IBN ʿARABĪ AND THE TRANSCENDENTAL UNITY OF RELIGIONS

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Abstract

This essay describes Ibn ʿArabī's comprehensive views, captured in his important Futūḥāt *and* Fuṣūṣ, *on the concept of* waḥdat al-adyān, *the discrepancy of beliefs, and the* Shari'ah *as well as its juncture and its unity. Elaborated explanation in this paper is expected to result in a true understanding of this crucial issue, particularly the concept of religious pluralism in the discourse of Islamic studies. Ibn Arabī' extensively discusses religion in the sense of the "ideal" versus "historical" or "esoteric" versus "the exoteric". Ibn ʿArabi concludes that the absolute unity of religions may only occur within spiritual, ideal, or transcendental realm (or "esoteric"), which is beyond the formal form of religions. Hence, the transcendental unity of religions cannot be found in the formal form of religions nor in the* shari'ah.*

[Artikel ini mengulas pandangan Ibn ʿArabī' mengenai waḥdat al-adyān *seperti dijelaskan dalam dua bukunya;* Futūḥāt *dan* Fuṣūṣ, *dan perbedaan dan kesamaan antara iman dan shariah. Diharapkan diskusi artikel ini berkontribusi dalam kajian pluralisme, utamanya dalam disiplin studi Islam. Dalam diskusinya, Ibn Arabī' menjelaskan perbedaan 'ideal' dan 'historikal' atau antara 'esoterik' dan 'eksoterik'. Ibn ʿArabi berpendapat bahwa kemanunggalan agama-agama dapat dicapai melalui spiritualitas, ideal, atau dimensi transcendental (esoterik) yang ada di luar tampilan formal agama-agama. Dengan kata lain, kemanunggalan tersebut tidak akan ditemukan pada shari'ah.]*

A. Introduction

Waḥdat al-adyān (lit. the transcendental unity of religions) is one of most heatedly debated concepts while discussing religious pluralism in Islam.[1] Introduced by Ibn ʻArabī (1165-1240), this doctrine is regarded as in chorus with the concept of religious pluralism, while for the critics, this concept is deemed *kāfir* (infidel.) There are at least three factions of scholars responding to the concept of *waḥdat al-adyān*. The first group, which is represented by *inter alia* ʻAbd al-Raḥmān al-Wakīl, accuses that Sufis are deviating from the true way due to their idea of unity of religions. The 'unity of religions' implies that all religions are basically the one and they possess the same objective, i.e. God the One. Sufis, according to al-Wakīl, perceive *īmān* (belief) and *tawḥīd* (unity of God) as the same as *kufr* (infidel) and *shirk* (polytheism); and take Islam with its guidance and holiness as an equal of Majūsī (Zoroaster) with its aberrance and dirtiness. According to this group, the Sufis have diverged and transgressed from the true Islamic path since they maintain the idea of the unity of all religions.

The second group argues that, in fact, Sufis do not exhibit the idea of *waḥdat al-adyān*. Belonging to this group are Suʻād al-Ḥakīm, a Lebanese expert in Ibn ʻArabī, and several scholars of ISTAC (International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization), Malaysia, such as Sani Badron, Syamsudin Arif, Anis Malik Thoha, and a Malaysian senior thinker originated from Indonesia, Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas. This group believes that Ibn ʻArabī and Rūmī (1207-1273)—who are

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[1] His name is Abū ʻAbd Allāh Muḥammad Ibn al-ʻArabī al-Tāʼi al-Ḥātimī. He came to be called *Muḥy al-Dīn* (The Revivifier of the Religion), besides well-known as well as *al-Shaykh al-Akbar* (The Greatest Master). He was born in 1165 in Murcia in Andalusia (Spain). His father ʻAli Ibn Muḥammad is a very pious, and was apparently employed by Muḥammad Ibn Saʼid Ibn Mardanīsī, the ruler of the city. His mother, Nūr al-Anṣāriyyah, is someone who devoted her-life to God. Ibn ʻArabī died in Damascus in 1240. I think, the most representative biography of Ibn ʻArabī is the work of Claude Addas, *Ibn al-Arabī ou La quéte du Soufre Rouge* (Paris, 1989), translated into English by Peter Kingsley, *Quest for the Red Sulphur: Life of Ibn ʻArabi* (1993). Another biography explaining that Ibn ʻArabi was primarily a "mystic" is *Unlimited Mercifier: The Spiritual Life and Thought of Ibn ʻArabi* by Stephen Hirtenstein (1999).

considered as the follower of the *waḥdat al-wujūd* concept—actually never cling to the *waḥdat al-adyān* idea. According to them, Ibn 'Arabī and Rūmī still believe that Islam is the perfect religion, while at the same time both Sufis consider other religions are encompassing scandal, defect, and dishonor, since they are incomplete and incomprehensive. The two Sufis are not included in a pluralist group which performed reduction, as assumed by John Hick, and they never taught religious pluralism. Therefore, a claim that both Sufis, and others alike, uphold the notion of *waḥdat al-adyān,* is clearly erroneous. Al-Attas says that scholars who support the theory of religions' transcendental union have fallen into fatal mistakes inside their assumptions.

Different from the above groups, scholars of the third group insist that Ibn 'Arabī and Rūmī indeed embrace the concept of the unity of religions. Some supporters of this view, like Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Nicholson, Abū al-'Alā 'Afīfī, 'Abd Qādir Maḥmūd, Muṣṭafā Ḥilmī, Annemarie Schimmel, Henry Corbin, William C. Chittik[2], are convinced that Sufis draws attention to the esoteric dimensions of religious (*bāṭin*) and essence (*ḥaqīqa*). As a result, these basic dimensions prevail in all religions. They agree that the essential view of Ibn 'Arabī and Rūmī is inclusive, or even pluralist, towards other beliefs. Even though the two never clearly mention this term, *waḥdat al-adyān* is strongly embraced by the two,

Through this article, I will describe Ibn 'Arabī's comprehensive views on the concept of *waḥdat al-adyān;* the discrepancy of beliefs and *shari'ah* as well as its juncture and its unity, which is critically explained in his important *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* (The Meccan Openings) and *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* (The Ringstones of the Wisdoms). An accurate explanation will lead us to a true understanding of this crucial issue, particularly in relation with the concept of religious pluralism in the study of Islam.

