

IBN AL-'ARABĪ ON THE ONE WHO IS TRANSCENDENT (*AL-AḤAD*) AND IMMANENT (*AL-WĀḤID*)

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Khulasah

Makalah dimulai dengan wacana Ibn al-'Arabī mengenai "*aḥadiyyah*" tiap-tiap yang mawjud. Kemudian, tinjauan disorotkan kepada tafsiran Ibn al-'Arabī mengenai peri hakikat serta sifat Mahaesa bagi Allah, sama ada sifat Mahaesa yang digelar *aḥadiyyah* mahupun *wāḥidiyyah*. Turut diteliti ialah, nisbah sifat Mahaesa kepada peribadatan dan penyerahan Agama, kepada Tuhan daripada manusia.

Katakunci: *aḥadiyyah*; *wāḥidiyyah*; hakikat serta sifat Mahaesa bagi Allah; sifat Mahaesa Dhāt; sifat kesatuan bagi tiap-tiap yang mawjud; ibadah; penyerahan; agama; Ibn al-'Arabī.

Abstract

This article begins with Ibn al-'Arabī's discourse on "oneness" that belongs to every existent. Then, it presents Ibn al-'Arabī's interpretation of the oneness of God (Allah), viz. His Essential Oneness—whose dual aspects are *aḥadiyyah* and *wāḥidiyyah*—and Its relation to worship and submission to God, by mankind through Religion.

Keywords: *aḥadiyyah*; *wāḥidiyyah*; oneness of God; Essential Oneness; oneness of every existent; worship; submission; religion; Ibn al-'Arabī.

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A Oneness that Belongs to every Existent (*Aḥadiyyat Kull Mawjūd*)²

The term 'one' (*al-aḥad*)—whose quality is called 'oneness' (*al-aḥadiyyah*)—is employed in the Qur'ān, to Allāh as well as to all other than Him. As Ibn al-'Arabī observes,³

Know you that the name 'one' (*al-ism al-aḥad*) is applied to every thing unrestrictedly: angel, celestial body, star, nature, element, mineral and plant...while it is a Divine Epithet (*na't ilāhī*) in His saying 'Say: He is Allāh, the One'⁴, He makes it (the term 'one') a creatural attribute (*na't kawwī*) in His saying 'let he who expects to meet his Lord (*Rabb*), in the worship of his Lord, admit no one (*aḥad*) as partner.'⁵

Ibn al-'Arabī points out that in the abovementioned 110th verse of *sūrat al-Kahf* (18), Allāh employs the word 'one' in an indeterminate form, so that everything that possesses oneness (*aḥadiyyah*) is included.⁶ The word 'oneness'—just like other expressions, such as 'existence' (*al-wujūd*), 'knowledge' (*al-'ilm*), 'power' (*al-qudrah*), and indeed all the names (*sā'ir al-asmā'*)—may be applied in a homonymous manner (*al-mushārahah*) to the Real as well as to other than Him, i.e., the Creation (*al-khalq*).⁷

² The term *aḥadiyyat kull mawjūd* is employed by Ibn al-'Arabī himself in, among others, the *Futūḥāt*, 2: 289.

³ *Futūḥāt*, 2: 221.

⁴ *Al-Ikhlāṣ*, 112: 1. For Ibn al-'Arabī's interpretation of this 112th chapter of the Qur'ān, see *Raḥmah min al-Raḥmān fī Tafsīr wa Ishārāt al-Qur'ān min Kalām al-Shaykh al-Akbar Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-'Arabī*, 4 vols. collected and presented by Maḥmūd Maḥmūd al-Ghurāb (Damascus: the editor himself, 1989), 4: 551-9.

⁵ *Al-Kahf*, 18: 110; for Ibn al-'Arabī's interpretation, see *Raḥmah*, 3: 34-38.

⁶ *Futūḥāt*, 3: 478.

⁷ *Futūḥāt*, 2: 579, 581. 'Oneness' is applied unrestrictedly to all existents—human and non-human alike, states *K. Aḥadiyyah*, in *Rasā'il Ibn al-'Arabī* (Hyderabad: The Da'irat al-Ma'arifil Osmania, 1948), 3; tr. Avraham

'There is nothing,' Ibn al-'Arabī resolves, 'except there is a oneness for it.'⁸ Indeed,

For every constituent part of the universe, there is a oneness (*aḥadiyyah*) peculiar to it, which others do not share. By this oneness, the thing is distinguished and differentiated from others, their shared qualities notwithstanding.⁹

Souls know that there is something that makes them—as a whole— unique from others, which is their unicity (*amr tanfārada bi-hi 'an ghayrihā 'alā 'l-ijmāl wa hiya waḥdāniyyatuhā*). From it (i.e. the unicity), they (i.e. the souls) know the unicity of He Who existentiates them, as none knows the One except the one (*lā ya'rifu 'l-Wāḥid illā al-wāḥid*). This is what is meant by the one who says, 'In each thing is a sign signifying that He is One' (*wa fī kull shay' lahu āyah tadullu 'alā annahu Wāḥid*), alluding to a peculiarity of every thing (*khāṣṣiyyat kull shay'*), which is its oneness (*aḥadiyyatuhu*), which is the sign

Abadi, 'The Book of Alif (Or) The Book of Unity, *JMIAS* II (1984), 15-40, on p. 17.

⁸ *Futūḥāt*, 3: 478.

⁹ *Futūḥāt*, 3: 181. This statement is somewhat repeated in Ibn al-'Arabī's other works. 'There is a unicity for every thing in itself, whereby it is distinguished from others (*inna li-kull shay' fī nafsī-hi waḥdāniyyah bi-hā yumtāzu 'an ghayri-hi*).' See *Wasā'il al-Sā'il*, 49, as quoted in *Mu'jam*, 1160. In *Tarjumān al-Ashwāq*, it is stated that 'the special quality that distinguishes the thing from all things else' is called 'its unicity' (*waḥdāniyyah*). See Muhyi'ddīn Ibn al-'Arabī, *The Tarjumān al-Ashwāq: A Collection of Mystical Odes*, tr. Reynold A. Nicholson, repr. (Theosophical Publishing: London, 1978), 73.

of the oneness of the One ('*alāmah 'alā aḥadiyyat al-Aḥad*).¹⁰

For Ibn al-'Arabī, then, every thing has a particular oneness that other things do not partake; by this oneness every thing is seen as a unique, specific reality, which is distinguished from other realities. According to Ibn al-'Arabī, this permeation of oneness in every existent, this generality of oneness in the entirety of created beings, is due to the Divine pervasion (*al-sarayān al-Ilāhī*), of which no creature may know, unless God wishes it.¹¹

