



Waḥdat al-Wujūd in The Perspective of Shāh Walī Allāh Al-Dihlawī

Waḥdat al-Wujūd dalam Perspektif Shāh Walī Allāh Al-Dihlawī

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Abstract: *This article aims to analyze the thought of Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī as a Sufi who accepted the doctrine of waḥdat al-wujūd, and reinterpreted it philosophically. This research confirms that the idea of sufism of Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī cannot be separated from the falsafi style. This research uses a hermeneutic approach, which is a method used to uncover the meaning of writings that become primary and secondary sources, as well as understand various kinds of facts. The primary data sources of this research are the main works of Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī which are related to his sufism ideas. Primary data is supported by authoritative secondary data, of course, which is related to his tasawwuf thought. The findings in this study are that Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī asserts that Ibn ‘Arabi’s pantheistic union with God is an experiential, and not an ontological reality (union with the divine form). Waḥdat al-wujūd, ontologically, that the only Ultimate Being is God, other than Him is a relative or contingent being. This Ultimate Being benefits the contingent being through wujūd al-munbasit, which is the first emanation of the Ultimate Being. From this wujūd al-munbasit will give rise to other forms (maujūdāt). On that basis, nature was created through God’s tajallī.*

Keywords: Shāh Walī Allāh; Waḥdat al-wujūd; Tajalli A’dzam

Abstrak: Artikel ini membahas gagasan *wahdat al-wujūd* perspektif *Shāh Walī Allāh*, yang seringkali sebagian peneliti menganggap *Shāh Walī Allāh* menolak bahkan mengafirkan konsep tersebut. Penelitian ini, menggunakan pendekatan hermeneutik, yaitu metode digunakan untuk membongkar makna dari tulisan-tulisan yang menjadi sumber primer maupun sekunder, serta memahami berbagai macam fakta. Temuan dalam penelitian ini yaitu *Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī* menegaskan bahwa penyatuan panteistik Ibn Arabi dengan Tuhan adalah realitas pengalaman, dan bukan suatu realitas ontologis (penyatuan dengan wujud ilahi). *Wahdat al-wujūd*, secara ontologis, bahwa satu-satunya Wujud Yang Hakiki adalah Allah, selain-Nya adalah wujud nisbi atau kontingensi. Wujud Hakiki ini memberikan manfaat kepada wujud kontingensi melalui wujud *al-munbasit*, merupakan pancaran pertama dari Wujud Hakiki. Dari wujud *al-munbasit* ini akan memunculkan wujud-wujud yang lain (*maujūdāt*). Atas dasar itu, alam tercipta melalui tajalli Tuhan.

Kata Kunci: *Shāh Walī Allāh*; *Wahdat al-wujūd*; Tajalli A'dzam.

Introduction

The pioneer of the doctrine of *wahdat al-wujūd* is Ibn 'Arabī. For him, the notion of *wahdat al-wujūd*, teaches the relative forms (nature and humans) as a way into the Absolute Form (God). Simply put, God can be understood through nature and humans. Ibn 'Arabī is of the view that the nature of the existence of God, nature and humans is one at a certain level, especially because the three have a relationship (*niṣbah*) and interdependence (*idāfah*) as objects of knowledge. Here, Ibn 'Arabī never talks about the unity of God, nature and man in substance. He realizes that the substances of God, nature and humans will never be united, because if it is said to be united, it violates the laws of logic. What he emphasizes is unity as a source of knowledge.¹

According to Kautsar Azhari Noer, the doctrine of *wahdat al-wujūd* cannot be said to be a deviation from tawhid. Rather, the doctrine of *wahdat al-wujūd* is the highest expression of tawhid and true tawhid. Because, in the doctrine of *wahdat al-wujūd* God as the one and ultimate being, other than Him is relative. Nature has no existence except from God. Nature is nothing more than His appearance. Thus, *wahdat al-wujūd* has a strong position, as seen in his works, supported by, or sourced from the Qur'an and hadith.²

On the one hand, many scholars have criticized the doctrine of *wahdat al-wujūd*, one of which is Ibn Taimiyyah, who according to him has deviated from Islamic teachings. *Wahdat al-wujūd*, in Ibn Taimiyyah's view, does not believe that God is the creator and the created being, so it clearly denies the existence of **theaq** and the

creature. According to him, this understanding does not know the difference between God and His creatures, so it is clearly rejected by reason, the Qur'an and the hadith.³

In addition to Ibn Taimiyyah, there are also sufi scholars who are the most outspoken in criticizing *wahdat al-wujūd*, namely Aḥmad Sirhindī (d. 1034 /1625).⁴ According to him, Ibn 'Arabi's pantheist teachings were intertwined with Hindu Vedantism.⁵ In addition, Ibn 'Arabi's supporters, who are *fanatical* about *wahdat al-wujūd*, no longer believe in sharia as a source of laws and norms that must be implemented. They see the Shari'a as knowledge resulting from the construction of previous scholars, so there is a need for a new understanding and according to the context of the times. With such an attitude, Sirhindī responded and straightened out their various mistakes, especially understanding the principles of Sufism that are correct and in accordance with the Shariah.⁶

Sirhindī criticized Ibn 'Arabi based on two things. First, it is criticism on the basis of experience. Ibn 'Arabi built his Sufistic experience on the theory of *wahdat al-wujūd* which was more theoretical and philosophical in nature. For Sirhindī, philosophical doctrines cannot be obtained through mystical experience. Second, is the critique from a rational point of view. The theory of *wahdat al-wujūd* has erroneous results in the conception of being and non-being, the relationship between essence and names, as well as the attributes of God, and the identity of God with nature. In a sense, *wahdat al-wujūd* identifies the world with God. Therefore, Sirhindī promoted the idea of *wahdat al-shuhūd* which is based on the principle that form is an additional attribute to essence.⁷

In the dispute, then reconciled by Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī (hereinafter will be written al-Dihlawī). According to him, basically, the two concepts (*wahdat al-wujūd* and *wahdat al-shuhūd*) are the same, distinguishing only minor issues, such as divine attributes. Thus, al-Dihlawī's attempt to show that Sirhindī's philosophy is essentially the same as Ibn 'Arabi's, the differences are not important enough except for semantics.⁸ Al-Dihlawī reconciles the contradiction between the ontological monism of *wahdat al-wujūd*, which denies all existence except that of God, and proclaims the ultimate union between God and the universe with the experiential union of *wahdat al-shuhūd*, which asserts that Ibn 'Arabi's pantheistic union with God is an experiential rather than an ontological reality.⁹