B. The Causes of Differences in Religions and Beliefs

Ibn 'Arabī argued, that God (*al-Ḥaqq*) Himself is the first problem that made difference in this universe since the beginning of time when all is in the process of making. He said:

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[2] William Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds: Ibn al-'Arabi and the Problem of Religious Diversity* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1994), pp. 3 & 157.

God Himself is the first problem of diversity that has become manifest in the cosmos. The first thing that each existent thing looks upon is the cause of its own existence. In itself each thing knows that it was not, and that it then came to be through temporal origination. However, in this coming to be, the dispositions of the existent things are diverse. Hence they have diverse opinions about the identity of the cause that brought them into existence. Therefore the Real is the first problem of diversity in the cosmos.[3]

Ibn 'Arabī does not see the problem of diversity as a source of confusion or distress. On the contrary, he takes it as one of the many signs that God's mercy takes precedence over His wrath, leading to the ultimate happiness of all creatures. Hence he continues by mentioning "since God is root of all diversity of beliefs within the cosmos, and since it is He who has brought about the existence of everything in the cosmos in a constitution not possessed by anything else, everyone will end up with mercy."[4]

One of the central themes on Ibn 'Arabī's Sufism systematical thought is his doctrine of *tajallī*. This word usually translated by modern authors as "self-disclosure," "self-revelation," "self-manifestation," or "theophany." *Tajallī* is a concept about *Wujūd* (God) and the "cosmos" or "universe" as His creatures. God creates the universe to manifest the fullness of His own nature. As the famous *ḥadīth qudsi* expresses, God says, "I was a hidden treasure, so I wanted to be known; hence I created the creatures in order that I might be known." In other words, through the cosmos, *wujūd* discloses the infinite possibilities latent within itself. Yet it reaches a fullness of self-manifestation only through the perfect human being, since they alone actualize every ontological quality—every names and attributes of God. None other than perfect human being has reached the goal for which people were created: to manifest the form of God Himself.[5] Dara Shikoh (1615-1659), a well known Sufist from India, and the devotee of Ibn 'Arabī's *waḥdat al-wujūd*, states that God manifests pervasively in everything; *everything has emanated from Him*. God

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[3] Ibn 'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*, Maḥmūd Maṭrajī (ed.), 8 volume (Bairut: Dār al-Fikr, 2002), vol. VI, p. 303. Further it is abbreviated as *Futūḥāt*.

[4] See also Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds*, pp. 4-5.

[5] Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds*, p. 29.

is the Beginning and the End, nothing exist but Him.[6]

Ibn ‘Arabi divides *tajallī* into *ghaybi* (invisible) and *shahāda* (visible). On *tajallī shahāda*,[7] a servant is responding to His manifestation in proportion to his/her knowledge capacity. That knowledge capacity is depending on "particular preparedness" (*al-isti‘dād al-juz’ī*) of individuals as a manifested form of "universal preparedness" (*al-isti‘dād al-kullī*) or "eternal preparedness" (*al-isti‘dād al-azalī*) that exist from the beginning of time in "immutable entities" (*al-a‘yān al-thābitah*) as self-disclosure (*tajallī*) *al-Ḥaqq.* Thus, God reveal Himself to His servant in congruous with his readiness to achieve His knowledge, of which He is being "perceived" or "limited" by his own knowledge. The Qur’an stated that God gives preparedness (*al-isti‘dad*)[8], revealing the veil (*ḥijāb*) between His servant and Himself. Thus the servant saw Him in his own perception.[9] The servant sees nothing of the Real, save his own form.[10] Therefore, what he/she witnesses is God in his/her perception.[11]

In the context of religious pluralism, the matters of *tajallī* feature axiomatic understanding that religious pluralism is a natural consequence of the infinite appearance of God's emanation. The One God or The One Essence is the cause of various different beliefs (*mu‘taqadāt*). However, it could be said that those beliefs bound God to *tajallī* in different forms.[12] It is a kind of eternal cycles of *tajallī* between God and mankind's beliefs. From mortal's side, plurality of religion and beliefs are simultaneous steps of "preparedness" (*al-isti‘dād*) or "receiving" (*qabūl*) of each creatures or phenomenal world to become his *maḥall* or locus of His manifestation.[13]

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[6] Muhammad Dara Shikuh, *Majma’ al-Baḥrain or The Mingling of The Two Oceans: Text and Translation*, M. Mahfuz-Ul-Haq (trans.)(New Delhi: Adam Publisher, 2006), p. 37.

[7] Ibn ‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam,* Abū al-‘Alā ‘Afīfi (ed.) (Bairut: Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī, 1980), vol. I, pp. 120-21. ‘Afīfī, "Ta‘līqāt," in Ibn ‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ,* vol. II, p. 145. Compare with Toshihiko Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism: A Comparative Study of Key Philosophical Concepts* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983), pp. 43-44.

[8] That verse said: *"He Who gave to each (created) thing its form and nature" Tāhā*: 50.

[9] Ibn ‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ,* vol. I, p. 121.

[10] Ibn ‘Arabi, *Futūḥāt*, Vol. V, p. 485.

[11] Kautsar Azhari Noer, *Tasawuf Perenial: Kearifan Kritis Kaum Sufi* (Jakarta: Penerbit Serambi, 2003), p. 97.

[12] Ibn ‘Arabī, *Futūḥāt,* vol. I, pp. 302-03.

[13] The word "*yaqbalu*" and its *maṣdar* "*al-qabūl*" and "*al-isti‘dād*" in the context of *tajallī* are mention in many places in *Futūḥāt* and *Fuṣūṣ*. In *Futūḥāt* for instance is

In other words, the existence of religious pluralism in the world is the direct consequence of the creature's difference in "preparedness" or "capacity" to receive His *tajallī*. Thus, when God reveals Himself, the weight that someone receives from His revelation will be determined by his "preparedness" to contain it.