Ibn al-'Arabī's commentator, al-Jīlī, sums up, that in the language of the generality of the people (*līsān al-'umūm*), the word 'oneness' designates 'the distinguishing feature ('*ayn*) of an entity that is composed of various multiple things' (*al-kathrah al-mutanawwa'ah*). This is exemplified in the case of a wall that might be seen by someone from afar. Though the wall is made of masonry, lime, plaster and wood, the seer would nevertheless not being able to observe anything of these bricks, whitewash, plaster and lumber; he could only see the wall. Now, the oneness of this wall is the totality (*majmū'*) of the masonry, lime, plaster and timber, not a designation of these four things, but the name 'wall' designates 'a distinguishing feature of wall' (*al-hay'ah al-makhṣūṣah al-jidāriyyah*).¹²

¹⁰ *Al-Ashwāq*, 49n1; also quoted in Su'ād al-Ḥakīm, *al-Mu'jam al-Ṣūfī: al-Ḥikmah fī Ḥudūd al-Kalimah* (Beirut: Dandarāh li al-Ṭibā'ah wa al-Nashr, 1981), 1161. For its partial tr., see *Mystical Odes*, 72-73.

¹¹ *K. Aḥadiyyah*, 3; *B. Unity*, 17. See above footnote no. 7. See also the references in nn. 9-10.

¹² 'Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī, *al-Insān al-Kāmil*, Eng. trans. Angela Culme-Seymour, *Universal Man*, 23. Muhammad Iqbal, *The Development of Metaphysics in Persia* (Lahore: Bazm-Iqbal, 1954, 3rd reprint, 1964), 124-5. Idem, "The Doctrine of Absolute Unity as Expounded by Abdul Karim al-Jilani," in *Thoughts and Reflections of Iqbal*, ed. with notes by Syed Abdul Wahid (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, repr. 1992), 4-

This example is an excellent illustration of the specific unity that is 'the complex oneness of a whole composed of parts', which is, in al-Jīlī's own words, 'oneness in the language of the generality of the people' (*lisān al-'umūm*). But, strictly speaking, this is a oneness of created things; as such, it is not applicable to the Divine or Transcendental Absolute Being.¹³ To refer exactly to this creaturely attribute, Ibn al-'Arabī calls it 'a united or combined whole' (*muttaḥīdah*), and its quality 'a unitary or combinative oneness' (*al-ittiḥād*), as opposed to what he calls the One Entity (*al-Ayn al-Wāḥid*) and His Essential and Divine Oneness (*al-Aḥadiyyah*) respectively.¹⁴ In order that we are more specific in the case of the wall given in al-Jīlī's example, its unity is 'the oneness of man-made compositions or aggregations'¹⁵; the unity of the

27, on pp. 14-15. Reynold Nicholson, *Studies in Islamic Mysticism* (Lahore: Kazi Publications, n.d.), 95. *Mu'jam*, 1165, 1168-9. *Hay'ah* (or *hi'ah*) means form, fashion, shape, aspect or appearance; figure, person, mien, feature or lineaments; guise; or external state or condition; state with regard to apparel and the like; or garb; state, condition or case; quality, mode or manner of being. See Edward William Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1863, reprinted in 2 vols. by Islamic Text Society, 1984), 2: 2908.

¹³ Indeed, Allāh, in His Essence, as He is in Himself, is above being qualified even by absoluteness and being. Considered in such isolation, He is in that degree unconditioned by any condition; He is unconditionally transcendent, and cannot be likened to created things. This is the oneness of God's Being with respect to the Essence at the level of His transcendent unity. See further Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *A Commentary on the Ḥujjat al-Ṣiddiq of Nūr al-Dīn al-Rānīrī* (Kuala Lumpur: Ministry of Culture, 1986), 39-40, 153-60, 308, 395, 404, 410, 415.

¹⁴ A unitary or combinative oneness (*al-ittiḥād*) is the attribute of the servant (*al-'abd*), as no servant is intelligible by himself; the servant is intelligible only by Other than him. He has no odour of Oneness ever (*fā-lā rā'iḥah la-hu fī 'l-Aḥadiyyah abadan*). *Futūḥāt*, 2: 31.

¹⁵ "One and Many," in *Great Books of the Western World*, ed. in chief Mortimer J. Adler, 2nd ed., 60 vols. (Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica,

wall comes, hence, under the category of 'artificial, complex oneness'¹⁶.

Be that as it may, this conception is very significant in the metaphysics of Islām. As has been outlined by Syed Muḥammad Naquib al-Attas, the fundamental nature of reality is *difference*. What makes a thing *what* it is, is strictly speaking not the commonness of 'being-existent', but rather, the 'being-distinct' from any other, for it is only by virtue of distinction that realities have come into existence.¹⁷ The

1990), vol. 2, *The Syntopicon: II - An Index to the Great Ideas*, afterwards cited as *Syntopicon*, 230, 234.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ *Islām and the Philosophy of Science* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1989), 25. See also al-Attas's definition of realities as permanent and separately placed entities, on p. 35. Indeed, this is why Islamic epistemology, as expounded by al-Attas, affirms that everything has its proper place in a system. Everything has a proper relation, or a network of relations, with others in the system, a certain proper order described in terms of priority and posteriority, in terms of space and position, and in terms of arrangement according to various levels and degrees. If everything in any system were in the same place, then there could be no meaning since there would be no relational criteria to judge, discriminate, distinguish and clarify; indeed, there would be no system. For recognition to be possible, and for meaning to be established, there must be *permanent specific difference* and *permanent essential relation* in things. Our discussion is also interconnected with the conception of created things as arranged in a just order or the just order that pervades all creation. It points also to one's *ḥaqq*, that which belongs to one, to one's own; it is the exact or the specific part that befits one's natural or essential constitution, to one's self; it is something inherent, a property, an essential attribute. It also implies thing's natural position, the position that conforms to the nature, both in the external world as well as in the imagination and in the mind, of the person, the thing, the object of knowledge. See further pp. 15-16, 22-23. Earlier, al-Attas has stated these ideas in *The Positive Aspects of Taṣawwuf* (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Academy of Science, 1981), 5-6, 8-9, 12. See also his *Commentary*, 163-4, 279-91; Syed Muḥammad Naquib al-Attas, *On Quiddity and Essence* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1990), 42, 46; Syed Muḥammad Naquib al-Attas, *Prolegomena* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1995), 123-4, 129-32, 252-3, 256.

meaning of al-Attas's statement that 'it is only by virtue of distinction that realities have come into existence' lies in the dual nature of the Divine Names (*al-asmā*).¹⁸

But al-Jīlī's definition of oneness as understood by the generality of the people has wider implications. It should be clear to the discerning mind that it is related to the oneness of an entity that is composed of 'various multiplicity' (*al-kathrah al-mutanawwa'ah*). In this more general manner, such a unity is called by Ibn al-'Arabī 'the oneness of multiplicity' (*aḥadiyyat al-kathrah*).¹⁹ This oneness of manyness is crucial, as from it man might cross to understand the oneness of the One Divine Transcendental Absolute Being:

You don't know the unicity of the Real, exalt Him [beyond what they ascribe] (*waḥdāniyyat al-Ḥaqq subḥānah*) except from your unicity, since for every thing in itself there is a oneness whereby it is distinguished from others. A person who achieves and actualizes this quality would realize the unicity of the Real, knowing that, of Allāh, exalt Him beyond what they ascribe, the quality of Unicity is an Essential Attribute (*Waṣf Dhātī*), an attribution of which is not valid to other than Him. Although there is a unicity for every existent other than Him, exalt Him beyond what they ascribe, for them it (i.e., the unicity) is shared attributes (*ṣifāt musharakah*), with the exception of the Real, as to Him belongs the attribution of unicity while there is none who share

¹⁸ For the time being see *On Quiddity and Essence*, 41-42; *Prolegomena*, 252-3.

¹⁹ *Risālat Lā Ya'ūl 'Alay-hi*, in *Rasā'il*, vol. 1, no. 16, p. 12; *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, ed. Abū al-'Alā 'Afīfī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Arabī, 1946, second impression 1980), 1: 200; *Futūḥāt*, 2: 290; 3: 404 465, 505; 4: 55, 88, 107, 136, 176, 183, 3: 289, 378, 483; 4: 55, 88, 107, 136, 183, 232, 276, 294, 376. A close example of the oneness of multiplicity is the unity of man, who is composite of body and soul, matter and spirit, extension and thought.

the same attribution with Him the Exalted (*inna li 'l-Ḥaqq waṣf al-Waḥdāniyyah wa laysa la-Hu man yushāraka-Hu fī-hi subḥāna-Hu*).²⁰

By its unicity, which is the special quality that distinguishes a thing from all other things, the thing knows the unicity of Him who brought it into being.²¹

As the oneness that we are discussing refers to the *distinguishing feature* of an entity, it is also called by Ibn al-'Arabī 'the oneness of distinction' (*aḥadiyyat al-tamyīz*).²² And as 'the oneness of the totality' of various multiple things, it is called by Ibn al-'Arabī *aḥadiyyat al-majmū'*,²³ and alternately 'the oneness of the sum' (*aḥadiyyat al-jam'*²⁴ or *aḥadiyyat al-jam'īyyah*)²⁵.

Taken in its wider implications as mentioned above, we might now venture to understand Ibn al-'Arabī's conception of the oneness of Allāh. As he affirms, He is the One God (*Ilāh Wāḥid*),²⁶ whose oneness as such is called 'the oneness of Godhood' (*aḥadiyyat al-Ulūhiyyah*),²⁷ 'the oneness of Divinity' (*aḥadiyyat al-Ilāhiyyah*),²⁸ and 'the oneness of the [Divine] Degree' (*aḥadiyyat al-martabah*).²⁹ Now, as this One God is self-manifested by various Names (*al-Asmā'*), His oneness is also referred to as 'the oneness of the Names' (*aḥadiyyat al-Asmā'*).³⁰ Elsewhere,³¹ Ibn al-'Arabī notes that

²⁰ *Wasā'il al-Sā'il*, 49, as quoted in *Mu'jam*, 1160.

²¹ Ibn al-'Arabī, *Tarjumān al-Ashwāq*, 73.

²² *Futūḥāt*, 3: 378, 4: 55. 4: 28 identifies *tamyīz* with *taqyīd*. See also on the relation between *waḥdāniyyah* and *tamyīz* in *Mu'jam*, 1158-61.

²³ *Futūḥāt*, 2: 293, 440, 3: 193, 194, 289; 4: 132, 294.

²⁴ *Futūḥāt*, 2: 225, 300; 3: 81, 193.

²⁵ *Futūḥāt*, 2: 300.

²⁶ *Futūḥāt*, 1: 36.

²⁷ *Futūḥāt*, 2: 290; 3: 310; 4: 276.

²⁸ *Futūḥāt*, 3: 378; 4: 80.

²⁹ *Futūḥāt*, 3: 378; 4: 80.

³⁰ *Futūḥāt*, 2: 291; 4: 276.

³¹ *Futūḥāt*, 4: 294.

the Qur'anic term (Divine) 'Names' is also referred to by Ṣūfī verifiers as 'Relations' (*Nisbah*) and by theologians as 'Attributes' (sing. *Ṣifah*, pl. *Ṣifāt*); hence al-Qūnāwī or al-Qāshānī's later coined terminology: 'the Attributive Oneness' (*al-Aḥadiyyah al-Ṣifātiyyah*).³² Indeed, Ibn al-'Arabī himself would be approving of such a terminology, as he states that Allāh is One despite the variety of His Most Beautiful Names or Attributes or Relations (*aḥadiy al-Kathrah bi-Asmā'i-Hi al-Ḥusnā aw Ṣifāti-Hi aw Nisābi-Hi*).³³

The Oneness of Allāh

However, we must be cautious on this issue of oneness, as Allāh Himself has admonished us that 'there is none like unto Him'³⁴ and that 'there is nothing whatever like unto Him'.³⁵ The unity of Allāh is not limited to such a relative oneness; it is 'relative', as it shows a relation between the worlds and Him, as the One God Who is self-qualified with various Relations and Attributes of Divinity. His Oneness is, rather, unconditionally Absolute and Transcendent, and, ultimately, identical with the Very Essence Itself. As Ibn al-'Arabī says, 'The Real-Truth is singled out for oneness of Essence (*aḥadiyyat al-Dhāt*), not for oneness of manyness, which is the oneness of Names (*aḥadiyyat al-kathrah allatī hiya aḥadiyyat al-asmā'*).'³⁶

....As regards the Divine Oneness (*al-Aḥadiyyah al-Ilāhiyyah*), one has no part (or is not involved) in it, for it cannot be said, of the Divine Oneness, that one aspect of It is something and another aspect of It

³² *Laṭā'if al-I'lām fī Ishārāt Ahl al-Ilhām*, fol. 13b-14, quoted in *Mu'jam*, 1169. The writer is either 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī (d. 1330) or Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qunyāwī (d. 1263). See *Commentary*, 94n37.

³³ *Futūḥāt*, 3: 483.

³⁴ *Al-Ikhlās*, 112: 4. See above note 4.

³⁵ *Al-Shūrā*, 42: 11; for its interpretation by Ibn al-'Arabī, see *Raḥmah*, 4: 64-76.

