

## Bediuzzaman Said Nursi View on Ibn Arabi's Concept of *Wahdatul Wujud* (Unity of Existence)

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**Abstract:** This article explores Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's view on Ibn 'Arabī's Unity of Existence (*Wahdatul Wujūd*) concept. In several books, Said Nursi has written about the idea of Unity of Existence. All of this suggests that Nursi expressed his thoughts on the subject when responding to questions from his students about Ibn 'Arabī and his idea of *Wahdatul Wujūd*. Nursi determined that *Wahdatul Wujūd* is of an acceptable degree and great value for the guardians (*auliya*), and that the subjects of *Wahdatul Wujūd* cannot be taught to common people. A study uses epistemological analysis to recognize the basic concept of *Wahdatul Wujūd* according to Ibn 'Arabī. As a result, *Wahdatul Wujūd* doctrine is divided into Sufism ideology, materialism, and naturalism.

Keywords: Bediuzzaman Said Nursi; Ibn 'Arabī; *unity of existence*; *Wahdatul Wujūd*,

### A. Introduction

Ibn 'Arabī is one of the greatest Andalusian Muslim scholars in Islam as a Sufi and an author,<sup>1</sup> while others regard him as a heretic and imposter. This could be attributed in part to his unusual style. His views are nearly intractable due to the uncertainty of his language and the multiplicity of his concept, especially to those unfamiliar with his elaborate methods of articulation. Ibn 'Arabī is a writer who is more concerned with thoughts and mystical sensations than with words.<sup>2</sup> People have misunderstood and misjudge him who is studying Ibn 'Arabī's books with their eyes locked on the words.

In fact, the common Western perspective is that Ibn 'Arabī is emblematic of Islamic monism or pantheism and that because of such monist theory, he destroyed the Islamic thought of God as a living and dynamic force and is

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Lings, *What Is Sufism* (Pakistan: Suhail Academy Lahore, 2005), 11.

<sup>2</sup> A.E. Affifi M.M. Sharif, *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, vol. 1 (Lahore: Royal Book, 1961), 406.

primarily responsible for the disintegration of true Islamic religious life.<sup>3</sup> However, in the view of Islamic thinkers, such as Seyyed H. Nasr argues that the fundamental doctrine of Sufism, especially as interpreted by Ibn 'Arabī and his school is the unity of existence (*Wahdatul Wujūd*) for which he has been indicated by many modern scholars, singularly western scholars of existence a pantheist, an existential monist, and a panentheist; and more recently of follower of that is called natural mysticism. Hossein Nasr explains that all of these attributions are false; however, because all of them fault the metaphysical doctrines of Ibn 'Arabī for philosophy and do not grip into deliberation the fact that the way of gnosis is not separate from dignity and spirituality.<sup>4</sup>

The Pantheistic attributions against the Sufi are doubly incorrect. It is because pantheism is a philosophical method, whereas Ibn 'Arabī and other Sufi never claimed to follow or create any "method" and it is because pantheism implies an essential continuity between God and the creation, while Ibn 'Arabī would be the first to declare God's absolute transcendence over every category, including that of substance.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, the unity of existence concept as expounded by Ibn 'Arabī is neither existential monism, nor pantheism, nor panentheism.

Thus, Said Nursi explained this misunderstanding in several books that he was written. He has said: "We have explained the basic and nature of his way to an extent in the treatise called *al-Mantsnawi an-Nuri*, and in some of the world (*al-Kalimat*), and Letters (*al-Maktubat*)".<sup>6</sup> From all of the words that Said Nursi has done, it can be understood that Ibn 'Arabī and his unity of existence concept strongly resists in the sight of pantheism.<sup>7</sup> However, Said Nursi has an interesting approach to study his concept because he has given a new color to understand what was the real meaning of *wahdatul hujud*.

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<sup>3</sup> Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Scpel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, n.d.), 263.

<sup>4</sup> Seyyed Hussein Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages* (Delmar: Caravan Books, 1997), 105.

<sup>5</sup> Seyyed Hussein Nasr, 105.

<sup>6</sup> Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *Letters* (Istambul: Sozler Publications, 2010), 514.

<sup>7</sup> M. Maftukhin, "REPOSISI KONSEP KETUHANAN: TANGGAPAN MUHAMMAD IQBAL DAN SAID NURSI ATAS PERJUMPAAN ISLAM DAN SAINS," *Epistemé: Jurnal Pengembangan Ilmu Keislaman* 12, no. 1 (June 17, 2017): 77–102, <https://doi.org/10.21274/epis.2017.12.1.77-102>.