Al-Dihlawī embraces the foundational idea of *wahdat al-wujūd*, which sees all existence as a manifestation of the one God. However, he also argues that this understanding must align with the moral and social responsibilities emphasized in Islamic teachings. For him, *wahdat al-wujūd* should be articulated in a way that respects the distinction between the Creator and creation, without undermining the values of *sharia* and the ethical principles of Islam.¹⁰

However, it is not uncommon for some researchers to consider that al-Dihlawī rejected the concept of *wahdat al-wujūd*. For instance, al-Sayalakūti believed that al-Dihlawī denied the doctrine of *tauhīd wujūdi*, viewing it as a form of *ilḥād* (atheism or anti-God).¹¹ Mana also expressed the opinion that al-Dihlawī criticized and even condemned the philosophical Sufism doctrine, including Ibn ‘Arabī’s teachings on *wahdat al-wujūd*. According to Mana, while al-Dihlawī initially followed Ibn ‘Arabī’s ideas, in his later views, he deemed the concept of *wahdat al-wujūd* as misguided.¹² The reason is that al-Dihlawī’s ideas were heavily influenced by Ibn Taimiyyah, who shared similar views and a common mission, namely to purify Islamic teachings from the influence of foreign doctrines.¹³

Nevertheless, according to Elizabeth Sirriyeh, al-Dihlawī deeply admired the intellectual prowess of Ibn Taimiyyah. While Ibn Taimiyyah was concerned about the corruption of faith through Jewish and Christian influences in Syria, al-Dihlawī was equally determined to eradicate Hindu influences in the Indian context. He agreed with Ibn Taimiyyah in his concerns over the theosophical ideas of Ibn ‘Arabī, which he considered potentially harmful. However, the key difference was that al-Dihlawī maintained a profound respect for *Sheikh al-Akbar* (Ibn ‘Arabī). Al-Dihlawī sought to identify the real challenges in the various misinterpretations of *wahdat al-wujūd* and the widespread misunderstanding of it, which led to the perception that Allah and the world are identical.¹⁴

As Baljon points out, there are differences between al-Dihlawī and Ibn Taimiyyah on certain points. For instance, Ibn Taimiyyah was outspoken in his criticism of philosophers and prominent sufi figures. However, in this regard, al-Dihlawī adopted a more moderate stance, even incorporating ideas from these figures that aligned with the spirit of Islam. The fundamental distinction between al-Dihlawī and Ibn Taimiyyah lies in their approach to harmonizing knowledge. Ibn Taimiyyah limited the integration of *aql* (reason) and *naql* (tradition), rejecting or dismissing speculative philosophy. He was also a staunch opponent of the doctrine of *wahdat al-wujūd*. In contrast, al-Dihlawī applied a coherent internalization of rational, traditional, and esoteric elements. He held Ibn ‘Arabī in high regard and even shared many views and characteristics with this *Sheikh al-Akbar*.¹⁵ In fact, during debates on *wahdat al-wujūd*, when al-Dihlawī was asked to express his opinion on the ontological ideas of Ibn ‘Arabī, his views were closely aligned with those of Ibn ‘Arabī. Thus, it is not surprising that al-Dihlawī, during his time in the Haramain, increasingly adopted the vocabulary of this mystic philosopher whom he greatly admired.¹⁶

This is further supported by Jalbani’s opinion that al-Dihlawī deeply admired Ibn ‘Arabī, and his ideas were heavily influenced by Ibn ‘Arabī. It is no surprise,

therefore, that his works are closely associated with philosophy, such as his two renowned treatises, *Lamaḥāt* and *Sata'at*, which discuss significant themes related to the philosophy of divinity.¹⁷

Therefore, this research is important to explore al-Dihlawī's ideas on *wahdat al-wujūd*. Although various studies have already discussed al-Dihlawī's ideas, such as:

Research written by Muhammad U. Farugue, "Sufism Contra Shariah? Shāh Walī Allāh's Metaphysics of *Wahdat al-wujūd*."¹⁸ An article that discusses the relationship between sufism and the Shari'a, focusing on *wahdat al-wujūd*. For Farugue, al-Dihlawī was very influenced by Ibn 'Arabī's thought, so that al-Dihlawī tried to reconcile the two doctrines of *wahdat al-wujūd* and *wahdat al-shuhūd*. Both are spiritual levels (*maqām*) towards Allah. *Wahdat al-wujūd* will refer to the state of *sakr* (drunkenness) in classical sufism. While the level of *wahdat al-shuhūd* is the level when a Sufi overcomes the state of *fanā* (dissolution) and is able to witness both unity and diversity, i.e. he does not lose sight that God and the world are separate, although the existence of the world depends on the existence of God. Thus, this article only explains the ontological side of al-Dihlawī's argument, not the cosmological aspect, or the manifestation of God to nature.

Research written by Nur Shadik Sandimula, "Pemikiran Metafisika Syah Waliyullah al-Dihlawi."¹⁹ Research that discusses in general about al-Dihlawī's metaphysics. In this research includes ontology, theology, cosmology, and psychology. According to Sandimula, al-Dihlawī's thought about ontology, that existence is the most basic essence of something, and the form that must be and the earliest is God. Al-Dihlawī follows the Sunni school of theology which believes in the existence of God's attributes. In cosmology, al-Dihlawī states the relationship between the spiritual realm and the material realm as an inseparable unity of the universe. While in psychology, al-Dihlawī talks that the human soul is a pure essence that comes from the malakut realm, when the human soul resides in the body, it will give rise to two tendencies, namely *malakiyyah* as the spiritual side and *bahimiyyah* as the material aspect. Thus, Sandimula only explains the theme in general, and does not discuss in detail the *wahdat al-wujūd* al-Dihlawī's ideas.

Thus, this study is different from the previous one. The central point of this research is to fully describe and perfect the previous research related to the al-Dihlawī's concept of *wahdat al-wujūd*.

To sharpen this research, a hermeneutic approach is used, which is a method employed to unpack the meaning of both primary and secondary source writings, as well as to understand various kinds of facts.²⁰ This approach allows for a deep analysis and interpretation of al-Dihlawī's ideas on *wahdat al-wujūd* (the unity of existence), which form the basis of his theological philosophy.