³⁶ *Futūḥāt*, 4: 274.

another thing, for It does not admit of any differentiation (*al-tab'īd*).³⁷ For this reason the People of God (*Ahl Allāh*) are barred from a divine Self-revelation of His Oneness (*al-tajallī fī 'l-Aḥadiyyah*).³⁸

And to quote his commentator al-Jīlī:

It is forbidden for the created being (*al-makhlūq*) to attribute to himself the Oneness (*al-aḥadiyyah*), for the Oneness is the pure Essence abstracted from the (Divine) Reality and the created thing (*ṣirāfat al-Dhāt al-mujarradah 'an al-Ḥaqqiqah wa 'l-makhlūqiyyah*), whereas the created thing is characterized by the condition of the createdness (*wa 'l-makhlūq qad ḥukima 'alayh bi 'l-makhlūqiyyah*). Moreover, to attribute something to oneself signifies that it be rendered subject (*ifti'āl*) and to be used (*ta'ammul*),³⁹ which would be contrary (*mughāyir*) to the principle of Oneness, which for this reason never will belong to the creature; it belongs exclusively to Allāh the Exalted (*fā-hiya lillāh ta'ālā mukhtaṣṣah bih*)....this state of manifestation (*majāh*) is not of those in which the created being (as such) can ever participate (*naṣīb*), but it belongs to Allāh alone, as the

³⁷ *Fuṣūṣ*, 90.

³⁸ *Fuṣūṣ*, 91. See also *Futūḥāt*, 3: 178-180; Maḥmūd Maḥmūd al-Ghurāb, *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam min Kalām al-Shaykh al-Akbar Muḥyi 'l-Dīn Ibn al-'Arabī* (Damsḥīq: the author himself, 1985, 2nd ed. 1995), afterwards cited as *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, 110.

³⁹ To put them in a grammarian terminology, *ifti'āl* and *ta'ammul* refer to the subject that is a 'receiver of action'. Cf. *Syntopicon*, 2: 228-9: 'The One...transcends intelligence. Knowing or thinking requires an object. The relation of knower and known entails a duality which would fracture the utter simplicity of The One.'

first essential manifestation (*fā-huwa lillāh waḥdah awwal al-majāli al-dhātīyyah*).⁴⁰

It is said by Jāmī in his *Sharḥ-i Rubā'īyyāt*⁴¹, that in the technical terminology of the masters of the Ṣūfī path (*arbāb al-sulūk*), the term oneness (*al-aḥadiyyah*) is applied to three things. Firstly, the oneness of the Essence (*al-Dhāt*), referring to the Unseen Mystery of the Ipseity (*ghā'ib al-Huwiyyah*).⁴² Here, the One is beyond all determinations into particular entities (*lā ta'ayyun*). Secondly, the transcendent oneness (*al-aḥadiyyah*) of the Essence, in which case the One (*al-Aḥad*) is considered as being devoid of all aspects (*salb al-i'tibārāt*)⁴³, as distinguished from the immanent oneness (*al-wāḥidiyyah*) of the Essence, where the One (*al-Wāḥid*) is considered as being qualified by the subsistence of aspects (*thubūt al-i'tibārāt*).⁴⁴ And thirdly, 'the oneness of the sum' (*aḥadiyyat*

⁴⁰ 'Abd al-Karīm al-Jilī, *al-Insān Kāmil* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'ilmiyyah, 1418H/1997), 47-8; *Universal Man*, 24; French extracts, trans. with commentary by Titus Burckhardt, *De L'Homme Universel*, (Paris: Dervy-Livres, 1975 reissued 1995), 49.

⁴¹ My source is the quotation of the relevant Persian passages as well as its Arabic translation in Ahmad Nekari, *Dustūr al-'Ulamā: An Encyclopedia of Interdisciplinary Terminology* (Lebanon: Librairie du Liban, 1997), 34-35; the work *Sharḥ-i Rubā'īyyāt* is unavailable to me.

⁴² Compare with a somewhat reverse statement of al-Jilī: "The Essence of Allāh the Exalted is the unseen mystery of the Oneness" (*ghayb al-Aḥadiyyah*). *Universal Man*, 4; *Homme Universel*, 31.

⁴³ Also identified as 'the Oneness with no qualification' (*al-Aḥadiyyah bi-lā qayd*) by al-Lārī. See Nūr al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī, *al-Durrah al-Fākhīrah fī Taḥqīq Madhhab al-Ṣūfiyyah wa'l-Mutakallimīn wa'l-Ḥukamā' al-Mutaqaddimīn*, eds. Nicholas Heer and 'Alī Mūsavī Behbahānī (Tehran: The Institute of Islamic Studies McGill Univ., Tehran Branch, 1980), 88; tr. with an intro. Nicholas I. Heer, *The Precious Pearl: al-Jāmī's al-Durrah al-Fākhīrah* (New York: SUNY Press, 1979), 127.

⁴⁴ Compare the relevant passage of Jāmī's *Sharḥ-i Rubā'īyyāt* (see above note 41) with *Durrah Fākhīrah*, 12, 88; *Precious Pearl*, 43, 127. See also *Commentary*, 154, 159-60, 410-11.

al-jam'), which is the Godhood or Divinity (*al-ulūhiyyah*). In this degree, the Essence is considered with the Attributes (*al-Ṣifāt*), which are Life, Knowledge, Will, Power, Hearing, Sight and Speech. More details of these three applications follow.

The Essential One

According to Ibn al-'Arabī, the oneness that is related to God (*Allāh*) is transcendent (*munazzah*) from being ascribed to other than Him, since it is the oneness of the Essence in all respects (*tawḥīd al-Dhāt min jamī' al-wujūh*). Other than Him is not described by this oneness, neither in word (*al-lafẓ*) nor in meaning (*al-ma'nā*). Indeed, the Essence of the Real, to which is ascribed such a oneness, is not even conditioned by transcendence, since in reality, the Essence is transcendent not by means of the affirmation of the affirmer of transcendence; It is in Itself aloof from any attribute.⁴⁵ In fact, the Real is transcendent by virtue of His Ipseity (i.e. *al-Huwa*), which is transcendence in reality (*munazzah 'alā al-ḥaqīqah*) and absolutely, not comparable with the oneness pertained to created things.⁴⁶

'The transcendent oneness is identical with the Essence, identical with the Ipseity (*dhātiyyah li'l-dhāt al-huwiyyah*),⁴⁷ says Ibn al-'Arabī. He points out that when the Jews asked Muḥammad—peace be upon him—'Relate thy Lord to us' (*insib Rabba-ka la-nā*), God revealed the verse: 'Say: He is Allāh, the One'; so, 'rather than the immanent One (*al-Wāḥid*), it is the transcendent One (*al-Aḥad*) which is ascribed to the Lord (*al-Rabb*), and it is with It (i.e. *al-Aḥad*) that the qualities of transcendence (*awṣāf al-tanzīh*) arise.'⁴⁸

⁴⁵ *Futūḥāt*, 2: 579.