Moreover, Ibn 'Arabī' received criticism from Islamic scholars, such as Ibn Taymiyyah, Taftazānī, and Ibrāhīm al-Biqā'ī.<sup>8</sup> In the theory of Ibn Taymiyyah has called the concept of *Wahdatul Wujud*, which is same as *al-Ittihad* and *al-Hulūl* concept. Therefore, he and others have said that Ibn 'Arabī was instead an atheist (*Ilhād*) and a heretic who did not believe in God.<sup>9</sup> This doctrine also believes in the unity of all the religions (*Wahdatul Adyan*) because of that Yāsir b. Husaen Burhami in his book "*al-Furqān Baina Awliyāi ar-Rahman wa Auliyāi as-Syaithan*" claims that *Wahdatul Wujud* has deviated from Islamic law (*Syari'ah*).<sup>10</sup>

As a result, the paper is going to discuss what is the dimension of *Wahdatul Wujud*. Although this concept is very sensitive and controversial, Said Nursi believes it must be explained with the right approach. Therefore, this research will converse about his perspective on the unity of existence concept according to Ibn 'Arabī of the text.

## B. A Brief Biographical Figure

Said Nursi is one of the distinctive figures in the contemporary Islamic thought whose important contributions to giving back the spirit of Islam.<sup>11</sup> Said Nursi was known as "Beiuzzaman" (Wonder of the Age), this nickname was well known because Nursi was a scholar of the highest studied several knowledge, not only the traditional religious sciences but also many modern sciences.<sup>12</sup> Mikail Tasdemir said in his introduction of the thesis that Bediuzzaman a prominent thinker of our age whose ideas have inspired many intellectual in Turkey.<sup>13</sup> However, Said Nursi's book has translated to several other languages such as English, Arabic, Bahasa Indonesia, Urdu, etc. Therefore, his influence has expanded that was not only in Turkey but also in the over Islamic world.

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<sup>8</sup> S.A.Q. Husaini, *The Pantheistic Monism of Ibn 'Arabī* (Lahore: Kashmiri Pazar, 1945), 38.

<sup>9</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah, *An-Nubūwāt* (Damaskus: adhwa' as-Salaf, 2000), 703.

<sup>10</sup> Yāsir b. Husaen Burhami, *Al-Furqān Baina Awliyāi Ar-Rahman Wa Auliyāi as-Syaithan*, vol. 1 (Kairo, n.d.), 10.

<sup>11</sup> Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi', *Islam at the Crossroads: On the Life and Thought of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi* (SUNY Press, 2003), 1.

<sup>12</sup> Mikail Tasdemir, "Political Thought of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi," 1999, 1, <http://studentrepo.iium.edu.my/handle/123456789/2345>.

<sup>13</sup> Tasdemir, 1.

Bediuzzaman Said Nursi was born in A.D 1877,<sup>14</sup> in the village of Nurs, a small town in the Bitlis (Anatolia in modern-day), one of the provinces in eastern Turkey,<sup>15</sup> and died in A.D 1960 at the age 87 after a life of perfect struggle and self-sacrifice for the source of Islam.<sup>16</sup> Bediuzzaman's mother was called Nuriye, and his father name was Mirza. Said Nursi's father has come originally from Jizre on the Tigris, known as Sufi Mirza. He died in the A.D 1920. Nuriye, Said Nursi's mother, was from small-town Bilkan, three hours distant from Nurs. They were a Kurdish family. Mirza was seven children that Said Nursi was the fourth. Three of them were girls, Durriye, Hanim, and Mercan (pronounced Merjan). Said Nursi was followed by more than three brothers, Abdullah, Mehmed, and Abdulmecid (pronounced Abdulmejid).<sup>17</sup>

In his formative days, he was designated Molla Said (Master Said) but inconsistently was called Said-I Kurdi that was mentioned as his nationality. It was not unusual in the Ottoman era to dub some people by their regions, of which Nursi was mainly Kurdish. Subsequently, he utilized his last name "Nursi" to associate with his Kurdish nationalism.<sup>18</sup>

Said Nursi began his studies at the age of nine with was Molla Abdullah, said Nursi brother's, his first example for him. However, Said Nursi went Molla Mehmed Emin Efendi's Medrese (pronounced Madrasa) in Tag, which was a village near Ispart in Turkey.<sup>19</sup> In that Madrasa, Said Nursi studied for more than three months only, then he attended several institutions and met with the teachers to ask them about basic Islamic knowledge. Said Nursi has said, "After thirty years of learning in my life, I learned only four phrases. One is 'I am not the owner of myself.' Second, 'Death is real.' Third, 'My lord is One.' And fourth, 'the self is a criterion to understand the attributes of God'".<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Syukron Vahide, *The Author of the Risale'I Nur: Bedauzzaman Said Nursi* (Istanbul: Sozler Nesriyat, 2010), 17. There is a variety of Said Nursi's date of birth that some researcher think Bediuzzaman born in A.D 1873 or A.D 1876.

<sup>15</sup> Zeki Saritoprak, *The Islamic World* (Canada: Routledge, 2008), 296.

<sup>16</sup> Tasdemir, "Political Thought of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi," 1.

<sup>17</sup> Syukron Vahide, *The Author of the Risale'I Nur: Bedauzzaman Said Nursi*, 17.

<sup>18</sup> Zeki Saritoprak, *The Islamic World*, 296.

<sup>19</sup> Syukron Vahide, *The Author of the Risale'I Nur: Bedauzzaman Said Nursi*, 19.

<sup>20</sup> Zeki Saritoprak, *The Islamic World*, 296.