Ibn 'Arabī associates *tajallī* with the diverse ways of prophets and apostles (*shari'ah)* to lead mankind to God. Due to their different *shari'as*, His *tajallī* are as diverse as delivered by God. Thus, the form of diverse *shari'ah* is caused by the difference in divine relations (*al-nisab al-ilāhiyyah*). One religious community has its own distinct divine relation with others' religious communities since indeed its *shari'ah* is different.[14] Hence, for Ibn 'Arabī, the *tajallī* process cannot be separated with the way mankind responds. There is an interaction between *tajallī* and its responses; that interaction resulted a form of *i'tiqād* (belief) that always congruent with His *tajallī*. Therefore, to Ibn 'Arabī , for someone who believed that God is in the form of nature, or else, that is how God wills *tajallī*.[15] As each of His *tajallī* is once and never repetitious, so it can be said that each of religions is one and exclusive in its nature, it is distinctive in one and another.[16] However, that distinction or difference is not absolute, because essentially and naturally one and another are one, connected, juncture, and even united.

Ibn 'Arabī frequently refers to Imam Junayd's (a prominent Sufi master of Baghdad d. 910) metaphorical view, that "the water takes on the color of the cup."[17] According to Syafa'atun, the love of Ibn 'Arabī with this metaphor does not mean that he sees all religions have the same meaning. Ibn 'Arabī' interprets it as an affirmation that if water is representing God's essence, hence the diverse religions are represented by the colors of its vessel. Accordingly, colors are directly connected with the "preparedness" of certain religions to receive particular manifestation from *al-Ḥaqq*. For that reason, there are some religions that

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mentioned in vol. I, pp. 641-42, pp. 645-46; vol. IV, pp. 338, 434, 441; vol. V, pp. 254, 516. On *Fuṣūṣ* for instance is mentioned in vol. I, pp. 120-21.

[14] Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt,* vol. I, p. 603.

[15] Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt,* vol. VI, p. 212.

[16] Syafa'atun Almirzanah, *Paths To Dialogue: Learning from Great Masters* (Herndon: USA: IIIT, 2009), p. 93. Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt* , vol. I, p. 603.

[17] Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ,* vol. I, pp. 225-26. Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt,* vol. I, pp. 641-42.

are monochromatic (limited in color) or even blurry in its nature. There are also religions that have bright and same hue, but others have different tone and quality, and so on and so forth.[18] Syafa'atun's interpretation is seemingly based on others Ibn 'Arabī's sight. Ibn 'Arabī says that He who reveals himself as He himself is one in his entity, but the revealed-self or its forms (for example plurality of religions) is various depending on the readiness of its containers to receive His *tajallī*.[19]

Henceforth, when God reveals one of His *tajallī* forms, what certainly happens is the diverse (partial) forms of revelation according to various contexts in which the revelation descends to. In this context, Ibn 'Arabi explains his traditional perception that *shari'ah* given to certain prophets is attached to the space and time elements, thus differentiation is inevitable. This is natural since religion is not revealed on an empty historical space. Religious *shari'ah* is nonetheless a response to the epochal condition and situation. Hasan Hanafi, an Egyptian Muslim intellectual, said that revelation is not something that outside the unchangeable and solid context but it is inside the ever changeable one.[20] Therefore, diverse race, nation, tribe and even different space and time requires the distinction of *shari'ah*. Consequently, there are no single and universal teaching that can possibly be used on any epochal situation and condition.

C. One God with Many Names

From perennial perspectives, mankind denote the One and absolute God with different names and terms but substantially it refers to the same Essence. It is because of His function and position as the Creator and Master of this universe or God as the absolute form and as He-Who-is-Known, mankind makes Him as the object of worship. On *tanzīh* level, God is believed as something far away and unreachable (transcendent), but on the *tashbīh* level, He is altogether within man, here inside his/her-self (immanent). Because That One and Absolute cannot be conquered by every limitation of human's reason capacity, His manifestation can only be grasped through symbols or names that mankind makes it sacred

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[18] Almirzanah, *Paths To Dialogue,* p. 91.

[19] Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt,* vol. I, p. 646. Syafa'atun Almirzanah, *Paths To Dialogue,* p. 91.

[20] Hasan Hanafi, *Dirāsāt Islāmiyyat* (Miṣr: Maktabah al-Anjalu al-Miṣriyyah, n.d.), p. 71.

later on, thus the birth of plural Gods.

In clasical Islamic theology, there is a debate amongst the scholars whether *name (ism)* is identical with "*object named*" (*al-musammā*). For Ibn 'Arabī, name and object named can be the same entity, but at the same time it is not. There are two important explanation about this matter. First, each of the name is one and the same with other names as long as those names refers to the same Essence, even though those names appear in contradiction, such as God is both Forgiving (*al-ghafūr*) and Vengeful (*al-muntaqim*), Life-giver (*al-muḥyi*) and Slayer (*al-mumīt*), and Exalter (*al-mu'izz*) and Abaser (*al-mudhill*). All of those are identical. Second, on the contrary, each name is independent and solitary as if one has its own diverse realities. For instance, "*al-ghafūr*" is different from "*al-muntaqim*" and "*al-mu'izz*" is different from "*al-mudhill*." First comprehension shows that names conceive a unity (*aḥadiyyah*), and the second shows that names conceive a plurality (*kathrah*). In other word, God's names conceive unity and plurality altogether. Ibn 'Arabī said:

> The names of the names are diverse only because of the diversity of their meanings (*ma'nā*). Were it not for that, we would not be able to distinguish among them. They are one in God's eye, but many in our eyes.[21]

According to Ibn Arabī, the unity of God from the point of His Essence is free and clean from plurality (*al-kathrah*), but at the same time His unity from the point of his names conceives plurality (*al-kathrah*). Ibn 'Arabi states, "God in His-self only has "Unity of the One" (*aḥadiyat al-aḥad)*, but from his names, He has "Unity of Manyness" (*aḥadiyat al-kathrah*)."[22] In other words, the unity of God from the point of divine names is "unity of manyness," and God's unity from the point of no name is "unity of the One" or "unity of the Entity" (*aḥadiyat al-'ayn*). Both of them are known as "name of the One."[23]

Explaining on the subject of the one and the many, Frithjof Schuon argues that the statement of *lā ilāha illa Allāh* (there is no God but God) denotes the real existence is God only. Consequently, everything is God. Nevertheless, we as a creation see the multiply of this world which in fact there is only the One Reality. Plurality or diversity is not against *unity*

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[21] Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt,* vol. IV, p. 119.