⁴⁶ *Futūḥāt*, 2: 579, also 580.

⁴⁷ *K. Aḥadiyyah*, 3. *B. Unity*, 17.

⁴⁸ Furthermore, Ibn al-'Arabī points out that in that Prophetic Tradition, 'oneness' comes by relation (*nasb*, or *nasab*); the Jews did not say 'attribute!' (*ṣif*) nor 'describe!' (*in'at*). *K. Aḥadiyyah*, 3. *B. Unity*, 17.

The abovementioned first verse of the Qur'anic chapter *al-Ikhlāṣ*,⁴⁹ according to Ibn al-'Arabī, affirms Absolute Being (*al-Wijūd*), and negates from It any quantitative predicament (*al-'adaḥ*),⁵⁰ i.e., matter, time and space.⁵¹ As Ibn al-'Arabī states in the beginning of his *Futūḥāt*, Allāh, the One God (*Ilāh Wāḥid*)—Who is the Absolute Being (*Wijūd Muṭlaq*)—is not a substance, which has a boundary taking up room in definite space (or 'extension' in the terminology of contemporary Physics; Ar. *jawhar mutaḥayyiz*); nor the Absolute being an accident ('*araḍ*'), which negates His existential endurance (*baqā'*), a negation of which is an impossibility; nor the Absolute being a body (*jism*), which is subject to direction (*jihah*), positional point (*tilqā'*) and zoning areas (*aqtār*); nor is the Absolute temporal-bound, nor spatial-contained.⁵²

As shown by Jāmī, in Ibn al-'Arabī's metaphysics, the opposite of the One Absolute Existence is not Multiplicity (*al-kathrah*), but rather the Absolute Non-Being or Non-Existence (*al-'Adam*), which is Nothing (*laysa bi-shay'*).⁵³ Hence, the verse 'He is Allāh, the One', in the spiritual understanding of Ibn al-'Arabī, affirms the oneness of Allāh⁵⁴ in the sense that is not shared or participated by anything, as there is nothing besides the Absolute Being. Indeed, the verse affirms the Absolute Oneness (*al-Aḥadiyyah al-Muṭlaqah*) of

⁴⁹ See above n3.

⁵⁰ *Futūḥāt*, 1: 34.

⁵¹ Cf. *Commentary*, 40, 395, which states that the Ṣūfis asserted that Allāh is neither substance, nor body; that He is neither in a place nor in time, etc. For the three quantitative predicaments, see, for example, "One and Many," *Syntopicon*, 230, 233. See above n14.

⁵² *Futūḥāt*, 1: 36.

⁵³ *Durrah*, 11-12; *Precious*, 43. It is 'Nothing, either cognitively or concretely (*'ilman aw aynan*),' says Jāmī's disciple Raḍī al-Dīn 'Abd al-Ghafūr al-Lārī, see *Durrah*, 87; *Precious*, 127. For Ibn al-'Arabī's own discussion on *al-'adam al-muṭlaq*, see *Futūḥāt*, 1: 44, 3: 46, 4: 145. See also 2: 426.

⁵⁴ *Futūḥāt*, 1: 34.

Allāh in contradistinction to the non-absolute, relative oneness of others (*mā siwā Allāh*).⁵⁵ It should be realized that Allāh's unicity is an Essential Attribute (*Waṣf Dhātī*), an attribution of which is not valid to other than Him, as for them unicity is among shared attributes (*ṣifāt mushtarakah*). To the Real belongs the singular description of unicity that is shared by none (*inna li 'l-Ḥaqq waṣf al-Waḥdāniyyah wa laysa la-Hu man yushāriku-Hu fī-Hi subḥāna-Hu*).⁵⁶ As Ibn al-'Arabī says:

The All-Holy Essence (*al-Dhāt al-Muqaddasah*)—in respect to Its oneness—is definitely not a source from which a thing is issued (*maṣdar li-shay*), nor is described by attribute, nor is named by name.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ *Futūḥāt*, 2: 581.

⁵⁶ *Wasā'il al-Sā'il*, 49, as quoted in *Mu'jam*, 1160.

⁵⁷ *Fa-inna 'l-Dhāt al-Muqaddasah min hayth aḥadiyyatu-Hā laysat maṣḍaran li-shay' wa lā muttaṣifah bi-ṣifah wa lā musammāt bi-ism aṣḥan al-battata. Bulghat al-Ghawwās*, fol. 100, as quoted in *Mu'jam*, 1167. *Al-Muqaddasah* may also be translated as 'the All-pure,' 'the All-perfect,' 'He Who is far removed from every imperfection, impurity, thing derogatory from His Glory, faults and defects'.

Ibn al-'Arabī states that 'the Essence, in respect to Its oneness, is not a source from which thing is issued', since existention, creation and origination (*al-ijād*) pertains not to His Absolute Oneness (*aḥadiyyah*); it rather pertains to His singularity (*fardiyyah*). See *Futūḥāt*, 4: 89. As the Ṣūfīs' understanding of the concept of creation (*takwīn*) is not the subject matter of this thesis, it is suffice to say that at the stage of creation, according to Prof. al-Attas, the Absolute is regarded as the Single (*al-Fard*) by virtue of having already contained within Himself the potentiality of the 'other', Himself being other than the otherness of the 'other', at the level of the Divine Names and Attributes. For a brief summary of the salient features in the Ṣūfīs' understanding of the concept of creation (*takwīn*), see *Commentary*, 316-19; extensively treated by Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism: A Comparative Study of Key Philosophical Concepts* (first ed. 2 vols. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten Publishers, 1983; new ed. in one vol. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), ch. XIII. For Arabic sources see *Mu'jam*, 247-50 (on *al-tathlith*) and 873-6 (*fardiyyah*); al-Ghurāb,

It is worthy of note that Muslim lexicologists, such as al-Fayrūzābādī (d. 817/1414) and his commentator al-Zabīdī (d. 1205/1790), have stated that the term *aḥad*, in its absolute sense, has no plural.⁵⁸ Al-Zabīdī quotes *al-'Ubāb* of al-Saghānī (d. 680),⁵⁹ that when Abū 'l-'Abbās⁶⁰ was asked whether *al-āḥād* is the plural of *aḥad*, he retorted, 'God forbid (*ma'ādha 'llāh*)! There is no plural for *al-Aḥad*.'⁶¹ It is so much so that according to al-Fayyūmī (c. 734), except Allāh, no one can be described with *al-Aḥad* in the strict sense of the word. The reason, according to al-Azharī (d. 370/980), and agreed upon by Ibn Manẓūr (d. 711) and al-Fayrūzābādī, is

Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam, 162-73. The original source is *Futūḥāt*, 1: 46, 260, 265, 323, 538, 732; 2: 62, 190, 201, 259, 280, 302, 400-02, 495, 672; 3: 46, 68, 90, 134, 217, 254-55, 263, 282, 286, 289-90, 525; 4: 70 and *Fuṣūṣ*, 115-17. Cf. also *Futūḥāt*, 1: 199-202.