In A.D 1940,<sup>21</sup> Said Nursi spent the time joining some lodges that were Naqshabandi Sufi, one of the most *tariqah* sufi at that time. Abdurrahman Tagi was one of these Sufi masters who found great capacity in young Said Nursi. Although he was in the Naqshabandi's sufi path but Shaykh 'Abd al-Qodir al-Jilani was more influential for him than others.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, Said Nursi as scholar has capability to talk about Sufism because he studied this part of knowledge even he becoming involved with the *tariqah*.

However, Said Nursi divided his long life into two principal sessions, those of the old Nursi and the New Nursi, which forcefully coincided with the most important periods of new Turkish history: the final decades of the Ottoman Empire, then the first twenty-seven years of the Turkish Republic. A third period was the third Said Nursi, which in essence was a continuation of the new Said Nursi but combined with it some characteristics of the old Said Nursi, coincided with the Democrat Party era (1950-1960), and with the last ten years of his life.<sup>23</sup>

### C. A Short History of Ibn Arabi's Life

Muhyi al-Din ibn al-'Arabī was a great influential figures in the history of Islam. He was known as al-Shaykh al-Akbar or the "Greatest Master" the second half of Islam history.<sup>24</sup> He was born on the twenty-seventh of Ramadan in A.H 560/A.D 1165, in the township of Murcia in Muslim Spain at that time.<sup>25</sup> His full name was Muhammad b. Ali b. Muhammad b. Ibn 'Arabī al- Ta'I al-Hatimi, which indicated that he came of an ancient Arab lineage. His father was one of important figure in the fields of politics that have been chief ministers to Ibn Mardanish (A.D 1124-A.D 1172). The family also appears to have been strongly religious one since three of his uncles became followers of the Sufi way.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Syukrin Vahide, *Biografi Intelektual Bediuzzaman Said Nursi* (Jakarta: Anatolia, 2017), 5.

<sup>22</sup> Zeki Saritoprak, *The Islamic World*, 197.

<sup>23</sup> Abu-Rabi', *Islam at the Crossroads*, 1.

<sup>24</sup> William C. Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds Ibn Al-'Arabi and the Problem of Religious Diversity* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1994), 1.

<sup>25</sup> Al-Syaykh Abdul al-Razaq al-Qasyani, *Al-Syaykh al-Akbar Muhyi al-Din Ibn al-'Arabi: Fusus al-Hikam* (Cairo: Dar al-Afaq, 2016), 5.

<sup>26</sup> Al-Syaykh Abdul al-Razaq al-Qasyani, 5.

He experienced his early education in Seville, which was a good center of studying and learning at that occasion. He studied under some of the greatest intellectuals for thirty years in that city such as Abi Muhammad 'Abd al-Haqq al-Ishbili, Ibn Zurqun, and Abu Bakr bin Khalaf. In that city he also met several spiritual teachers, such as Yusuf bin Khalaf al-Qumi who was a personal apostle of Salih al-'Adawi, and Shaikh abu Madyan, whom he described as a model of austerity.<sup>27</sup>

During his spiritual apprenticeship, he must have studied a variety of mystical themes, including Sufi philosophical beliefs, cosmology, esoteric interpretation, and possibly other sciences such as astrology and alchemy. Ibn 'Arabī was a follower of two spiritual instructors at the time; both of them considerably advanced in age when he became their disciple. Shams was one of them who lived in Marchena. The other lady, with whom he spent a considerable time, was Fatima of Cordova.<sup>28</sup>

In A.D 1190, Ibn 'Arabī crossed his native shore and traveled to visit the cities of North Africa, especially Tunis and Fez, where he took the opportunity for study. The Doffing of the Sandals by Ibn Qisiy that was Sufi leader of the rebellion against the Almoravids in the Algarve.<sup>29</sup> It was over this period that Ibn 'Arabī wrote *Mawaqiu n-Nujum, Insha'ud Dawair, 'Uqlatu'l-Mustawfiz, al-Tadbiraltul Ilahiyah* and others works that he was done at that time.<sup>30</sup> When Ibn 'Arabī stand Fez that he meet Muhammad Hasar and they traveled together to Egypt. They did not stop, however, and continued on their journey to Egypt, where they resided in Alexandria and Cairo. Muhammad Hasar, Ibn 'Arab's companion, died there after some time, following that, Ibn 'Arabī traveled alone to Mecca, Islam's holiest city.

In the year A.D 1200,<sup>31</sup> Ibn 'Arabī left Egypt with the intention of going to Mecca. In that opportunity, he visited several North African cities and reached Mecca in A.D 1201. He stayed at Mecca for about three years before the reputation of his spiritual learning and authority spread among the more pious families of

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<sup>27</sup> M.M. Sharif, *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, 1:399.

<sup>28</sup> Ibn 'Arabī, *Sufis of Andalusia: The Ruh al-Quds and al-Durrat al-Fakhirah* (Pakistan: Suhail Academy Lahore, 1999), 25-26.

<sup>29</sup> Ibn 'Arabī, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, ed. R.W.J. Austin (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 4.

<sup>30</sup> S.A.Q. Husaini, *The Pantheistic Monism of Ibn 'Arabī*, 28-29.