[22] Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt,* vol. VI, p. 302.

[23] Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ,* p. 105.

but *it is within it and not alongside it*.[24] To Schuon, plurality as "the many" is the *outward aspect* of this realm. Thus, it is essential to perceive *inward reality* as the essence from which the various genus and forms emerge.[25] In other words, without plurality or "the many" the deepest reality of the One (or Divine Reality) will never be known by the creature.

Ibn 'Arabī's explanation on the One (*al-wāḥid*) and the Many (*al-kathīr*) indeed is identical with his view on *tajallī*. The One emanates or *tajallī* and becomes many, unlimited, and uncountable by human mind. His diverse *tajallī* in phenomenal world is in fact still in the One Essence. It is also true that many God's names actually will goes back to the One Essence.[26] Again Ibn 'Arabī stated: "Although the Real is One, beliefs present Him in various guises."[27] In this context, it can be said that every religion has special names to evoke or call out Him. Thus mankind know the names such as *God*, *Lord*, *Yahweh*, *Father*, *Allah*, *Tao*, *Thian*, *Brahman*.[28] Therefore, within the ontological system of Ibn 'Arabī, those names are one and the same as long as it refers to His Essence or Substance that concieves a unity (*aḥadiyyah*). However, according to each meaning, quality or reality of those names are diverse (*kathrah*).

D. Paths to God

Religion is simply interpreted as a path to God. Religion in the Qur'an is *shir'a*, *sabīl* or *subul*, *ṣirāṭ*, *ṭarīqah*, and *mansak*. Despite varied paths, the path to God is only one, but it has lot of tracks. However, *al-Fātiḥa* mentions three different paths in the verses, "guide us on (1) the straight path, the path of those whom Thou hast blessed, not (2) [the path] of those against whom Thou art wrathful, nor (3) of those who are astray." One of these paths is straight and two are crooked. Yet, from a certain point of view, all paths are "straight," since each has been laid

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[24] Frithjof Schuon, "The Quintessential Esoterism of Islam," in Jean Louis Michon and Roger Gaetani (eds.), *Sufism: Love and Wisdom* (Bloomington: World Wisdom, Inc., 2006), pp. 258-59.

[25] Frithjof Schuon, "The Quintessential Esoterism of Islam," p. 259.

[26] Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ,* vol. I, 124 & 177.

[27] Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt,* vol. VIII, p. 196. See also Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds*, p. 163.

[28] In Hinduism, as elucidate in Rig Veda, there is a phrase: "God-the Absolute-Truth is One, sages call Him by many names." See Diana L. Eck, *Encountering God: A Spiritual Journey from Bozeman to Banaras* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), p. 54 & 63.

down by the command. All paths come from God, and would lead back to Him. All paths are "good," since there is no evil in existence.[29]

Through his *Futūḥāt,* Ibn 'Arabī discusses five of these paths. First is the path of Allah (*sirāṭ Allāh*) in which there are different paths that lead the traveler to God, either revealed *shari'ah* divine or products of human thought; everything will be up to God.[30] In this path, if the servant follows the Lord's command, he will be safe and happy. Conversely, if he is reluctant to follow all His commands and prohibitions, he will be tortured in hell. In other words, in *sirāṭ Allāh,* God calls human being to follow His prescriptive command (*al-amr al-taklīfī*), and the obedience to this command will bring the human being to felicity in the *barzakh* and beyond. But humans have the freedom to choose whether he would live to obey or disobey that prescriptive command. Second is a glorious path (*sirāt al-'izzah*) or the path of inaccessible (*sirāṭ al-'azīz*). This is the path of purification (*tanzīh*). Someone will not get to this path unless he who has purified himself from the desire to be a Lord or respectable (*sayyid*).[31] Third is the path of the Lord (*sirāṭ al-rabb*).[32] Fourth is the path of the blessing (*sirāṭ al-ni'am*) or the path of the Blessing-giver (*sirāṭ al-mun'im*). This is the path that was awarded the guidance of Allah; the path once traveled by the prophets Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. Therefore, Ibn 'Arabī calls this path as a comprehensive road taken by every prophet and apostle in upholding religion and caring for the umma's harmony.[33]

The fifth is a unique or specific path (*sirāṭ khāṣ*), i.e. the path of the Prophet Muhammad. The Qur'an names it as a strong rope of God. According to Ibn 'Arabī, the prophet Muhammad is the last prophet; the *imām* or leader of the prophets and apostles, even the master of all mankind on the day of resurrection. The obligation of the Muslims to follow the straight path and leave the other ones is expressed by God in His word, "And this is My straight path, so follow it, and follow not diverse roads, lest they scatter you from its road." (*al-An'ām*: 153). Straight path is also shown by the Prophet Muhammad. He made a straight line

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[29] Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1989), p. 301.

[30] Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt,* vol. VI, p. 210.

[31] *Ibid,*. p. 212.

[32] *Ibid,*. p. 214.

[33] *Ibid,*. p. 215.

on the ground and some of the other lines on the right and the left. Then, he put his finger on the line as he read the verse, "Verily, this is a straight path, so follow it, and follow not diverse roads (while pointing to the lines that are on the right and left of the line straight), 'cause they scatter you from His right way (pointing to a straight line)."[34] Ibn ʿArabī names this path as the road of felicity (*ṭarīq al-saʿādah*),[35] as opposed to the road of suffering (*ṭarīq al-shaqāwah*) endured by non-Islamic adherents,[36] even though all paths lead to God.