Al-Dihlawi and His Arguments

Quṭb al-Dīn Aḥmad or better known as Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī, was a reformer, Sufi, hadith expert as well as a prolific writer in Islamic literature. He was born on Wednesday, February 21, 1703 AD. or 4 Shawwal 1114 H. in India, precisely Phulat, Delhi. He has blue blood from both parents, from the father's line connecting to 'Umar al-Khatāb, while from the mother's line has a line to 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, the fourth Caliph.²¹ His father 'Abd al-Raḥīm was a great Sufi and jurist, as well as an editor of fatwas in the Mughal court at the behest of King Aurangzeb. The collection of fatwas was called Fatawa Alamghiri or known as Fatawa Hindiyah.²²

'Abd al-Raḥīm educated al-Dihlawī from an early age. He was the most beloved child, because since childhood he was known as a smart child, fast memorizing, clean heart, good manners, and not playful.²³ Thus, his father was very focused on caring for and educating him intensively, even when he was five years old, al-Dihlawī was included in his father's madrasa, *al-Raḥimiyyah* (a name taken from his last name). Not so long ago, at the age of seven, al-Dihlawī had memorized the Quran. He was also taught Arabic and Persian, which were the official languages of the time. At the age of ten to fifteen, al-Dihlawī learned under his father's tutelage various master books such as tafsir, hadith, fiqh, usul fiqh, logic, creed, sufism, medicine and philosophy. The books he has studied include the tafsir of *al-Baiḍāwī*, *Mishkāt al-Maṣābiḥ*, *Ṣaḥiḥ al-Bukhārī*, *al-Shamāil li al-Tirmidzī*, *Sharah al-Wiqāyah wa al-Hidāyah*, *Sharah al-Shamsiyah*, *Sharah al-Jāmi*, 'Awāriḥ al-Ma'arīf, *al-Tib*, *Sharah al-Hidāyat al-Hikmah*, and many others. He also studied with a local hadith scholar, Muḥammad Afḍal al-Sayālakūtī, studying hadith books, especially *Kutub al-Sittah*.²⁴

According to Azyumardi Azra, al-Dihlawī settled in the Hijaz, for two pilgrimage seasons in 1143-1144 H/1731-1732. He also studied with scholars there. Among his teachers were Abū Ṭāḥīr al-Kuranī, Sulaimān al-Mālikī al-Makkī, Ḥasan al-'Azamī, Tāj al-Dīn al-Ḥanafī, 'Isā al-Maghribī, al-Barjanzī and 'Abd Allāh al-Baṣrī. However, al-Dihlawī's most impressive and influential teacher was Abū Ṭāḥīr al-Kuranī, a Sufi and hadith expert. In fact, al-Dihlawī completed several books of hadith with him to his heart's content.²⁵

Al-Dihlawī breathed his last at the age of 62, on Saturday 29 Muharram 1176 AH/1763 in Delhi.²⁶ The departure of al-Dihlawi did not stop his great idea to restore the glory of Islam in Mughal. As Schimmel points out, al-Dihlawi's ideas were carried on by his descendants, especially his two sons, Shāh 'Abd al-'Azīz (d. 1823) and Shāh Rafī' al-Dīn (d. 1818), as well as his grandson Shāh Ismāil al-Shahīd (d. 1831), a prolific writer in Arabic and Urdu, and to Sayyid Aḥmad of Bareilly. Both were known as reformers for their valiant resistance to the Sikhs who occupied all of Punjab and parts of the northwestern frontier.²⁷

1. Ontological Argument

The ontological argument uses *existence* itself as the basis of its reasoning. This argument was proposed by Ibn Sina, who categorized existence into three types: *wājib al-wujūd* (necessary existence), *mumkin al-wujūd* (contingent existence), and *mumtani' al-wujūd* (impossible existence). *Wājib al-wujūd* refers to the Necessary Being, which must always exist, none other than God. Meanwhile, *mumkin al-wujūd* represents potential existence, such as the universe, which has the possibility of existing but lacks the principle of actuality. As such, it cannot come into existence by itself and must depend on another existence, namely the *wājib al-wujūd*.²⁸

In *al-Khair al-Katsīr*, al-Dihlawī explains the definition of *wujud*, which is a conceptual matter that can be understood by what is in front of it of a reality, or called *fi'liyah al-māhiyah* (real essence).²⁹ In another source, al-Dihlawī mentions that *wujud* can be understood by what is in front of it, in the sense that realities are the source of different effects (*atsār*) after being comprehensively examined. Such observations form in the mind a concept of what is called *wujud*. In short, *wujud* is an entity (*ma'nā*) that can be confirmed in its quiddity (*māhiyah*).³⁰

Furthermore, al-Dihlawī divides *wujud* into two kinds. First, the form of itself (*min nafsihī*), namely as a source of other forms, as an absolute essence avoiding particularization and any relationship. Second, the form of otherness (*min ghairihī*) is a form that relies on absolute form (the first form), it cannot exist without a cause. In other words, existence can be understood in two forms, namely existence by itself or as pure essence, without all types of particularization and relations. Then existence as a result of something else, whose existence is included in the existence of the cause.³¹ Between essential (*wājib*) and contingent (*mumkin*) existence has the properties of existence. However, existence does not just mean existing, it rather signifies the reality that is the basis for considering something to exist. This reality itself exists without an external cause, which gives it its existence. It is the cause of all existence. If this reality did not exist then everything else would not exist. So without the essential form, all contingent forms would manifest themselves in nothingness.³²

In the issue of existence (*wujūd*) and quiddity (*māhiyyah*) are identical or different, al-Dihlawī becomes part of discussing this debate. According to Baljon, al-Dihlawī describes the fundamental difference in this case, between the form of God and the contingent form (*mumkināt*). The form of the Self-Existent (God) is identical to His Essence (Substance), in the sense that His Essence is form, and form is *māhiyyah*. However, at the level of conceptual analysis, contingent form is different from *māhiyyah*, because “in the mind” can understand the quiddity of something and at the same time doubt its actual existence, and can think of form independently of quiddity (*māhiyah*).³³ As al-Dihlawī states:

The first thing that comes to your mind is that there is something we call “existence in the mind” (*wujūd fī al-a’yān*) and existence in the external world (*wujūd fī al-khārij*). There is something opposite to it which we call “non-existence” (*‘adam*). Sometimes we think of the *māhiyyah* (quiddity) of existence, and at the same time we doubt the existence of *māhiyah* itself. Or we declare *māhiyyah* to be non-existent. Nonetheless, you establish with a definite verdict. Sometimes we think of existence but do not think of *māhiyyah* at all. Therefore, your word that has a benefit or purpose is “darkness exists” whereas your word that has no purpose is “darkness is darkness.” When explaining *māhiyyah*, you say that this one (*māhiyyah*) exists, and that one exists. In both cases, i.e. only one meaning can be understood. From this, it becomes clear that manifestation and *māhiyah* are two different things. *Wujūd* is the meaning evident in *māhiyyah*. However, attention to this issue can only be fully given when you understand both of them thoroughly, and know what is actually in their substance (*wujūd* and *māhiyyah*). Hence, listen to what we say, and content yourself with the summary and not the full text.³⁴

On that basis, clearly, al-Dihlawī distinguishes *wujūd* and *māhiyyah*. *Māhiyyah* only exists in a mind and reason (*wujūd fī al-a’yān*), while *wujūd* is found in the real world outside the mind (*wujūd fī al-khārij*). However, al-Dihlawī equates *wujūd* and *māhiyyah* in *wājib al-wujūd* (God), His *wujūd* is His *māhiyyah*, and his *māhiyyah* is His *wujūd*. This principle is exactly the same as what Ibn Sinā discussed in describing *wājib al-wujūd*. However, al-Dihlawī emphasizes and prioritizes form over *māhiyyah*. Because *māhiyyah* does not really exist, it is like a figment of the imagination. This view is largely in accordance with the school of Ibn ‘Arabī.

According to Jalbani, whom he quotes from al-Dihlawī’s statement, the Ultimate (God) should not be imagined as an individual of a form (existence) that has included as the whole includes the parts. Rather, the Ultimate (God) encompasses in the form of a universal conception of this being (both in the external world and in the world of reality which is only an extraction, an idea that has no meaning except what is represented in the brain). In other words, He should not be regarded as a substance or genus or anything like that. When related to the One, it is like the relationship of the number one to the major numbers. But by that relationship is meant that one precedes two and is present in every number. The basic ideas of al-Dihlawī are:

Regarding *wahdat al-wujūd*, is the mystical intuition (*dzauq*) of a wise man (Sufi), which in this case is different from other opinions. Because according to him, every contingent form (*mumkin al-maujūd*), is assumed to have actuality (*fī liyyah*) or quiddity (*māhiyyah*). What is meant by its actuality is the way in which it is formed and the way in which it is actualized, by which it is distinguished from the pure and simple nothingness (*‘adam al-sarf al-basit*) in *nafs amr*. As for the quiditas, it is something considered dark and illusory that is stripped of fixity (*taqarur*), and is the marker by which all things are distinguished from one another. However, it (quiditas) has a distinction prior to the

knowledge that relates to God. An *'arif* determines that (the discussion of) quiddities should not be pursued further as it lacks the corresponding reality, hence, he ignores it. With regard to (the concept of) actuality, the aspect of emanation (*ṣudūr*) and its power of existence that does not rely on the Obligatory, is found to be impossible in the external world.³⁵

The statement, according to Faruque that al-Dihlawī appears to make a note between the common understanding of *wahdat al-wujūd*, which would reduce all distinctions between God and the world, and maintain God's transcendence. Then he explains that any contingency that is placed, confronts the Obligatory Being, which has two distinct aspects of actuality and quiddity. Actuality is bestowed upon it from the Compulsory One, without whom it would lose its essence. Quiddities, on the other hand, do not really exist, as they are like delusions. This view is largely in accordance with Ibn 'Arabī.³⁶

When discussing *wahdat al-wujūd*, al-Dihlawī often raised the issue of the proper relationship between *wujūd al-munbasit* and the Obligatory or Divine substance. He also took issue with a number of Sufis including 'Abd Rahmān Jamī', in al-Dihlawī's view, they failed to distinguish *wujūd al-munbasit*, which is the first emanation of the Divine substance. Al-Dihlawī alludes to the idea that Sufis who cannot distinguish the forms the place where it manifests its names and attributes are mistaken. The following is al-Dihlawī's statement:

Whoever thinks that *wujūd al-munbasit* is the same as the Obligatory is mistaken, because he is unable to distinguish the manifest from the locus of manifestation.³⁷

It is important to note that the reality of *wujūd munbasit* permeates the entire universe, which indicates a continuity between the Obligatory and the contingent, as the Obligatory Being benefits the contingent through *wujūd al-munbasit*.

Furthermore, being has different levels (*marātib*), just as the intensity of sunlight differs from the intensity of moonlight. The highest proportion of existence is found in the forces of *Labut* (the world of Divine Substance). Next is the level of *al-wujūd al-'aql*, which is the stage where God becomes aware of Himself, then follows the level of *wujūd al-munbasit*, the first emanation.³⁸ From this *wujūd al-munbasit* will give rise to other forms, and the relationship between *wujūd al-munbasit* with *maujūdat* (existing objects) is like the relationship between writing and ink on written letters.³⁹

From this, it can be understood that the most comprehensive idea of being in al-Dihlawī's thought is what he calls *al-wujūd al-aqṣā* (the highest being) which includes units of being from all sides. Al-Dihlawī said:

It is not as the erroneous imagination believes, that *al-wujūd al-aqṣā* (the supreme being) is one of the beings composed of individuals just as the universal is composed of each of its particulars. Not so, it is a more universal and comprehensive concept, its universality

and comprehensiveness surpassing every other concept. The supreme form has encompassed the individual form from above and from below, covering it from all sides and removing the possibilities from it....⁴⁰

In addition, al-Dihlawī tried to reconcile the concepts of *waḥdat al-wujūd* and *waḥdat al-shuhūd*. He emphasized that the unity of existence is a mystical experience, which is more ecstasy oriented, where the inner condition of the spiritual practitioner is completely absorbed by the reality of God's form which includes everything.⁴¹ As indicated by Rizvi, al-Dihlawī's thoughts about *waḥdat al-wujūd* were experienced by Sufis who were still in search of Universal Reality. Meanwhile, *waḥdat al-shuhūd*, indicates that a Sufi has reached the stage where *jama'* (unification) and *tafriqah* (separation) are mixed and can see clearly that unity and different forms of diversity originate from related causes.⁴² In *Lamaḥāt*, al-Dihlawī states:

Be aware that *waḥdat wujūd* and *waḥdat al-shuhūd* are terms that are often used in the context of the spiritual journey towards Allah (*al-sair ila Allāh*). It can be said (about these two terms) that spiritual practitioners (*salik*) have stations (*maqāmāt*), *waḥdat al-wujūd* and *waḥdat al-shuhūd*. The meaning of *waḥdat al-wujūd* is immersion (*istigrāq*) in the knowledge of reality (*ma'rifat al-haqiqah*) which includes everything, where nature becomes real and is gathered within it. So that this does not apply the laws of separation and differentiation in knowing the good and bad on that basis (*waḥdat al-wujūd*). Even though the *shari'a* and reason have provided clear and perfect statements and confirmations. Some *salik* remain at this level until Allah saves (transfers) them. While the meaning of *waḥdat al-shuhūd* is the coming together of the laws between unification (*al-jama'*) and separation (*al-tafriqah*), they (the *salik*) know that everything is one (*wāḥidah*) from one aspect and various (*katsrah*) from other aspects. This *maqām* is more perfect and higher than the first *maqām*. I took this term from some of the students of Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi, namely Adam al-Banūrī.⁴³

The statement above indicates that *waḥdat al-wujūd* and *waḥdat al-shuhūd* are the achievements of different levels taken by sufis. In this case, al-Dihlawī seems to follow the great ideas of Simnanī and Sirhindī, which reveal that *waḥdat al-wujūd* is the initial stage for climbing an even higher *maqām*, namely *waḥdat al-shuhūd*.

In other words, the state of *waḥdat al-wujūd* refers to the state of *sakr* (unconsciousness) in classical sufism. Meanwhile, the level of *waḥdat al-shuhūd* is the level when a sufi overcomes the state of *fanā* (dissolution) and is able to witness both unity and diversity, that is, he does not lose the view that God and the world are separate, even though the existence of the world depends on the existence of God.⁴⁴

On another occasion, in *al-Tafhimāt*, al-Dihlawī rejected and even labeled as infidels those who believed that Allah is the substance of the universe and that the universe is the substance of Allah, denying the concepts of reckoning and punishment. Such beliefs, according to him, blur the distinction between God and the

universe. In contrast, al-Dihlawī emphasized that Allah is the One and Only Being, who is capable of being pleased, disapproving, granting forgiveness, and administering punishment.⁴⁵ For him, the essence of Allah is Most Majestic and beyond comprehension (*idrāk*). No expressions (*i'tibarāt*) can encapsulate or adequately describe the essence of Allah, as He is the Absolute and Infinite Being.⁴⁶ This demonstrates that al-Dihlawī strongly emphasized *tauhīd* (the oneness of God) in all aspects of life to avoid disbelief and polytheism. As Aziz Ahmad stated, al-Dihlawī's fundamental stance was based on a firm rejection of polytheistic associations (*shirk*), which equate creatures with God. From this, it becomes evident that these two concepts, according to al-Dihlawī, represent a spiritual experience characterized by a *dzauq* (taste) of unity with God.⁴⁷

Thus, through this ontological argument, al-Dihlawī emphasized that God, as the Necessary Being (*wājib al-wujūd*), must exist and is also worthy of worship. Through this argument, one can attain the highest level of *tauhīd* (the oneness of God).⁴⁸

2. The Cosmological Argument

According to Muhammad al-Ghazali, an important element in al-Dihlawī's philosophy of existence is the doctrine of the universal soul (*al-nafs al-kulliyah*), namely about the diversity of universal phenomena which directs human intelligence to the idea that God has created a universal soul *ex-nihilo*, and ultimately that emanates all that exists. However, the relationship between the creator and the universal soul cannot be explained in terms of this material world. There is a kind of unity between the creator and the universal soul, nevertheless, this unity is not real and cannot be understood by human intelligence. This unique relationship between the creator and the universal soul, called *ibda* (beginning) by al-Dihlawī, is far beyond the reach of the human mind.⁴⁹

In al-Dihlawī's view, cited by Baljon, Allah creates nature like Himself to show His beauty. Therefore, when the Creator falls in love with Himself, the creation comes into being, and the object of His love is His own beauty. On the issue of whether the universe emanates from God all at once or in a gradual process, al-Dihlawī clearly states that everything that may emanate from the Divine substance emanates all at once (*daf'atan wāḥidatan*). However, this simultaneous emanation occurs in a latent transcendental determination (*tsubūt*), and not in a contextual existence (*maujūd*). Likewise, the universe passes three ontological levels. *First*, he is at the level of the Divine mind, namely the stage of *tsubūt* (transcendental determination). Moreover, he enters the first level called *al-nafs al-kulliyah*, namely the stage of existence (*wujūd*). Arriving at this level, it cannot be said to be "immortal" due to it has left the Divine mind, nor can it be said to be created because it has not yet

attained real existence. Consequently, at this stage of development, it must be qualified as “immortal in time” and “temporary” (since it must be specialized). After that, the universe descends into the realm of material (*nasūt*) and becomes manifest in Physical forms.⁵⁰

Al-Dihlawī called the universe *al-shakhṣ al-akbār*, or *al-insān al-akbār* (macrocosm). The universe, for him, is like humans who have a soul, this soul is called the universal soul. This relationship between the souls of different bodies and the soul is similar to the relationship that the senses of sight, hearing and thought have in the human soul.⁵¹

According to Fazlur Rahman, *shakhṣ akbār* in al-Dihlawī’s view, is covered by the power of imagination just as humans are between the powers of perception and intellect. *Shakhṣ al-akbār* or this universe, has two components, namely the universal soul and *nafs al-Rahmānī* (breath full of grace), which refers to Ibn ‘Arabī’s ideas. All essential characteristics of a thing, be they general, specific, or individual qualities, flow from the universal soul. When it descends within, the results are differentiated into types, species and individuals. Matter itself has no qualities. For example, when water changes into air (steam), one particular form changes into another form, so each of them has a name, namely water and air.⁵² In other words, when the universal soul descends into the *nafs rahmānī*, it operates as a hidden formative force that endows everything with its special and individual qualities. In the flow of the universal soul, all things receive cosmic, elemental, vegetative, animal, and human forms. Therefore, the universal soul enters matter with subsistence (*qayyūmiyah*).⁵³