<sup>31</sup> S.A.Q. Husaini, 29.

Mecca, and he was soon being received with honor and respect by the most learned of its citizens. During this time, he would also have been deeply engaged in study and writing for his great work "*al-Futuhatu'l-Makiyyah*" (The Mecca Revelations) which was published in four volumes of about 700 pages each of imperial octavo.<sup>32</sup> He also completed four lesser works, which is including a collection of Traditions called *Mishkat al-Anwar*, a treatise on the Sufi virtues, *Hilyah al-Abdal*, a treatise on visions, *Taj al-Rasa'il*, and the *Ruh al-Quds*.<sup>33</sup>

In A.D. 1204, Ibn 'Arab left the Holy City and journeyed to Bagdad, where he stayed only long before heading to Mosul, where he studied and wrote.<sup>34</sup> During this time, He wrote "*al-Tanazzulat al-Mawsilyyah*" a fifty-three-chapter dissertation on the esoteric importance of ablution and prayer (Revelations at Mosul).<sup>35</sup>

In addition, the cities have been mentioned above that Ibn 'Arabī has visited. There was several cities that he was attained such as Medina, Jerusalem, Kayseri, Siwas, Asia Minor, Konya, and Aleppo.<sup>36</sup> He eventually made Damascus, , where he died on the 28th of Rabi' al-Thani 638/November 17th, 1240. He was buried in the private sepulcher of Qadi Muhyi al-Din b. al-Dhaki on Mount Qasiyun.<sup>37</sup>

#### **D. The Unity of Existence (*Wahdatul Hujud*) Theory According to Ibn 'Arabī Concept**

The concept of *Wahdat al Wujūd*, the "Unity of Existence" or "Oneness of Being" stands at the concept of Ibn 'Arabī's thought. In point of fact, this term was not found in his works. As William C. Chittick points out in his book "*Imaginal Worlds: Ibn al-'Arabi and the Problem of Religious*" that was singled out to represent his point of view not so much because of the contents of his writings but because of the concerns of his followers and the direction in which Islamic

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<sup>32</sup> S.A.Q. Husaini, 29.

<sup>33</sup> Ibn 'Arabī, *Sufis of Andalusia: The Ruh al-Quds and al-Durrat al-Fakhirah*, 38.

<sup>34</sup> Ibn 'Arabī, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, 8.

<sup>35</sup> Ibn 'Arabī, *Sufis of Andalusia: The Ruh al-Quds and al-Durrat al-Fakhirah*, 39.

<sup>36</sup> Ibn 'Arabī, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, 8–10.

<sup>37</sup> William C. Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds Ibn Al-'Arabi and the Problem of Religious Diversity*, 400.

thought developed after him.<sup>38</sup> However, even if Ibn ‘Arabī never employs the expression *Wahdat al-Wujūd*, he generally uses statements that approximate it. Therefore, It is certainly justified in to claim that Ibn ‘Arabī supported this term.

The term “*Wahdat*” has usually been translated into English “unity”. According to Ibn Mandzūr, the root of the word *Wahdat* was *wa-ha-da* which means: to be one (*tawahada*), to assimilate.<sup>39</sup> However, there was several researchers who has translated *Wahdat* same as *Tauhid*. It seems that thing was not quiet right, even this word built from the same root, but *Tauhid* was taken from the principle of Islam, which has been born since the time of the Prophet. Therefore, the most accurate meaning for *Wahdat* was like what Ibn Manzur has said; assimilation of things to be one thing (*alwahdah fi ma’na al-tawahud*).

Meanwhile, the word *Wujūd* has typically been translated into English as “existence” or “being”, and this term was employed in Islamic philosophy and *ilm al-Kalam* in the tradition of Islam. On the other side, the pattern of the basic root in the Arabic word was so rich and prevalent, *wa-ja-da* can mean; create or bring about, originate, to produce, and to grieve for.<sup>40</sup> However, the primary sense of the term was “finding” or to be found” because it was difficult to translate in English, in fact, that terms as being and existence have been understood by common Western thinkers.<sup>41</sup> As a result, in his study the author will use the word existence to facilitate understanding what is actually meaning by *Wujūd* in English.

In Ibn ‘Arabī’s thought the word *Wujūd* in a variety of meanings, he recognized that term was one of fundamental sense, given the fact that *Wujūd* was one. On the highest level, *Wujūd* was the absolute and non-delimited reality of God. God according to Ibn ‘Arabī was in excess of all qualities and they are (*ālam-nature*) neither He nor other than He and the others were His manifestation of Himself.<sup>42</sup> He was said in “*Kitābu Inshā’ul ad-Dawāir wa’l-jadāwar*”: “those who know about God did not know anything about Him except that He exists and that He was Almighty, Knowing, Speaking, Willing, Living, Controlling, Hearing and

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<sup>38</sup> William C. Chittick, 15.

<sup>39</sup> Ibn Mandzūr, *Lisān Al-Arab*, vol. 3 (Bairut: Dār al-Sāhir, n.d.), 446.