⁵⁸ Al-Fayrūzābādī, *al-Qāmūs Muḥīṭ*, which has the following 2 editions: 4 vols. (Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1371/1952; repr. Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, n.d.), 1: 379; 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1997), 1: 391.

⁵⁹ Lane, *Lexicon*, 1: 27, cites the narration from al-Fayyūmī's *Miṣbaḥ* (completed 734 AH). However, as indicated in al-Zabīdī's *Tāj al-'Arūs*, the narration has been documented by earlier authority, Abū Maṣṣūr Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Azharī (282/895-370/980). Al-Zabīdī's assertion is true, and al-Azharī's authority, in turn, is al-Mundhūrī; see al-Azharī, *Tahdhīb al-Lughah*, eds. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Mun'im al-Khafājī and Maḥmūd Farraj al-'Uqdah, rev. 'Alī Muḥammad al-Bajāwī, 15 vols (n.p.: al-Dār al-Miṣriyyah li 'l-Ta'lif wa 'l-Tarjamah, 1964-7), 5: 194. See also Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'Arab* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1417/1997), 18 vols., on 15: 231.

⁶⁰ He is Abū 'l-'Abbās Aḥmad Ibn Yaḥyā al-Tha'lab, the author of *al-Faṣīḥ*.

⁶¹ Abū 'l-'Abbās takes *al-āḥād* to be most probably originally *al-awḥād*, which is the plural of *al-wāḥid*, just like *ashḥād* the plural of *shāhid*. See Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-'Arūs*, ed. 'Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn (Kuwait: al-Majlis al-Waṭani li al-Thaqāfah wa al-Funūn wa al-Ādāb), 40 vols., on 7: 376; 9: 264. It is plural of paucity (*jam' qillah*). See *Lexicon*, 1: 27.

'due to the purity of this sublime Name for Him the Exalted' (*li-khulūṣ hādihā 'l-ism al-sharīf la-Hu*).⁶²

Ibn al-'Arabī identifies Oneness (*al-Aḥadiyyah*) with the Absolute Essence (*al-Dhāt al-Muṭlaqah*), Who cannot be perceived by physical eyes nor comprehended by mental thoughts, which is the hidden aspect (*mabṭūn*) of Divine self-manifestation.⁶³ Indeed, peculiarity of Essence (*khūṣūsiyyat Dhāt*) is particularly distinguished above others by Oneness (*al-Aḥadiyyah*).⁶⁴ That His oneness resembles the oneness of anyone is rejected by His saying 'and there is none like unto Him'.⁶⁵ By affirming that 'nothing that could be compared with Him', the revealed verse makes due to Him oneness that is not appropriate to other than Him.⁶⁶ As stated in *Mashāhid al-Asrār*, 'When Allāh the Exalted stood alone in the Oneness, this attribute could not be attributed to any other than Him.'⁶⁷

Here, one is reminded also of what is called by Ibn al-'Arabī 'the One Ipseity' (*Huwiyyah Aḥadiyyah*).⁶⁸ And Jāmī's identification of the Essential One with the Unseen Mystery of the Ipseity (*ghā'ib al-Huwiyyah*) reminds us of Ibn al-'Arabī's teaching on the Absolute Unseen (*al-Ghayb al-Muṭlaq*), Who is not possible to be witnessed in any state whatsoever,⁶⁹ Who is forever unseen and unknown.⁷⁰ Indeed,

⁶² *Tāj al-'Arūs*, 7: 376; *Tahdhīb al-Lughah*, 5: 198; *Lisān al-'Arab*, 15: 233.

⁶³ Ibn al-'Arabī, "Kitāb al-Yā' ", in *Rasā'il*, no. 10, 1.

⁶⁴ *Yā'*, 3.

⁶⁵ *Al-Ikhlāṣ*, 112: 4.

⁶⁶ *Futūḥāt*, 2: 579-80.

⁶⁷ Ibn 'Arabī, *Contemplation of the Holy Mysteries*, tr. Cecilia Twinch and Pablo Beneito (Oxford: Anqa Publishing, 2001), 93.

⁶⁸ *Futūḥāt*, 4: 28.

⁶⁹ *Futūḥāt*, 2: 579.

⁷⁰ *Futūḥāt*, 4: 128. See also his *Kitāb al-Jalālah wa huwa Kalimat Allāh*, no. 4 in *Rasā'il*, 3. On the Most Holy Unseen (*al-Ghayb al-Aqdas*), see the *Futūḥāt* 2: 392. On *al-ghayb*, see further *Murjām*, 848-57, also

the Essential One is free from, and not connected with, and keeps aloof from, created beings (*al-tabarrī min al-khalq*).⁷¹ The highest human knowledge of Him instills silence, implying thus the inexpressible One, Who is beyond names and description.⁷²

For the author of *Laṭā'if al-I'lām*, who is either al-Qūnāwī or al-Qāshānī, the Oneness (*al-Aḥadiyyah*) is identical with the Essence in respect to the fact that there is no relation at all between the Essence and anything (*i'tibār al-Dhāt min hayth lā nisbah bayna-Hā wa bayna shay' aṣlan*). By this expression called Oneness, the Essence is required to be self-sufficient from the universe (*bi-hādhā 'l-i'tibār al-musammā bi 'l-Aḥadiyyah taqtaḍī al-Dhāt al-ghinā 'an al-'ālamīn*). In this respect, the Essence is not known nor comprehended in any way, due to the exclusion or omission of aspects from It (*wa min hādhā 'l-wajh lā tudrak al-Dhāt wa lā tuḥāṭ bi-Hā bi-wajh min al-wujūh li-suqūt al-i'tibārāt 'an-Hā*); this is the aspect (*i'tibār*) whereby the Essence is called 'One' (*Aḥad*), and its referent is the interior and absolute conditions of the Essence (*wa muta'allaqu-hu buṭūn al-Dhāt wa iṭlāqu-Hā*).⁷³

Here, in Jāmī's words, the Real Being possesses oneness (*waḥdah*) that is not superadded to His Essence, but is rather His being considered as He is in Himself (*min hayth Huwa Huwa*) and insofar as there is no duality in It. When considered in this way, His unity is not an attribute (*na't*) of the One (*al-Wāḥid*), but is rather identical with Him (*'aynu-Hu*). This is what the verifiers mean by Essential Oneness (*al-*

Fihris al-Shawāhid, in Su'ād al-Ḥakīm, *Ibn 'Arabī wa Mawlid Lughah Jadidah* (Beirut: Dandarrah, 1991), 121, 178.