Thus, al-Dihlawī equates *shakhṣ al-akbār* (the universe) with humans, because they have the same nature. This, has been explained by Ibn ‘Arabī,⁵⁴ that there is a general similarity between the macrocosm (*shakhṣ al-akbār*) and the microcosm (humans), such as the four kinds of water (salty, sweet, rotten, bitter) similar to tears, mouth, nose and ears respectively. Just as the universe was created from four elements (earth, water, air, fire), so too was the human body created from these four elements. The four winds (i.e. winds coming from four directions) are similar to the four psychological faculties (i.e. absorbing, grasping, digesting, and repelling). The universe has visible and invisible parts, as well as in humans there are outer and inner parts, the outer part is the sensory world, namely the *mulk* realm, and the inner part is the world of the heart, namely the *malakut* realm.⁵⁴

More than that, for al-Dihlawī, the universe has a universal soul, it is also formed from *nasamah*. This *nasamah* flows in the organs of the body, namely the elements and particles. This *nasamah* has three abilities. First, *‘ilmīyah* (which is intellectual) namely paying attention to planning issues (*tadbīr*). Second, *tabi’āt* (physiological), namely the natural properties that each body has, such as hot, cold, long, short and

others. Third, *qalbiyyah* (which is stimulative) namely that which encourages two other forces (*‘ilmiyah* and *tabi’at*) to an action.⁵⁵ As Al-Dihlawī said:

The whole universe is one body, ever changing in its states, and ever moving in its course. Thus, for although bodily forms are substances themselves, in all circumstances they become properties, separate states for some time in relation to permanent reality. Everything was turning around.⁵⁶

In addition, *shakhṣ akbār* (the universe) has extraordinary powers of imagination. This power of imagination is represented by what is called *‘ālam mitsāl* (the world of pre-figuration). He also has his own will power which resides in the *qalb*. This *qalb* is the center or throne of the universal soul. This throne is like a mirror that constantly reflects the reflections of the Creator (God). Through these reflections, the universum per-magnum (universe) attains cognition of its Lord, and naturally forms an image of Him. This image is known as *tajallī a’zām* (supreme theophany).⁵⁷ Al-Dihlawī emphasized this, namely:

The reality of this abundance is that the universal soul is the support of matter. When matter adapts the form that descends to support it, or the soul does the opposite (regardless of the world’s preparations), then this universal soul appears as a whole in some other form, just as humanity appears in a particular person.⁵⁸

From this explanation, it shows that nature as *shakhṣ akbār*, has a soul and reason which is called universal reason and soul. Therefore, nature behaves like an intelligent person. The universal soul flows throughout all parts of nature and is responsible for all movements in the universe.

In the creation of nature, al-Dihlawī said that nature has four properties related to creation. First, *ibda’*, which is creating something without material, so that nature exists from its concealment without material. It indicates that everything is from nothing, or non-existence, which does not require any material. This explanation is based on a hadith in which the Prophet was asked about the origin of creation and he replied “At that time there was only Allah and nothing before Him.” Second, *al-khulq*, which is creating something from matter, or making something from something else, such as Allah creating Prophet Adam from the ground. This is based on the Quran and the Prophet’s hadith, “He created the jinn from a smokeless fire.” This shows that Allah created this world into a universe consisting of every species and kind, then assigned each species with its own characteristics. For example, the distinctive feature of humans is their ability to speak. Third, *tadbīr ‘alam al-mawālīd* (regulation of the universe), *tadbīr* means making nature in accordance with Allah’s orders which bring benefits to the realization of nature. This necessitates that the various events that occur in this universe must be in accordance with the system that has been established by His wisdom, so that benefits are realized in accordance with His will and mercy. For example, He created the rain from the clouds, and with the

rain the vegetation flourishes on the earth for man and animals to eat, so that by this arrangement all creatures can live their lives until a predetermined time.⁵⁹ Fourth, *tadalli* or *tajallī* or *inbijās* (emanation)⁶⁰ means the appearance of the Real (God) as the Ruler in the world in the same way as the human soul is the ruler of the body. The appearance reflected in dreams or the waking state or in the afterlife through this radiance is the result of the appearance of God. In other words, this radiance (*tadallī*) is the perfection of God's rule, He is the agent of the radiance and all creatures receive the radiance.⁶¹

Al-Dihlawī follows Ibn 'Arabī's view that this world was made by God through *tajjālī*. He explains a hadith, when the Prophet was asked by Abu Razin Uqaili, "Where was our Lord before He created creation? and the Prophet replied, He was in the realm of dark mist (*al-'amā*)." From the quotation of the hadith, al-Dihlawī states that '*amā*' is the disposition that exists in primary matter, namely the capacity to assume all incorporeal and corporeal forms. He resides in *Rahmūt* (*'alam al-Rahmān*), He is like a mirror for *al-Rahmān* that shows His beauty, with respect to His being the origin of all phenomena, which is called the universal realm.⁶² *Al-Rahmān* is the most important name and encompasses all realities that emerge from nothing (*'adam al-baḥt*). Therefore, every plan originates from *al-Rahmān*, which can also be referred to as *al-ṣadr al-awwal* (the first outpouring entity). Such is the result of *subugh*, a being filled with divine substance, like an overflowing fountain, which spews forth foam.⁶³

