveness for my previous experience, then return to God and ask for His bounty. Because without His guidance, I will not be able to see the majesty of one stage from another, so I will be left at the level of manifest monotheism, because before in my view there has never been a higher level than it. It is God Himself who determines the truth and shows the way"* (Sirhindi n.d.).

Based on this mystical experience, Sirhindi then determined three stages of his experience, namely: the unity of Substance (*Wahdat al-Wujud*), shadow (*dziliyat*), and the stage of servanthood (*'abdiyyat*). In pure mystical language, the three experiences describe the stages of unity (*al-jam'*) or stages of being indistinguishable (*jam' al-jam'*), separation after union (*farq ba'da al-jam'*), and absolute difference (*farq al-mutlaq*). The mention of the three stages is intended by Sirhindi to show that the truth of God's absolute majesty is not just a matter of faith, as is believed by ordinary people, or just an intellectual conclusion as done by theologians but is a fact found through experience. In addition, Sirhindi wanted to restore the mystique of his time, which was largely opposite from the first stage (*al-jam'*) and then stopped at the second stage (*farq ba'da al-jam'*). According to Sirhindi, there are still stages that are higher than the stage of unity, where usually people will see that humans are one with God, or that the world and God are One Essence. The highest stage is the stage of servanthood, where God is very different from creatures, and humans are only His simple creatures and only His servants.

The Sirhindi Sufi experience was also experienced by Alauddaulah Simnani (d. 1336 AD), the great Persian Sufi. Simnani's experience is as described in his following statement: *"O beloved! true faith is in touch with reality and following the shari'a. You have a definite belief (ilm al-Yaqin) in the early stages of mukasyafah, a definite view ('ain al-Yaqin) in the middle of mukasyafah, and absolute truth (haqq al-Yaqin) at the end of the advance stage."* Simply stated absolute truth as stated in His word: *"Worship Allah until you reach belief"* (Al-Hijr 15: 99), and this is only achieved at the end of the mukasyafah (Al-Simnani 1905).

In this quote Simnani points out that the level of true truth (*haq al-Yaqin*) is through the experience of *farq ba'da al-Jam'* (absolute difference), a stage which mentions the absolute transcendence of God. In Al-Junayd's language, this stage of absolute transcendence is called 'return to origin'. According to him, monotheism is the complete separation of uncertainty from the necessary (Al-Qushayri 1972). Then Sheikh Abdul Qadir al-Jailani repeated this in his own words. *"Beginning is setting aside normal life (al-ma'hud), to follow The God's orders (al-Masyru'), then to*

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observe what is dictated by the will (*al-Maqdur*), and finally to return to a normal state (*al-Ma' hud*), which is a condition determined by the limits of the *shari'ah*." (Al-Jilani 1973).

Regarding the station of servitude as the main condition experienced by servants, Abul Qasim Al-Qushayri (w.1072) (1972) wrote:

After experiencing absolute unification (*jam' al-jam'*) unfolds a sacred state (*halai 'azizah*) which is called the second separation (*al-Farq al-Tsani*) by the Sufis. The Second Separation is a situation where the Sufi returns to simplicity (*al-sahw*) when he performs the fardhu prayer, so he must carry out his obligations at that time. He returns only to and for God, and not to him and with him. He feels that in such a state God is in complete control over him, and He alone is the source of his essence and existence. That only He has the power that is in him.

Thus, the experience of oneness (*jam' al-jam'*) is not the highest Sufi experience. There is a higher experience than that, namely separation after uniting (*farq ba'da al-jam'*) or what is called the *maqam* of servanthood

Building an Understanding of *Wahdat al-Shuhud*

Wahdat al-Shuhud or also called *Tawhid Shuhudi* is seeing a single Essence or declaring the absence of anything but a Single Substance. But 'perceiving' does not mean assuming something doesn't exist. With this way of thinking, for example, what is 'seen' is only the sun and not the stars. It is different from *Tawhid Wujudi* which only recognizes that what is 'visible' is only a Single Substance, while the others do not exist. Therefore, other substances exist only because they are manifestations of the One Being, because only the One Being exists, and nothing else. Sirhindi (n.d.: 56) wrote:

The essence of *Tawhid Shuhudi* is to see a single substance; in the perception of a Sufi there is nothing but a single Essence. On the other hand, *Tawhid Wujudi* is believing that there is only a Single Substance, while others are considered non-existent, and besides that others are considered as manifestations and appearances of a Single Sub-stance.