Ideally, however, Muslims should follow a unique and still narrower path. This is the "path of Muhammad" as set down in the guidance that is given exclusively to him, the Qur'an. It leads to the specific form of mercy and felicity that God has singled out for the followers of Islam. At the same time, because of the all-embracing nature of the Quranic revelation, it includes within itself the paths of all the previous prophets.[37] As the Ibn ʿArabi writes:

> The Muhammadan leader chooses the path of Muhammad and leaves aside the other paths, even though he acknowledges them and has faith in them. However, he does not make himself a servant except through the path of Muhammad, nor does he have his followers make themselves servants except through it. He traces the attributes of all paths back to it, because Muhammad's revealed religion is all-inclusive. Hence the property of all the revealed religions has been transferred to his revealed religion. His revealed religion embraces them, but they do not embrace it.[38]

In short, even though all paths lead to God, but "The road of felicity is set down by revealed religion (*shari'ah* of Muhammad), nothing else." When discussing the relationship between Islam and the previous revealed religion, Ibn ʿArabī makes metaphor of the sun and stars. He says, all the revealed religions (*sharāʾiʿ*) are light. Among these religions, the revealed religion of Muhammad is like the light of the sun among the lights of the stars. When the sun appears, the lights of the stars are hidden, and their lights are included in the light of the sun.[39] For Ibn ʿArabī, the

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[34] *Ibid.*, p. 131; vol. III, p. 391.

[35] *Ibid.*, vol. VI, pp. 224-25.

[36] *Ibid.*, vol. III, pp. 263-64; vol. VI, p. 225.

[37] Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds*, p. 145.

[38] Ibn ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, vol. VI, p. 210. See also Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds*, p. 145.

[39] Ibn ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt,* vol. V, p. 295.

coming of Islam means abrogating (*naskh*) the previous revealed religion because they take place through Muhammad's *shari'ah*. Nevertheless, they do in fact exist, just as the existence of the light of the stars is actualized. All of Muslims have been required in all-inclusive religion to have faith in the truth of all the messengers and all the revealed religion. Ibn 'Arabī states that they are not rendered null (*bāṭil*) by abrogation—that is the opinion of the ignorant.[40]

At the same time, Ibn 'Arabī is not afraid of attacking leaders of the People of the Book (*Ahl al-Kitāb*). By referring to the Qur'an, Ibn 'Arabī criticizes those leaders that they have sold the verses of the Lord for a low price by doing *tabdīl* (changing) and *takhrīf* (distortions) for the sake of wealth and social status as religious leaders.[41] In addition, Ibn 'Arabī also sharply criticizes the stories contained in the Bible that many Christians and Jews blemish and record wrong stories, such as the scandal of the prophets.[42] For Ibn 'Arabī, the stories would be inappropriate to be attributed to God and His apostles, not even a single text in the Qur'an and hadith that tells the similar. Islam, says Ibn 'Arabī, always encourages respect for the prophets, and maintains a sense of shame to God. For Ibn 'Arabī those stories are an "accidents" and "disasters" based on a faulty interpretation and invalid sources, i.e. as products of the minds of Jewish people.[43]

On the further theological (exoterical) views, Ibn 'Arabī blames the Jewish and Christian religious institutions as polytheistic religion, associated other gods with Allah (*shirk*). He accuses the Jews and the Christians as infidels because of their claim that they are children of God and His beloved.[44] The Jews have lied by accusing Mary as adulterous and Jesus as an "illegitimate son." Ibn 'Arabī again convicts the Christians as infidels; lying, exaggerating in religion, rude, and blind of the truth. It is because they believe that Jesus had two natures: the son of a man (Joseph) and the son of God as well, and Jesus is God.[45] In some parts of the *Futūḥāt*, Ibn 'Arabī mentions that the belief in the Trinity is a pagan,

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[40] Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt,* vol. V, p. 295. See also Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds*, p. 125.
[41] Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt,* vol. VIII, p. 432.
[42] *Ibid.,* vol. III, p. 463.
[43] *Ibid.*, p. 463.
[44] *Ibid.,* vol. V, p. 313.
[45] *Ibid.,* vol. VII, p. 214. 'Afifi, "Ta'līqāt," in Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, vol. II, p. 145.

false, and heretical,[46] as well as a cult of Mary. The crucifixion of Jesus has never happened, and all the views about the crucifixion and the claims of the Israelites who have killed Jesus are a lie, very weak and unfounded.[47] For Ibn ʿArabī, the prophet ʿIsā died because of natural causes and not crucified.[48] Jesus is also not the son of God as the Christians claimed. This claim is equally erroneous to the claim of Jewish people that Uzayr is children of God.[49]

The explanation above shows that as both Sufi and theologian, Ibn ʿArabī clearly shows his determination that the best road to God with its felicity and blessing is the path or *shariʾah* of Prophet Muhammad. Although he adopts the idea of the transcendental unity of religions, as we shall see, he remains faithful to the *shariʾah*. He does not embrace "inner religion" and does not create "new religion" with his concept about *waḥdat al-adyān*. Even though he believes that there is no aberration in the level of "ideal religion," he criticises the "historical religions" perceives them as being deviated, turning away from the "original" and "ideal" path.

E. The Unity of Essence and the Religion of Love

Indeed, Ibn ʿArabī never mentions the term of the unity of religions (*waḥdat al-adyān*). Nevertheless, his explanation on the unity of Essences, Form, and Source may indicate or prove the existence of the idea of transcendental unity of religions. As far as the concept of the unity of essence concerned, it compromises four. *First*, through the doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd*, Ibn ʿArabī' believed that The Essence is One. All diverse creation are coming out and back to Him. From the side of creation, the manifestation that is seen is many and diverse. Ibn ʿArabī said, "the Essence is One, but its law are varies, therefore various *rūḥ* (spirit) and form existed,"[50] or "the Essence is one, but its law are varies, those are unseen but for someone who knew."[51]

The Essence has two meanings: first that God himself is the source of everything, and second as the source or origin of diverse

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[46] *Ibid.,* vol. VI, p. 365; vol. VII, p. 171; vol. VIII, p. 155 & 177.

[47] *Ibid.,* vol. VII, p. 214.

[48] *Ibid.,* vol. IV, pp. 30-31.

[49] *Ibid.,* vol. IV, p. 61.

[50] *Ibid.,* vol. IV, p. 43.