<sup>40</sup> Robert J. Dobie, *The Phenomenology of Wajud in the Thought of Ibn Al-‘Arabi*, vol. 3 (Switzerland: Spiringer Nature, 2017), 313.

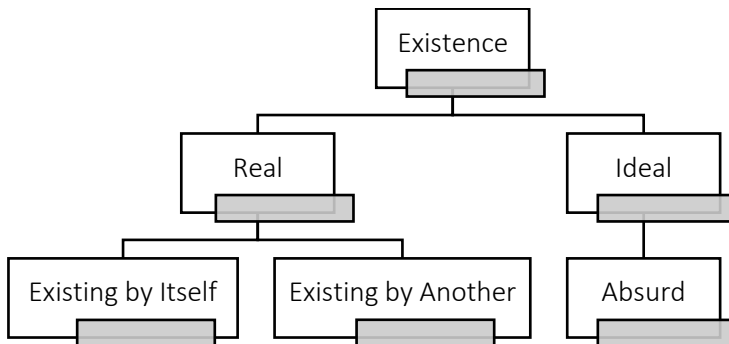
<sup>41</sup> William C. Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds Ibn Al-‘Arabi and the Problem of Religious Diversity*, 15.

<sup>42</sup> Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 267.



Seeing. They do not know anything except that He exists".<sup>43</sup> Therefore, the purpose of actual existence of creatures has not only identical with God but it was also the reflections of His attributes.

Following his view that existence classified into real (*Yaqbal al-Wujūd al-'Ain*) and ideal (*Lā Yaqbal al-Wujūd al-'Ain*).<sup>44</sup> Real existence divided into two different kinds; the existing by itself that has either material (corporeal) or spiritual (incorporeal) and the existing by another have either inseparable as property or separable as accident.<sup>45</sup> The existing by itself did not come into being out of nothing but exists absolutely because it did not spring from anything before. It was the Creator of the universe, known as God.<sup>46</sup> On the other hand, the universe exists though God's *wujūd*; there was no temporal sequence between God and the universe. The universe followed itself to God's things because it did not exist and cannot found without Him.<sup>47</sup> Although, the ideal was like the absurd, which has no substantial existence, and it was existed by itself not in or by another.<sup>48</sup> Chart showing the classification of existence:



Ibn 'Arabī also explained the correlation between existent things and nonexistent things. This concept was fundamental to understand because it has

<sup>43</sup> Ibn 'Arabī, *Kitābu Inshā'ul Ad-Dawāir Wa'l-Jadāwar* (Bairut: Dar al-Kitāb al-Ilmiyah, 1971), 103.

<sup>44</sup> Ibn 'Arabī, *Al-Futūhāt al-Makkīyah*, vol. 2 (Cairo: al-Hay'at al-Misriyyat al-'Amma li'l-Kitāb, n.d.), 454.

<sup>45</sup> S.A.Q. Husaini, *The Pantheistic Monism of Ibn 'Arabī*, 46–47.

<sup>46</sup> Ibn 'Arabī, *Al-Futūhāt al-Makkīyah*, 2:119.

<sup>47</sup> William C. Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds Ibn Al-'Arabi and the Problem of Religious Diversity*, 16.

<sup>48</sup> Ibn 'Arabī, *Al-Futūhāt al-Makkīyah*, 2:454.

to do with his main idea about Universal Reality. According to him, existence (*al-wujūd*) and non-existence (*al-ma'dūm*) are not the qualities of a thing, but they are relative terms. If existence and non-existence were the qualities of a thing, both of them could not be attributed to it simultaneously. He illustrated his concept with examples; Zayd, who exists considerably, may exist at the market, but in that some time he did not exist at the house. Since the substantial existence of Zayd was declared, his existence (in market) and non-existence (in the house) were merely relative. It was like blackness and whiteness, which were two qualities qualifying an existing thing because both of them would be impossible to apply together at the same time.<sup>49</sup>

Ibn 'Arabī pointed out that the non-existing things have several kinds; *first*, a non-existing thing that was put-down but will never be existed, such as the companion of God or His son or the entering of the camel into the eye of a needle. *Second*, a non-existent thing that can take place voluntarily but not compulsorily like the heavenly bliss to a Muslim. *Third*, non-existent things whose existence is permissible, such as the bitterness of a sweet thing. *Fourth*, a non-existent thing cannot happen by choice but is sometimes found in an individual of a species.<sup>50</sup> In short, he argues that the non-existent things have many categories that need to observe and to understand.

Ibn 'Arabī knows that the universal reality, even though they have no tangible individual existence in themselves, is conceived of and known in mind; this is certain. They are always un-manifest as regards separate existence while imposing their effects in all such existence; indeed, separate existence is nothing other than (an outer manifestation) of them, that is to say, the universals.<sup>51</sup> Thus, concerning of the universal reality as Ibn 'Arabī view that Allah (God) has life and knowledge, and also He is Living and Knowing as well as Men and Angels also have it. Therefore, he trusts the reality of knowledge is one, as is the reality of life, and the relationship between the knower and the living remains (always) the same.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Ibn 'Arabī, *Kitābu Inshā'ul Ad-Dawāir Wa'l-Jadāwar*, 3–8.