From Sirhindi's statement, it can be seen that the *tawhid* of the *shuhudi* is based on the highest experience of the Sufis on divine transcendence, which is allegedly by the teachings of the Prophet. Divine transcendence is the foundation and basis of the philosophy of *Wahdat al-Shuhud* because God is completely different from the world, and also completely as something else. The world is not one with God, nor is it in his being. God is a separate substance, and the world is another (the others), while the two will have nothing in common.

In this context, Sirhindi is not unaware of the fact that Ibn 'Arabi is not yet complete in identifying the world with God, who recognizes the difference between the two, and recognizes the relative transcendence of God. But Sirhindi believes that the distinction between God and the world in Ibn 'Arabi's mind is only peripheral and grossly inadequate. Because in *Wahdat al-Wujud*, identity is very important and fundamental, and is an indivisible unity, both in God and the world (Ansari, 1986: 182). At this point Sirhindi objected to the concept of 'fundamental unity' which was used as a basis for existential people. For Sirhindi the most fundamental concept is the 'fundamental difference' namely that the world is a substance and God is another substance. So, the existence of God is not the existence of the world. Since God is a different Substance and completely different from the world, the fundamental truth is not in substance monism, but in dualism.

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One more thing, *Wahdat al-Shuhud* recommends high respect for *Shari'ah* as a logical consequence of the difference between God and creatures. Abu Bakr al-Syibli, for example, once stood up for prayer, would immediately repeat it, and then remain in that state for a while, and then perform it again. When he finished, he said: "Really, when I pray, I am actually being ignorant. But if I do not pray, I will become a disbeliever." (Al-Kalabadzi 1960). The statement of al-Syibli, that by praying he acknowledges the difference between Khaliq and creatures, thus denying the existence of unity between God and creatures. This then creates room for submission and obedience to the rules outlined by God in sharia. If he is not praying, then he has denied God and he is united with his denial. This is different from *Wahdat al-wujud* where the experience of 'unity' is allegedly going to hide the truth from differences, so that it will lead to conflict with sharia. In the literature of the Sufis there is a general statement, namely that unity (*jam' al-Jam'*) without separation (*tariqah*) is heretical.

To conclude, Ibn 'Arabi and Ahmad Sirhindi both agree on the proposition that "what is real is only the one who is called God". The difference between the two stems from the statement, how far is the relationship between the world and God? Ibn 'Arabi believed that the existence of God was identical with the existence of the world; that there is a Single existence that encompasses everything, which when viewed from one side is God, and when viewed from the other side is the world. God is both immanent and transcendent. Immanent, because the existence of God is the existence of the world and there is only One Substance. Being transcendent, because God is an infinite substance, while the world as a manifestation of God is limited. 1

On the other hand, Sirhindi assumes that the existence of God is not identical with the existence of the world. God is separate from the world and is not one as Ibn 'Arabi thought. In other words, the existence of the world is on the side of God and not in God. The proposition 'the world is with God' does not contradict the truth, that in reality there is only One Being, namely God. Meanwhile the existence of the world is a virtual, and the existence of an unreal image does not threaten the unity of the Real Substance.

Based on Sirhindi's thought, the existence of the world is like the existence of a shadow image on the glass. There is no comparison between the mirror image and the real existence of the object. On the other hand, the image, even though it appears to be behind the glass, is actually you never see it there. There is also no image in the glass. Therefore, the image does not exist in the space where the object is located. Various other properties related to objects can also be found in the image. Therefore, the existence of an image is not the existence of an object, because the existence of an object is a real existence in real space. While the existence of an image is an unreal existence, only in perception (*hiss*) and imagination (*wahm*), which is located in the shadow space (*kharij dzilli*). Therefore, the existence of the image is the existence of a shadow (the form of *dzilli*) which is completely different and separate from the real existence of the object.

This is Sirhindi's argument that shows the world as a shadow existence (*Manifest al-dzilli*). This argument should not be completely forgotten. This shadow world which has an unreal status is then explained by Sirhindi through his concept of 'adam (non-existence). The world as *ma'dum* means that the objects of the world are in essence a determination does not matter and are only a reflection of God's attributes. It only exists in the outer world because the virtue of reflecting God's existence is in a level which when compared to God's existence is in the level of non-existence. Similarly, Ibn 'Arabi's statement that the world is non-existing (*ma'dum*), he means objects called ideal prototypes (*a'yan al-tsabithah*) which are the ideal determinations of the Essence, which remain eternal in the mind. God, and has no existence in the outer world.

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