[51] *Ibid.,* vol. VI, p. 240.

forms of phenomenon that just like the essence of light or water which takes many difference shapes. The Essence of both is one; enumeration is not possible but its appearance or vessel might vary. This one Essence manifests into ninety-nine names. The whole names are one and the same in its essence. At the same time, those names are also conceived diversity (*kathrah*), independent; solitary; have its own different realities in each of it. Here, they are seen as many (*kathīr*). So far one can see that Ibn ʻArabī's idea of the unity of Essence is identical with his doctrine of *tajallī*. Therefore, religions are only different and even contradictory on its forms, manifestations or appearances. Essentially, they are one and the same from One and the Same God. The unity of religions means the unity of the essence of religions.

Second is the unity of its end. Ibn ʻArabī argues that at the point of end, its estuary is the same. Since all of religions essentially are coming from the one and the same God. Ibn ʻArabī affirms that all of the believers shall lead to the same end: God. Thus, all of the different forms of religions are always in the frame of God's grace. Therefore, all believers will end happily because of His grace that forgives all of their conception of God and the forms of their worship.[52]

Third is the unity of the path or *shari'ah*. Ibn ʻArabī argues that all *shari'ah* that is sent to messengers and prophets are in its essence truly from the same source and also have the same spirit. The *shari'ah* of messengers and prophets come from one original *shari'ah*. As what the Prophet SAW says in hadits Bukhārī: *al-anbiyā' dīnuhum wāḥid...kulluhu min ʻindi Allāh*.[53] ʻAfifi and Addas stated that Ibn ʻArabī's philosophical Sufism system, ideas and arguments echoes the teaching of 10th century scholars Ikhwān al-Ṣafā. Ikhwān stated that The Religion (*al-dīn*) is only one. *Al-dīn* in this context is understood as in its original essence that is followed by all of the prophets and messengers. Whereas *shari'ah* containing order, prohibition, and guidance must differ in many ways because one and another has its own different socio-cultural contexts.[54] Likewise, Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, five centuries before Ibn Arabi, a prominent Qur'an's interpreter and historian, quoted Qatādah (d.117 H), mentioned

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[52] *Ibid.,* vol. VI, p. 31.

[53] *Ibid.,* vol. VI, p. 31.

[54] Ikhwān al-Ṣafā, *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā* (Qum: Maktab al-Aʻlām al-Islāmī, 1405 H), pp. 486-87.

religion (*dīn*) is one, but its *shari'ah* is always different (*al-dīn wāḥid wa al-sharī'ah mukhtalifah*).[55] A distinguished Shi'ite *Mufassir,* Ṭabāṭabā'ī, also confirms that Allah ordered His servants to worship Him with "One Religion," which is a religion that surrenders to Him (*al-islām lahū*). However, to achieve that Allah made different ways according to their own characteristics.[56] For Ibn 'Arabī, though their *shari'ah* are diverse, mankind are instructed to live in unity, harmonious, and firm in obeying their *shari'ah*.[57]

Ibn 'Arabi also explains this original "unity of *shari'ah*" as he elucidates verse (*al-Mā'ida*: 48) saying, "for each We have appointed a divine law *(shir'ah)* and a traced-out way *(minhaj)*...." from this original *shir'ah* emerges diverse *shari'ah* models (*min hādhihi al-sharī'ah jā'a shir'ukum*). That origin *shir'ah* or *ṭarīqah,* according to Ibn 'Arabī, is like a tree from where the branches grow or like Moses that suckled from his mother's breast. The source of the motherness of Moses' mother is at her willingness to feed him, not because she delivered him.[58] There is a law of rightful (*ḥalāl*) in the *shari'ah* of one prophet, but not for others. Nevertheless, what this *shari'ah* means here is the institutional form.[59] According to 'Afifi the version of original unity of *shari'ah* of Ibn 'Arabī is "*shari'ah*" that is beyond the categorization of *ḥalāl* and *ḥarām*; it might be called as *waḥdat al-wujūd shari'ah*, which gives acknowledgment that God, *al-Ḥaqq,* shall receive every deed and believe under His consenting.[60]

The categorization of *ḥalāl* and *ḥarām* within diverse *shari'ah* is

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[55] Muḥammad Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān fī Ta'wīl al-Qur'ān* (Bairut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1999), vol. IV, p. 610. The statement that the religion of prophets are one is statement in one of Muhammad's hadits, "Verily we are group of prophets, our religions are one..., the prophets are one father with different mothers." See Ibn Taymiyyah, *Iqtiḍa al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm* (Bairut: Dār al-Fikr, n.d.), pp. 454-6.

[56] Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *Al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* (Bairut: Dār al-Fikr, n.d.), vol. V, p. 361.

[57] Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt,* vol. VI, p. 215.

[58] Ibn 'Arabī's Allegory is based on the argument that the function of mother as the birth giver is the inevitable mandate and the nature of women. Meanwhile, breast feeding is a choice that may or may not be done but has the very essential function, namely gives life to the baby. Therefore, Ibn 'Arabī said, "*fa 'ummuhā 'alā al-ḥaqīqah man arḍa'athu lā man waladathu.*" Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ,* vol. I, pp. 201-02.

[59] Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ,* vol. I, p. 201.

[60] 'Afifi, "Ta'līqāt," in Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ,* vol. II, pp. 300-1.

only in its *form* (*ṣūrah*), not in its essence or source. Ibn ʿArabī points out this original or essential *shirʿah* as *al-ṭarīq al-umam* (the path of *umma* or religious community) or the straight path that is taken on by many diverse believers.[61] ʿAfifi names that path as the path of *waḥdat al-wujūd* (the unity of Existence) and *waḥdat al-maʿbūd* (the unity of the worshiped), following Ibn ʿArabī's doctrine that there is no worshiped except He who reveals Himself into many forms of worshipful tributes.[62]

As the whole paths lead to God, hence forms of worshipful tributes -from the coarse form such as idols to the most abstract of religiously philosophical ideas- all are leading to God. Therefore, in the light of Ibn ʿArabī, ʿAfifi argues that monotheism, polytheism, henotheism, and other models of beliefs are one universal religion. The difference between monotheism and polytheism, in Ibn ʿArabī's theory, is just a matter of a logical difference between The One and the Many.[63] A person becomes polytheist only if he/she fails to understand or realize the Absolute union of the whole. The polytheist believes that The One Existence is divided and then worship it. In fact, Ibn ʿArabī argues, "there is no ally to God," and the ally of worshiper is not The Essence. The idols whom they are worshiping are none other than the manifestation of God.[64]