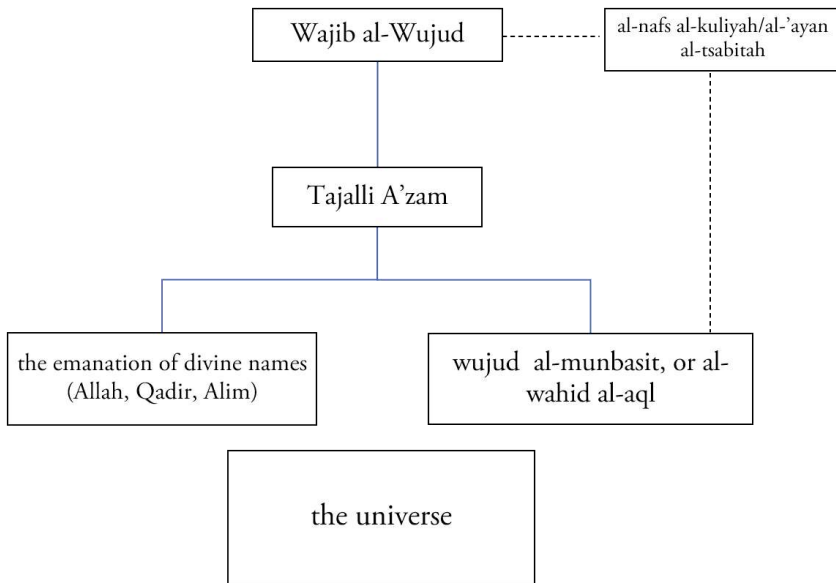
In the *tajallī* of God, al-Dihlawī does not follow Ibn 'Arabī in the division of the most holy emanation (*al-faiḍ al-aqdas*) and the holy emanation (*al-faiḍ al-muqaddas*), but he uses *tajallī al-A'zam* (the Highest) to mention that God manifests Himself in the breath of *rahmānī* (the breath of the Most Compassionate) thus giving rise to the entire universe. Before the determination of time and the appearance of the world, *tajallī al-A'zam* is meant to attract the souls of people to God as iron is attracted to a magnet. *Tajallī al-A'zam*, for al-Dihlawī, shows that the Divine substance has a will that brings about change and a continuous process of innovation in the universe, just as the sun and its light cannot be separated from each other. Light is coupled to the sun, but the effect of the light is temporary and changing. For example, at midday it makes stones hot and causes ice to melt. Hence, this *tajallī al-A'zam* is the center (heart) of the Universal Soul and the regulator of the universe, just as the heart serves as the center of religious consciousness, various kinds of knowledge emerge from the *tajallī al-al-A'zam*.⁶⁴

This *tajallī a'zam* has a special relationship with the human soul, there is nothing closer to it than *tajallī a'zam*. Hence, it is the most suitable means of perfecting the soul. *Tajallī a'zam* (as He manifests Himself in the universe) can be given many attributes and named many names. There are three basic names, namely:

- a) Allah, this name refers to the symptoms of personality and individuality found in *tajallī*.
- b) *Qādir*, a name that refers to the power (*qahr*) that performs in all possibilities that are subsumed in the breath of *rahmānī* (the breath of the Compassionate One) i.e. the ever-spreading existence (*wujūd al-munbasit*) that gives rise to continuous beings
- c) *‘Ālim*, this name refers to the presence of realities in the world that appear at the level of the mind (divine).⁶⁵

Thus, *tajallī a’zam* refers to these three Divine Names. Moreover, the name *al-Qādir* is associated with the concept of the ‘Breath of the Compassionate’ (*nafas Rahmānī*), which illustrates an existence that continually expands and evolves on its own, creating beings that depend on it.⁶⁶

“Manifestation Concept Diagram”



Supported by Fazlur Rahman’s opinion, al-Dihlawī asserts that the first emanation from the Absolute is none other than the divine name. It cannot be reason, as the Muslim peripatetic philosophers say. The reason is that the first emanation or emanation of the Divine Self must be a thorough and complete representation of one aspect of the Absolute, just as a name is a revelation of something. However, al-Dihlawī describes the first emanation as an intellect that lacks the entities that philosophers call the forces that explain the movements of the celestial spheres. He calls this intellect the unitary intellect (*al-wāhid al-'aql*) because the successive order of the world and its events are latent and revealed from it, just as the ineffability of

numbers is latent in the number one. In his Persian work *Saṭa'āt*, he calls the first emanation or first determination (*ta'ayyun*) the intellect, but in the Arabic *Lamahāt*, he calls it by Ibn 'Arabī's term, *al-wujūd al-munbaṣiṭ 'alā hayaki al-maujudāt*. (a being that stretches over the frameworks of existence). He says that the first emanation cannot be characterized by certain qualities, in the sense that its entity must not be the opposite of another entity. Its relationship to all things is like the relationship of a black line to all the characters of all writing. It appears, then, that this entity, which gives form to everything at every level of reality, is external, identical through the intellect. The intellect, then, in its unity contains all things in a single entity. This unitary intellect or self-opening entity can produce the universe (*shakhṣ akbār*) with all its abundance of beings. With the emergence of this universe, humans moved from the realm of eternity to the world order. However, before the emergence of this *shakhṣ akbār* an infinite series of *tajalliyāt* or enlightenment of Divine names took place until it reached the last name which is Divine will. For the entire creation is directly under the Divine will, which is an external destiny, permanently binding all essences to His attributes, like fire with its heat.⁶⁷

It can be seen here that al-Dihlawī combines the theories of cosmology according to theologians and philosophers. He does not contradict or criticize any of these theories. Rather, he presents the various theories of creation to complement each other and obtain a more complete picture that has been presented by Muslim theologians and philosophers.

In the level of nature, al-Dihlawī mentions five levels of nature, namely:

- a) The realm of *lahūt*, which is the realm of *Wājib al-Wujūd* (Allah) and all His attributes.
- b) The realm of *malakūt* or *arwāḥ*, which is the realm inhabited by the “highest council of angels (*malā al-a'lā*) and the souls of righteous human beings. The most excellent human spirits join them (the angels), as revealed in Allah's words “O tranquil soul, return to your Lord contented and pleased; enter among My servants into My paradise.” The duty of the highest council of angels is to face the Creator completely without being distracted by other concerns. They are commanded by God to follow the order of goodness and condemn all evil. There, they gather as one and their assembly is called the sacred circle (*ḥazīrat al-quds*). Pious souls are attracted towards *ḥazīrat al-quds*, like iron is attracted by a magnet. In the *ḥazīrat al-quds* an agreement was reached to establish the means of saving mankind from the sufferings of this world and the next, by perfecting the holiest person of his time and making all his commands obeyed by mankind. The agreement of *ḥazīrat al-quds* demands that inspiration be revealed to those who are ready to accept and follow the perfect man.⁶⁸ In other words, according to Jalbani, *ḥazīrat*

al-quds (sacred circle) is one of the basic principles in al-Dihlawī's philosophy. It is the place where God's message or inspiration in the form of various events, especially important events that will occur in the world, such as the coming of prophets, the establishment of new countries and others, is mediated.⁶⁹