<sup>50</sup> S.A.Q. Husaini, *The Pantheistic Monism of Ibn 'Arabī*, 44.

<sup>51</sup> Ibn 'Arabī, *Fusūs Al-Hikam*, ed. al-khomainy (Bairut: Dar al-Mahajjah al-Baidhā', 2001), 32.

<sup>52</sup> Ibn 'Arabī, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, 53.

Consequently, as Ibn 'Arabī has a mansion that, Universal Reality (*al-Umūr al-Kulliyah*) was attributed neither to existence nor to non-existence things. It was neither eternal nor temporal. According to him, a universal reality is supposed in real stuff in accordance with what the realities of those things demand, such as the attribution of knowledge to the knowing and life to the living. He recognizes that life is an inferred reality and knowledge is as distinct from life, just as life distinct from knowledge, while God is a combination of both.<sup>53</sup> However, knowledge is attributed to God that is become eternal, but if it is attributed to the men that is become temporal. It is because the men could not have known anything before he came into existence and men's knowledge is also contingent (*muhdīs*). Therefore, Ibn 'Arabī has said the relationship between the inferred things (*al-Ma'qūlāt*) and real things (*al-Maujūdāt al-'Ainiyah*), If knowledge is found in one, that it is called the knowing. Comparably, if knowledge is found in the temporal, the knowledge itself is called temporal, and if is found in eternal, it is called eternal.<sup>54</sup>

Furthermore, Ibn 'Arabī explains that God draws our recognition to what is started as an aid to the knowledge of Him, and He says in the Qur'an; "*We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that is the truth, But is it not sufficient concerning your Lord that He is, over all things, a Witness?*".<sup>55</sup> Thus God suggests that knowledge of Him is deduced in human knowledge. Whenever humans assign any quality of Him, they are representative of His Self-sufficient Existence (Necessary Being). Since humans know their God through himself and from himself, the humans attribute to Him all men attribute to himself. Because of this reason, the divine revelations come to human through the mouths of the prophets for describing Himself to mankind.<sup>56</sup>

This is one aspect of Ibn 'Arabī theories. It has been correlated with the concept of emanations that he has established in the many words. He mentions several emanations, which are each of the sixth degrees of emanations connected with the true Existence.<sup>57</sup> In the first degree, God is un-manifested, un-conditioned, and exempt from all restrictions or connections. In this aspect, He

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<sup>53</sup> Ibn 'Arabī, *Kitābu Inshā'ul Ad-Dawāir Wa'l-Jadāwar*, 12–19.

<sup>54</sup> Ibn 'Arabī, *Fusūs Al-Hikam*, 33.

<sup>55</sup> (Q.S. Fussilat, 53)

<sup>56</sup> Ibn 'Arabī, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, 54–55.

<sup>57</sup> Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 270.

cannot be described by epithets of attributes and is too sacred to be reported by spoken or written words; neither does tradition furnish an expression for His Dignity, nor has reason the power to demonstrate the depth of His Perfection. The second degree is the self-display of the Idea “the intelligible world of the divine” (*‘Ālam al-‘Ilm*) in an epiphany containing in itself all the active, compulsory, and divine manifestation, as well as all the passive, contingent, and mundane manifestations. This is the first emanation (*at-Ta’ayyun al-Awwal*), because it is the earliest manifestations of the Ideas. In the third degree, it is named the “Unity of the Whole” (*Ahadiyat al-Jam’*), which contains in itself all the active and efficient manifestations. It is called the degree of “Divinity” (*Ilāhiyāt*). The fourth degree is the manifestation in detail of the degree named Divinity; it is the degree of the names and the theatres wherein they are manifested. There are two last-named degrees refer to the outward aspect of existence that is a universal order. The fifth degree is the Unity of the Whole, which includes all the passive manifestations whose characteristic is the potentiality of receiving impressions that is passivity. It is the degree of mundane existence and contingency (*Martaba al-kauniyah al-Imkaniyah*). The last degree is the manifestation in detail of the preceding degree; it is the degree of the sensible world. There two last degrees refer to the exterior of the intelligible world, wherein contingency is one of the invariable qualities. It is being formed of the revelation of the Divine Mind to Himself under the plans of the substance if the contingent.<sup>58</sup>

According to his point, there are two of the divine names led to distinguish God’s names that are ninety-nine names from the immutable entities by calling God’s Universal names and His particular names. Each and every attributed of God such as justice (*al-‘adl*), Power (*al-Qowiyyu*), Knowledge (*al-Alīm*), Generous (*al-Karīm*), Forgiveness (*al-Ghafūr*), Mercy (*ar-Rahīm*), and so on. It is the manifestation of God in the varying intensities within the things of the universe. In the particular entity has a specific that allows it to display the attributes of existence to a greater of lesser degree. A stone is the manifestation of power in a certain passive way. A vegetable shows traces of life, desire, knowledge, and active

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<sup>58</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *The Tarjuman Al-Ashwaq a Collection of Mystical Odes*, ed. Reynold A. Nicholson (London: Theosophical Publishing House, 1978), 26–27.