Ibn ʿArabī further comment on the verse, "Thy Lord hath decreed, that ye worship none save Him,"(*al-Isrāʾ*: 23), unlike the common understanding, "that you should not worship others than Allah," but "Any things that you are worshiping, you are (actually) not worshiping other than Allah, as there is no other than Him in any existence that exist."[65] Therefore, in ʿAfifi exegesis, Ibn ʿArabī does not refuse polytheism as long as the worshiper of idols really conscious that their "gods" are merely manifestation (*majlā*) or forms (*wujūh*) of Reality (the True God).[66] The doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd* is also believed by Aḥmad Amīn, he argues that the difference of religions is only in the outer aspect, as in its inner or

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[61] *Ibid.,* p. 1.

[62] *Ibid.,* p. 5.

[63] ʿAfifi, *The Mystical Philosophy of Muḥyid-Dīn Ibnul-ʿArabī* (Lahore: SH Muhammad Ashraf, 1964), p. 149.

[64] Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ,* vol. I, p. 190.

[65] *Ibid.,* p. 72. Ibn ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt,* vol. IV, p. 549.

[66] ʿAfifi, *The Mystical Philosophy of Muḥyid-Dīn Ibnul-ʿArabī,* p. 149.

essential aspect of all men, whatever of their religion, are going through the way to God. The different paths are not important anymore, as the end of the goal is one: love the One God.[67]

A Sufi master, 'Abd al-Qādir Maḥmūd, has a similar perspective. According to Maḥmūd, the strong concept of Ibn 'Arabi's *waḥdat al-wujūd* in its turn delivering the concept of *waḥdat al-adyān* (the unity of religions). Because all existences is God's *tajallī*, therefore, then all of them, not least, are worshiping The One God. The aim of those rituals is none other than to find His essence of Essence. The wrong form of ritual is reducing God only into one model of worshiping His manifestation.[68] In other words, one should be conscious that his worshiping form (*shari'ah*) is just one of other forms of worshiping as it is His diverse manifestations.

In the context of the original unity of *shari'ah*, Nasr perceives that Ibn 'Arabī's doctrine of *logos*, developed further by al-Jīlī, implicitly contains the universality of revelation principle. Prophet or religious founder is one aspect of the ultimate or universal *logos* (*uncreated logos*); each of them are an historical "*logos*" (*created logos*).[69] Each of historical *logos* brings teachings (*shari'ah*) which are different from one to another, but at the same time, the same as coming from the universal *logos*.[70]

As there is the original unity of *shari'ah*, it implies the existence of the original unity of scripture. According to Ibn 'Arabī, from the side of the source of God's words (*kalām*) all scriptures are equal. There is no most prime (*mufāḍalah*) between one and another since all scriptures are from the same source: the One (*al-kutub kulluhā min al-Wāḥid*). However, Ibn 'Arabī immediately states that Qur'an is the most comprehensive and complete in its historical level.[71] However, it is worth noting that the Qur'an is deemed to verify (*muṣaddiqan*) and support or look after (*muhaiminan 'alayhi*) earliest scriptures (*ṣuḥuf*). Hazrat Inayat Khan (1882-

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[67] Aḥmad Amīn, *Zuhr al-Islām* (Bairut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, n.d.), vol. IV, p. 165.

[68] 'Abd al-Qādir Maḥmūd, *al-Falsafah al-Ṣūfiyyah fī al-Islām: Maṣādiruhā wa Nazariyyātuhā wa Makānatuhā min al-Dīn wa al-Ḥayāt* (Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabī, n.d.), pp. 516-8.

[69] Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Three Muslims Sages: Avicena-Suhrawardi-Ibn 'Arabi* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), p. 116.

[70] Detail explanation of Logos sees William Stoddart, "Aspect of Islamic Esoterism," in Jean Louis Michon and Roger Gaetani, (eds.), *Sufism: Love and Wisdom*, pp. 237-49.

[71] Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt,* vol. VIII, p. 209.

1927), a prominent modern Sufi from India who had tediously spread the message of peace for humanity through Sufism, also resounds the inner unity of the holy scriptures. He resounds that inner sound of all scriptures is one and the same; they are coming from God with the same message, the realization of union. [72]

Fourth, transcendent unity of religions is found in the religion of love. Ibn ʿArabī's religion of love is always based on his famous poem:

> My heart is capable of every form:
> a meadow for gazelles,
> a cloister for monks,
> For the idols, sacred ground,
> *Ka'ba* for the circling pilgrim,
> the tables of the Torah,
> the scrolls of the Qur'an.
> I profess the religion of love;
> wherever its caravan turns along the way,
> that is the belief,
> the faith I keep.
> Like *Bishr*,
> Hind and her sister,
> love-mad Qays and his lost Láyla,
> Máyya and her lover Ghaylá [73]

From the above poet, Nicholson said, Ibn ʿArabī proclaims that there is no religion more noble than the religion of love and possessing God. The whole essence of the creed is love. Ibn ʿArabī and all true mystics are able to accept any of the beliefs and their believers' perception on what they assumed.[74] Therefore, through *waḥdat al-wujūd*, one shall find out that love of God is the basis of all forms of worship. ʿAfifi claims that "worshipping means loving the object of worshipped, and love is a

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[72] Hazrat Inayat Khan, *The Unity of Religious Ideals* (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1974), p. 12.

[73] Ibn ʿArabī, *The Tarjumān al-ʿAshwāq*, translated by Nicholson (London: Theosophical Publishing House Ltd., 1978), p. 19.