- c) The realm of *mitsāl*, which is a realm that has no elements. According to Rahman, this realm of imagination is a transitional plane between the sensory realm and the intellectual realm. All these spiritual entities and events are wrapped in a quasi-physical form before finally taking on a semi-spiritual status. This realm of *mitsāl* seems to have been first discussed by al-Suhrawardī, then developed by Ibn 'Arabī, Mulla Sadra and others. It is fully utilized by al-Dihlawī in whose thought it plays a central role. All heavenly and earthly bodies as well as spiritual beings (angels) and other living beings have this faculty of imagination, as does the *shakḥ akbār* (universe) as a whole.⁷⁰ In that world, various abstract concepts are depicted in semi-bodily forms that correspond to those concepts. In this realm, things acquire their own forms before they materialize on earth, so when they do materialize (on earth) their physical forms are the same as the ideal forms in the imaginal world. Many things that are considered by the common people to be only spiritual (having no physical form), actually move and pass down physically, even though they do not see them. The existence of this imaginal world is supported by the Qur'an and hadith, for example, in the Qur'an it is explained "Then, we sent Our spirit (Jibril) to him, then he appeared before him in the form of a perfect human being." (Q.S. Maryam: 17). Or in the hadith it is reported "In the grave, a disbeliever will be tormented with 99 venomous snakes that bite and sting him until the Day of Resurrection arrives," and "When the corpse (of a believer) is put into the grave, the setting sun will rise on him, he sits down, rubs his eyes and says 'let me pray.'" According to al-Dihlawī, believing in the traditions about the realm of *mitsāl* should be taken literally and their interpretation should be avoided.⁷¹
- d) The realm of *nasūt* or *maḥsūsāt*, which is the realm of human life and activities. Al-Dihlawī calls it the realm of *al-ḥayat* or the realm of *al-mawālīd*. This term *al-mawālīd* means the life of creatures on earth, and this nature is subject to the rules of Allah which makes it run according to its ecosystem, as there is a divine will to make various kinds of creatures in accordance with the order and benefit of nature.⁷²

Thus, Fazlur Rahman further emphasized that al-Dihlawī has integrated spirituality, philosophy and law (sharia) into a system. Because it considers the universe as

an organism. The universe develops and is organized under the direction and governing power of *ḥadzarat al-quds* and *malā al-'alā*, where its spiritual and material sides work together with constant and material interaction. In short, al-Dihlawī quite selectively took elements from Stoicism, Neo-Platonism and so on. He has constructed a system, in which the cosmology of the Qur'an and hadith comes alive.⁷³

Conclusion

Al-Dihlawī accepts the idea of *wahdat al-wujūd* and re-explains that it is acceptable to the shariah, namely *wahdat al-wujūd* as a mystical experience, where a person's condition is experiencing *fana* (ecstasy), he is fully absorbed by the reality of Allah's all-pervading form. In addition, *wahdat al-wujūd* is the initial level towards *maqām wahdat al-shuhūd*, which is the level when a sufi overcomes the state of *fana* (dissolution) and is able to witness both unity and diversity, i.e. he does not lose sight that God and the world are separate, although the existence of the world depends on the existence of God.

For him too, *wahdat al-wujūd*, ontologically speaking, is the one and only Ultimate Being that is God, other than which He is a relative or contingent being. This Ultimate Being benefits the contingent being through *wujūd al-munbasit*, the first emanation of the Ultimate Being. From this *wujūd al-munbasit* will give rise to other forms (*maujūdāt*). Both *wujūd al-munbasit* and *maujūdāt* flow from the universal soul (*al-naḥs al-kulliyah*), which Ibn 'Arabī calls *al-a'yān al-tsābitah* (entities that remain) in the knowledge of God. Hence, from this universal soul emanates all that exists both macrocosm and microcosm. In other words, the universe was created through the emanation (*tajallī*) of God. This comprehensive emanation, for al-Dihlawī is called *tajallī a'zam*.

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51. Jalbani, *Teachings of Shah Waliyullah*, 219.
52. Fazlur Rahman, *A Studi of Islam Fundamentalism Revival and Reform in Islam*, ed. Ebrahim Moosa, (Oxford: Oneword, 2003), 175.
53. Baljon, *Religion and Thought of Shāh Walī Allāh...*, 54.
54. Masataka Takeshita, *Insan Kamil Pandangan Ibnu 'Arabi*, trans. Harir Muzakki, (Surabaya: Risalah Gusti, 1987), 118.
55. Al-Dihlawī, *al-Taḡhīmāt al-Ilāhiyyah*, vol. I, 53.
56. Al-Dihlawī, *Lamaḥāt*, h. 29.
57. Al-Ghazali, *The Socio-Political Thought of Shāh Walī Allāh*, 16.
58. Al-Dihlawī, *Lamaḥāt...*, 36.
59. Al-Dihlawī, *Ḥujjat Allāh al-Bālighah*, vol. II, (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, 2005), 25-26.
60. Al-Dihlawī often uses these three words in some of his books related to emanation.
61. Al-Dihlawī, *Lamaḥāt...*, 55.
62. Al-Dihlawī, *al-Taḡhīmāt al-Ilāhiyyah...*, vol. I, 158.
63. Al-Dihlawī, *al-Budūr Al-Bāzighah*, 18. See also Al-Dihlawī, *al-Taḡhīmāt al-Ilāhiyyah*, vol. II, (Surat: al-Majlis al-'Ilmī, 1936), 39.
64. Al-Dihlawī, *Lamaḥāt*, 84.
65. Baljon, *Religion and Thought of Shah Wali Allah...*, 33.
66. Muhammad Ashfaq, Shah Junaid Ahmed Hashimi, and Abzahir Khan, "Shāh Walī Allāh's Interpretations of Divine Mercy (Al-Raḡmah) and Its Applications in Social Life: An Ethico-Psychological Study," in *Webology* 18, no. 6, 2021, 8165.
67. Rahman, *A Study of Islamic Fundamentalism...*, 174-175.
68. Al-Dihlawī, *Ḥujjat Allāh al-Bālighah*, vol I, 34.
69. Jalbani, *Teaching of Shah Waliyullah*, h. 223. See also Rizvi, *Shah Wali Allah and His Time*, 276.

70. Rahman, *A Study of Islamic Fundamentalism...*, 175.
71. Al-Dihlawī, *Hujjat Allāh al-Bālighah*, vol. I, 27-28.
72. Al-Dihlawī, *Hujjat Allāh al-Bālighah*, vol. I, 26.
73. Rahman, *A Study of Islamic Fundamentalism...*, 182.

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