power. A beast exhibits all these attributes with much greater strength.<sup>59</sup> At the top of the visible hierarchy of existence, human beings have the potential to manifest every divine name. Therefore, Ibn ‘Arabī finds that all creatures are eyes of manifestation of existence (*wujūd*).<sup>60</sup>

Consequently, the Real Existence, in his view, is one alone, at once the true existence and Absolute (*wujūd Muthlaq*).<sup>61</sup> It is the reality that cannot conceive God; the utmost knowledge, human can has regarding Him is the negative qualities, such as “*There is nothing like unto Him*”.<sup>62</sup> “*Glorified be your Lord, the Lord of Honour and Power! (He is free) from what they attribute unto Him!*”.<sup>63</sup> As Ibn ‘Arabī already explained who want to know about God that he did not know anything about Him except that He exists and that He is Almighty, Willing, Speaking, knowing, Hearing, Controlling, and Seeing. The human or all universe are not existed by themselves, and not by attribution is permissible in the case of temporal only and not in the case of the absolute.<sup>64</sup> Therefore, a fascinating aspect of his theories is that God is the first and the last, he says;

*There is none besides God;  
There is none besides His  
Being firm, none but God  
He is not known in time,  
No one can ever know God.*<sup>65</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Andri Azis Putra, *Sufistic Consciousness as a Foundation of Religious Well-Being in Ibn ‘Arabī’s Teaching to Understanding Existential Uncertainty*, vol. 32, 2, n.d., 183.

<sup>60</sup> William C. Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds Ibn Al-‘Arabī and the Problem of Religious Diversity*, 21–22.

<sup>61</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *The Tarjuman Al-Ashwaq a Collection of Mystical Odes*, 25.

<sup>62</sup> Q.S. Ash-Shura: 11.

<sup>63</sup> Q.S. As-Saffat: 180.

<sup>64</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Kitābu Inshā’ul Ad-Dawāir Wa’l-Jadāwar*, 18–20.

<sup>65</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Al-Futūhāt al-Makkīyah*, 2:276. In Arabic words;

فليس إلا الله لا غيره      وليس إلا كونه الحكيم  
فهو الذي يعلم وتناكما      يجهل في وقت ولا يعلم

## **E. Said Nursi's Thoughts on the Unity of Existence (*Wahdatul Hujud*)**

### **Concept**

The concept of Unity of Existence (*Wahdatul Hujud*) is one of the important ways in the world of Sufism in Islam, and another name of this idea is the Unity of Witnessing (*Wahdatus Syudud*). Said Nursi explains that Unity of Existence restricts the gaze of *Wujud* of Necessary Existent or Necessary Being (*Wājibul Hujud*), and notices other existence to be so frail and shallow-like in relation to God, and it is because they do not really exist. It is casing them in veils of imagination and in the station of abandoning all things other than Him, counts them as nothing. It even imagines them to be non-existent and goes so far as to belittle the manifestation of the divine names (*Asmaul Husna*), saying they are mere imaginary mirrors.<sup>66</sup>

According to Said Nursi, there is the essential fact of this line of thought which taught and elevated sanctity of those on this way advancing to the degree of absolute certainty (*haqqul yaqin*), the existence of dependent of beings is so reduced that nothing remains in its view other than imagination and non-existent; it is idea denies the universe on the Necessarily of Existence.<sup>67</sup> On the other hand, Said Nursi has Said: "But this way holds dangers, the first of which is this: there are six pillars of faith, and such pillars as belief in the Last Day and belief in God require the existence of contingent beings. These firmly-founded pillars of belief cannot be constructed on imagination! For this reason, when a person following this way (*Wahdatul Hujud*) re-enters the world of sobriety from the world of ecstasy and intoxication, he should not bring them with him, nor should he act in accordance with them".<sup>68</sup> Therefore, Said Nursi believes those who are not able to understand what is meant by the concept of Unity of Existence; they cannot criticize it. That is the reason the idea of *Wahdatul Hujud* could not be taught to public or common people.

Thus, it should not transform to the man, which is pertaining to the heart and the certain states that it does not also related to the knowledge, words, and reason. It is because the process of practices of them cannot be inapplicable to reason of

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<sup>66</sup> Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *Letters*, 513.

<sup>67</sup> Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *Letters*, 513.

<sup>68</sup> Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, 513.

knowledge. As a result, the *Rashidun* Caliphate, some authority leaders of law, and almost the first generation of Islam were not seen to practice this way.<sup>69</sup> That is why the Sufism approach is not the only way to take glory in Islam, but there are several ways that can also bring to perfect Muslim.