[74] Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam* (London: Routledge and Keagan Paul Ltd., 1966), p. 105.

principle that impregnates and binds both of them".[75]

Quoting the verse of *al-Isrā*: 23, Ibn 'Arabī believes that there is no love but God. In reality only God that is loved by all of his creatures, but their names are a hindrance. One may name the object that they worshipped as Manāt, 'Uzzā and Lā.[76] Therefore, according to Ibn 'Arabī, an accomplished *'ārif* or one that has refined his knowledge and his *kashf*[77] is a man who sees God's essence in any of His appearances.[78] As Ibn 'Arabī recites:

> The creatures have knotted their beliefs
> Concerning God
> And I bear witness to everything
> They believe.
> When He appears to them in forms
> Through self-transmutation
> They state what they witness
> Not disclaiming Him...[79]

Ibn 'Arabī spiritually has witnessed God's Essence in any forms and beliefs of human's worship. In this state, his view is as an inclusive and even pluralist.[80] According to 'Abd Qādir Maḥmūd, Ibn 'Arabī's poem above is the inevitable consequence of his *waḥdat al-wujūd* idea. Through *waḥdat al-wujūd*, God as the Essence of all gods is worshipped by mankind in various forms and ways. According to Ibn 'Arabī, the meaning is no One is worshipped but is God is One, though human's perception and His appearance are diverse and varied.[81] The *'ārif* peoples, Ibn 'Arabī

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[75] 'Afīfī, *The Mystical Philosophy of Muḥyid-Dīn Ibnul-'Arabī*, p. 151.

[76] Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt,* vol. VII, p. 472.

[77] In *Futūḥāt* Ibn 'Arabī names it 'a perfect arif' (*al-'ārif al-kāmil*), but in *Fuṣūṣ* he call it 'a perfected 'arif' (*al-'ārif al-mukammal*). Both of this terms presumably referring to the same meaning: the perfect man (*al-insān al-kāmil*) that is one of the very important topics in Ibn 'Arabi system of Sufism.

[78] Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ,* vol. I, 195. Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt,* vol. V, p. 255; On the capability of an *ārif* about the one in the many or vice versa see William. C. Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God: Principle of Ibn al-'Arabī's Cosmology* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1998), p. 79.

[79] Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt,* vol. V, p. 255.

[80] 'Afīfī, "Ta'līqāt," in Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, vol. II, p. 289.

[81] 'Abd al-Qādir Maḥmūd, *al-Falsafah al-Ṣūfiyyah fī al-Islām,* p. 516.

mentioned, are able to accept various mode of beliefs (*'aqīda*). Apparently, they do not merely refer to Muslim Sufi, but all saintly people from all religions and traditions. The doctrine and practice of self-purifying, the closeness to the Absolute God, and objection to material world (*zuhd*) are profoundly found in all religious tradition.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr acknowledged Ibn 'Arabī's religion of love is not merely an emotion or a common feeling but the realization of *ma'rifat*, a spiritual knowledge on the unity of the essence of inner religions. On this esoteric level, no doubt, it takes place at the basic meeting of various religious traditions and even the inner union of all religious traditions.[82] According to Nasr, generally all of the Sufis are giving attention on the discourse of the inner unity of religions, but only Ibn Arabī who has given vast elucidation in details.[83] As with Nasr, Chittick, through his *Imaginal Worlds* (1994), comes up with the hypothesis that ontologically all forms of beliefs are true, no matter what the content are, as the entire things in this universe is depended on *al-Ḥaqq*. The emergence of various religions is caused by the will of *al-Ḥaqq,* as the Guide of mankind, to bring into their happiness and comprehensiveness. However, all manifestation of the ultimate guide is never totally pervading the truth; therefore each religion has its particular mode of expression than others.[84] Schuon further views that religions in its meaning as form have character of formal, particular, and limited, whereas God is the Absolute One and the Infinite. Based on this logic of divine transcendental, all forms and appearances of beliefs cannot assert themselves as the holder of the one absolute truth.[85] In fact, all religions are accommodating the Absolute Truth.

F.   Conclusion

The article offers an alternative way of reading Ibn 'Arabī's though by which it tries to bridge between two contrasting opinions and groups. The first group is the one that claims that Sufis have deviated and *kāfir*, for it similize all religions and forms a new religion by embracing a doctrine of unity of religions, as stated by 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Wakīl. The second

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[82]   Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Sufi Essays*, pp. 146-47.

[83]   Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Three Muslims Sages*, p. 116.

[84]   William C. Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds*, p. 139 & pp. 174-75.

[85]   Frithjof Schuon, *The Transcendent Unity of Religions* (Illinois USA: Theosophical Publishing House, 1984), pp. 18-19.

group is the one that claims that Ibn ʿArabī did not confess and taught the concept of religions' unity, as stated by Suʿād al-Ḥakīm, Sani Badron, Anis Malik Thoha, Syamsuddin Arif, Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas and Yūsuf Zaydān.

Both groups actually do not comprehensively analyze Ibn ʿArabī's concept on the unity of the religions. The above discussion however is againts the first group which claims that Ibn ʿArabī has already similized all religions, and similized a religion based on monotheism with a polytheism (*shirk*) religion, and finally tried to create 'a new religion' with carrying the concept of religions' unity. In fact, the first group actually does not have ample and intact understanding towards the whole views of Ibn ʿArabi, particularly in the context by which Ibn ʿArabī proposed the view of universal truth of religions and transcendental unity of religions. As with the first, the second group missunderstood Ibn ʿArabī's concept of the unity of religion. It is true that the unity is meant as the unity of *shari'ah*. But what he has purposed is the transcendental unity, while the religions' *shari'ah* (forms) are different, even are in conradiction one to another. Therefore, the second group has neglected Ibn ʿArabī who demonstrated his humanist and inclusive paradigms with regards to the principal truth of religions.

The discussion reveals that article is in accordance with the third group of scholars, mostly experts in Sufism and comparative religions. These scholars propose a theory that Ibn ʿArabī, Rūmī and Hallāj truly keep the concept of religions' transcendental unity, as acknowledged by Frithjof Schuon, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Nicholson, Abū al-ʿAlā ʿAfīfī, ʿAbd al-Qādir Maḥmūd, William Chittick, Schimmel, and Muṣṭafā Hilmī. In short, Ibn ʿArabi's stances toward other religions in the 13th centuries is humanist and unique. The more people understand the intersection and the essential unity of religions, the more they are open for dialogues with other different faiths. The more intense of the believers making encounter and dialogue, the more intense they will design humanitarian works to response actual issues that cannot be faced alone anymore.

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