⁷¹ *Futūḥāt*, 2: 579-80.

⁷² Cf. Shahidullah Faridi, *Inner Aspects of Faith* (Karachi: Mahfil-e-Zauqia, 1979, second ed. 1986, repr. Kuala Lumpur: A.S. Noordeen, 1993), 127.

⁷³ *Laṭā'if al-I'lām*, fol. 13b-14, quoted in *Muḥjam*, 1169.

Aḥadiyyah al-Dhātīyyah).⁷⁴ This is the oneness of the Being that is really indivisible or simple in every respect (*al-Wāḥid al-Ḥaqīqī*),⁷⁵ 'the level of absolute Oneness where not even a trace of multiplicity is discernible', 'the One of absolute simplicity', not in the philosophical sense of *individuated* Essence, but in the ṣufic sense of *absolute* Essence, which becomes individuated at the level of godhood (*ulūhiyyah*) where, as God, He is already self-invested with Names and Attributes.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ According to Jāmī, from *al-Aḥadiyyah al-Dhātīyyah* are derived numerical unity (*al-waḥdah*) and numerical multiplicity (*al-kathrah*) i.e., two quantitative predicaments (*al-'adadiyyatayn*) which are familiar to all. In other words, unity and multiplicity are among the forms of the individuations of the Absolute Oneness. *Durrah Fākhīrah*, 12, 88; *Precious Pearl*, 43, 127.

⁷⁵ *Durrah Fākhīrah*, 42, 48; *Precious Pearl*, 67-68, 72

⁷⁶ *Commentary*, 303-9, 412; Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *Degrees of Existence* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1994), 34-41, 52; *Prolegomena*, 298-303, 313.

The Dual Aspects of the Essence: *Aḥadiyyah* and *Wāḥidiyyah*

It is narrated by al-Tahānāwī, that for the philosophers (*al-ḥukamā*),⁷⁷ there is simply no difference between *al-aḥadiyyah* and *al-wāḥidiyyah*, as both express that the Necessary Being, in Itself, having no parts (*'adam qismat al-Wājib li-Dhāti-Hi ilā 'l-ajzā*).⁷⁸ As the author of *Miṣbāḥ*, al-Fayyūmī puts it, *aḥad* is interchangeable with *wāḥid*.⁷⁹

On the contrary, the Ṣūfis take these two terms as expressions of a dual nature (*i'tibārān*) of the Essential Oneness (*al-Dhāt waḥdah*) of Allāh⁸⁰; if considered as being devoid of all aspects (*al-i'tibārāt*), It is called transcendent oneness (*aḥadiyyah*) without qualification (*qayd*), but if considered as being qualified by them, It is called immanent oneness (*wāḥidiyyah*).⁸¹ This is the second application of the term oneness: to the Absolute Essence (*al-Dhāt al-Muṭlaqah*), considered as being entirely without any aspect. As Ibn al-'Arabī states, '*Huwa al-Wāḥid al-Aḥad*' means He is not only transcendentally One, but also immanently One (*al-Wāḥid*), in the sense that His Will (*mashī'ah*, *irādah*), Knowledge, Power is His Essence; He is Exalted from being many or numerous or multiple in Essence.'⁸² According to Ibn al-

⁷⁷ On the list of the philosophers, see *Commentary*, 218-21.

⁷⁸ Al-Tahānāwī, *Kashshāf Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Funūn*, annotated by Aḥmad Ḥasan Basaj 4 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1418H/1998), 4: 303.

⁷⁹ Al-Fayyūmī, *al-Miṣbāḥ al-Munīr*, second ed., (Bulaq: al-Maṭba'ah al-Kubrā al-Amūriyyah, 1324H/1906), 1:11; al-Jawharī, *al-Ṣiḥāḥ*, 6 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-'Ilm li al-Malāyīn, 1376H/1956, third repr. 1404/1984), 2:440; Sa'īd Khūrī, *Aqrab al-Mawārid*, 3 vols. (Beirut: Maktabah Mursali al-Yasū'iyyah, 1889), 1: 5, 2: 1432; *Mujmal al-Lughah*, 1: 89, 4: 918. *Lexicon*, 1: 27.

⁸⁰ *Durrah Fākhīrah*, 87; *Precious Pearl*, 127. See also *Degrees of Existence*, 5-10; *Prolegomena*, 271-9.

⁸¹ *Durrah Fākhīrah*, 12, 88; *Precious Pearl*, 43, 127.

⁸² *Futūḥāt*, 1: 291. Ibn al-'Arabī's *Kitāb al-Alif wa huwa Kitāb al-Aḥadiyyah*, is opened with this praise to Allāh: 'Oneness (*al-aḥadiyyah*) is the praise (*ḥamd*) of the immanent One (*Wāḥid*) for its own unicity

'Arabī, the Real could be understood as absolutely One as well as as having relation or attribution (*iḍāfah*), as He possesses all and everything (*al-kull*); indeed He is the Essence (*'Ayn*) of all or everything.⁸³ 'Know that He who is properly named *Allāh* is One in the Essence, All by the Names,⁸⁴ says Ibn al-'Arabī in *Fuṣūṣ*, stating at once that all—whether it is called the Essence, Ipseity, Allāh, or the One—are identical. 'The Oneness [of He Who is properly named *Allāh*] gathers all (of His Names) together in His potentiality.'⁸⁵ To return to our discussion on the distinction between *aḥad* and *wāḥid*, here is a quotation from *Mashāhid al-Asrār*:

The Real made me contemplate the light of oneness...then He said to me, 'You are *al-wāḥid* and I am *al-Aḥad*.'⁸⁶ ...The oneness of *wāḥid* is a composite oneness, capable of division, whilst the oneness of *Aḥad* is a simple and indivisible oneness.⁸⁷

Ibn al-'Arabī's understanding and application of the terms *al-wāḥid* and *al-aḥad* could be substantiated by Arabic authorities. As stated in al-Fayyūmī's *Miṣbah*, the term *al-aḥad* is used absolutely in negative phrases;⁸⁸ indeed, as noted in al-Zabīdī's *Tāj al-'Arūs*, some lexicologists argue that the term *al-aḥad* is employed to deny (*nafy*, *jaḥd*, *juhūd*)

(*waḥdāniyyah*). Unicity is the praise of the absolute and transcendent One (*Aḥad*) for its own transcendent oneness....Allāh is the greatest (*akbar*)....the praise of the transcendent One for the transcendent One remains only for its own transcendent oneness.' p. 2; *B. Unity*, 16.

⁸³ *Futūḥāt*, 2: 31.

⁸⁴ *Fuṣūṣ*, 90.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ Ibn 'Arabī, *Contemplation of the Holy Mysteries*, tr. Cecilia Twinch and Pablo Beneito (Oxford: Anqa Publishing, 2001), 91.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 93.