Therefore, Said Nursi divides the dangers of teaching this concept "*Wahdatul Hujud*" into three things; *the first*: is the way the concept of Unity of Existence is quite directly rejecting the universe in front of Almighty God. It should not adopt by the heedless community when it enters himself that ideas are materialist taints ideas thought in particular, it will direct them to deny the Creator on account of the universe and materiality. *The second*: This concept also rejects the domination of anything other than God, and they deny all things other than God that is known by removing dualism. For this reason, they do not acknowledge the independent existence of anything. *The third*: This understanding has triggered some considerations of thought considerations that not unsuitable for Islamic thought. They are said who is speaking about the Unity of Existence that should rise in mind from the ground to the Pleiades, and they assume that the universe is non-existent.<sup>70</sup>

In another aspect, Said Nursi explains that Materialism is so popular in this century that it is regarded as the source of everything. However, presenting it in terms of intellectual knowledge to those who are enamored of the world and are immersed in materialist philosophy and nature will drown them in nature and materiality, removing them from the reality of Islam. It is because they are loving world attracted to the sphere of causes and wish to give it a sense of permanence. Consequently, in reality, the concept of Unity of Existence is only suitable for Sufi circles that get highest level (*khawas al-Khawas*). As Ibn Arabi has established in his world of Sufism, many of his followers misunderstood the Sufi teaching; therefore, everyone who studies his thinking must appreciate the concept of existence that he has explained in his many words.

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<sup>69</sup> Cemal Sahin and Zaimul Asroor, "Reinterpretation of Tarekat and the Teachings of Sufism According to Said Nursi," *Millah: Jurnal Studi Agama*, April 27, 2021, 374, <https://doi.org/10.20885/millah.vol20.iss2.art7>.

<sup>70</sup> Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *The Flashes Collection*, ed. Surkran Vahide (Istanbul: Sozler Publications, 2004), 369–70.

Like Said Nursi has said in his book "*al-Maktūbāt*" that is not simple to understand what the saints feel within the state of witnessing and illumination, but they are the men of reality and truth. The common people (*awam*) cannot interpret what they own dream while dreaming it.<sup>71</sup> However, the only ones who can be construed their thoughts are the scholars of Prophethood (*ulama*), which are called "the purified ones" (*Ashfiya*). They can understand their mistakes through the guidance of the Qur'an *al-Karim* and the Prophet's words (*as-Sunnah an-Nabawiyah*).<sup>72</sup>

According to Said Nursi, People who follow this path are free of material possessions and intermediaries, and they have rented a large number of causes. It is absorbed in a state of witnessing, then non-knowledge experiential. The Unity of existence is not coming from the unity of existence as materialism thought, but Unity of Witnessing approaches it. Therefore, the purified ones have said universe's rule is; "the reality followed is constant" (*al-haqāiqu al-asy'yāi tsābitah*).<sup>73</sup> As for the meaning of this word is nothing in the universe compared to God. He is completely beyond categorization, classification, or division into sections, and His relationship with beings is creativity. Beings are not as those who followed the path of the unity of existence declared, beings are neither fantasies nor imaginations. For that reason, everything is "from Him," yet not everything is "Him." it is because the entities cannot be pre-eternal.<sup>74</sup> However, Said Nursi seems that universal reality does not change, as Ibn 'Arabī said. In his point, God has given existence to everything with the manifestation of His name *al-Khalliq* (Creator), and He also maintains all of creation in this universe.<sup>75</sup>

Although many people disagree with Ibn 'Arabī, it is inappropriate to disparage him because he is one of Islam's miraculous scholars. Ibnu 'arabi is appropriately quoted and acceptable, yet he cannot be the guide and instructor in all of his writings. He resisted the *Sunnis* laws because he frequently progressed

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<sup>71</sup> Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *Al-Matsnawi an-Nuri*, ed. Hasbi Sen Zaprukhan (Jakarta: Anatolia, n.d.), 509.

<sup>72</sup> Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *Letters*, 101–2.

<sup>73</sup> Safar ibn Abdurahmman al-Hawāly, *Zāhir Al-Irjāi Fi al-Fikr al-Islamy* (Egupt: Dar al-Kalimah, 1999), 703.

<sup>74</sup> Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *Letters*, 104.

<sup>75</sup> Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, 104.



in the reality without balance, and some of the things he said appear to express misguidance. As Ibn Arabi has Said: "Those who are not one of us and do not know our station should not read our books, for it may be damaging for them". In addition, Said Nursi emphasizes who wants to read Ibn 'Arabī's books at this time, especially about the unity of Existence, which is quite hazardous.<sup>76</sup>

## F. Conclusion

Ibn 'Arabī, according to Said Nursi, is an Islamic miracle. On the other hand, many of his followers and scholars misinterpreted the ideas he expressed in some of his books. As a result, as Said Nursi has repeatedly stated in various books, teaching the unity of existence (*Wahdatul Hujud*) in our era is extremely difficult, will result in many misunderstandings, and can lead to mistake. Therefore, Said Nursi divides *wahdatul hujud* into two essential parts to distinguish whether concepts are correct; *the first*, unity of existence (*Wahdatul Hujud*) is a concept defined by materialism and naturalism. This group will encourage individuals to deny the existence of objects other than God, eventually leading to the denial of God's existence because, in their ideas, everything is thought to be the same. *The second* is Sufi groups immersed in Tauhid that is not limited to the view of mind only that leads people to the unity of His *qudrat* (divine decree). In other words, in this universe, no one influences nature except Allah, and they said that the true *wūjud* was solely God as a result of this realization.

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<sup>76</sup> Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *The Flashes Collection*, 370.

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