⁸⁸ *Lexicon*, 2: 2028.

while *al-wāḥid* is to affirm (*ithbāt*).⁸⁹ Al-Zabīdī was certainly referring to earlier authorities, among others, al-Azharī (d. 370/980).⁹⁰ It is stated also in the same *Taḥdhib* of al-Azharī⁹¹ and the *Lisān al-'Arab* of Ibn Manẓūr (d. 711AH),⁹² that, except Allāh, there is no being to whom the epithets of *al-Wāḥid* and *al-Aḥad* are applicable *together*, or to whom *al-Aḥad* is applicable *alone*.⁹³

'Know that,' says Ibn al-'Arabī, 'for Allāh, in respect of Itself (*Nafsuḥ*), is a oneness of the transcendent One (*aḥadiyyat al-Aḥad*), and in respect of His Names, is a oneness of manyness (*aḥadiyyat al-kathrah*).'⁹⁴ Indeed, the name 'Allāh' is a transcendently Unique Exalted Essential Name as well as an Integrative Name (*al-Dhātī al-'Alī al-Aḥadī al-Jam'ī*). The latter is a oneness of an integration of the accumulation of the most beautiful Names (*aḥadiyyat al-Jam' jam'īyyāt al-Asmā' al-Ḥusnā*), as the Names are indicative of (*mushūrah ilā*), pointing to (*dāllah 'alā*) and dependent on the Essence.⁹⁵

As the author of *Laṭā'if al-I'lām fī Ishārāt Ahl al-Ilhām* says, the name 'the transcendent One' (*al-Aḥad*) is of the Essence per se, being subtracted from all aspects, and all entifications are withdrawn from It; this is in contradistinction to the name 'the immanent One' (*al-Wāḥid*), whereby the Essence is considered with all aspects and entifications, *ad*

⁸⁹ Al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-'Arūs*, 9: 264

⁹⁰ Al-Azharī, *Taḥdhib*, 5: 195. See also Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, 1: 82, 15: 231, 233.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 5: 197-8.

⁹² Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, 15: 233.

⁹³ See also *Lexicon*, 2: 2028.

⁹⁴ *Futūḥāt*, 3: 465.

⁹⁵ *Ismuḥi al-Dhātī al-'Alī al-Aḥadī al-Jam'ī [al-Ism 'Allāh'] alladhī huwa aḥadiyyat al-Jam' Jam'īyyāt al-Asmā' al-Ḥusnā min kawniḥā mushūrah ilayhi wa dāllah 'alayhi wa tata'allaq bihi*. Ibn 'Arabī, *Risālat Shaqq al-Juyūb 'an Asrār al-Ghuyūb wa Tājallī al-Maḥbūb min Ufiq Samā' al-Qulūb* (Cairo: Maṭba'ah al-Sa'adah, 1325H/1907), fol. 62, as quoted in *Mu'jam*, 1167.

infinitum.⁹⁶ Indeed, the Essence's unity in multiplicity (*wāḥidiyyat al-Dhāt*) is identified with His Attributive Oneness (*al-Aḥadiyyah al-Ṣifatiyyah*), which is the aspect of the Essence that brings about the union of Its Names and Attributes. In this respect, the Names, albeit pointing to the Essence, are taken as different from It, given that the One (*al-Wāḥid*) is understood as distinct from other Names.⁹⁷ As al-Kamshakhānawī states, 'Oneness is the Subtraction of the Sum (i.e., *Allāh*) from Attributes and Names and Relations and Self-entifications' (*isqāt al-jamī' minā 'l-Ṣifāt wa 'l-Asmā' wa 'l-Nisab wa 'l-Ta'ayyunāt*).⁹⁸

Al-Tahānawī, citing the commentary of the *Fuṣūṣ*, states that the degree of *al-aḥadiyyah* is the wellspring, as it were, of two ontological effusions.⁹⁹ Firstly, the effluence of the fixed entities and its potentialities indwelling in the Divine

⁹⁶ Fol. 13b, quoted in *Mu'jam*, 1162: *Al-Aḥad huwa 'l-ism al-Dhāt bi-i'tibār suqūt jamī' al-i'tibārāt wa intifā' jamī' al-ta'ayyunāt 'an-Hā wa dhālika bi-khilāf al-Wāḥid fa-inna 'l-Dhāt innamā tusammā bi-hi bi-i'tibār thubūt jamī' al-i'tibārāt wa 'l-ta'ayyunāt allatī lā tatanāhā.*

⁹⁷ Fol. 13b-14, quoted in *Mu'jam*, 1169: *ya'nī bi 'l-Aḥadiyyah al-Ṣifatiyyah i'tibār al-Dhāt min hayth ittūḥad al-asmā' wa 'l-ṣifāt bi-hā wa intishā'uhā 'an-hā wa hādihā 'l-i'tibār yusammā bi-wāḥidiyyat al-Dhāt ayḍan wa bi-hādihā 'l-i'tibār tatakhdhu al-asmā' 'alā ikhtilāfihā wa yadhlu kull ism 'alayhā wa in fuhima minhu ma'nān yatamayyazu bihi 'an ghayrihi min al-asmā'. Cf. Lārī's remark that 'Oneness, like all other attributes, is identical with Him with respect to reality and the thing itself (*nafs al-amr*) but other than He with respect to [mental] consideration (*al-i'tibār*) and intellection (*al-ta'aqqul*).' *Durrāh*, 87; *Precious*, 127.*

⁹⁸ Al-Kamshakhānawī, *Jamī' al-Uṣūl* (Egypt: Dār al-Kutub al-'Arabiyyah al-Kubrā, 1331H/1913), 54, as quoted in *Mu'jam*, 1169.

⁹⁹ *Al-aḥadiyyah hiya 'l-martabah allatī hiya manba' li-fayḍān. Kashshāf*, 4: 303. These two effulgences correspond to Ibn al-'Arabī's two kinds of self-manifestations of the Absolute Being: *tajallī ghayb* and *tajallī shahādah*. See further *Fuṣūṣ*, 120-1; *Mu'jam*, 265-6, 888-92; *Commentary*, 167, 278.

intelligible presence,¹⁰⁰ and secondly, the effluxion of their existence and perfections in the plane of concrete entities according as their spiritual and physical universe and spheres. The degree of Oneness is prior to the degree of Godhood or Divinity. Even though all have the same existence, the mind determines that some of them are prior to others, like Life over Knowledge, and Knowledge over Will, and so forth.¹⁰¹

To enlighten us further on the conception of *al-aḥadiyyah* of the author of the *Fuṣūṣ*, al-Tahānawī recommends al-Jīlī's *al-Insān al-Kāmil*, which states that the word 'oneness' designates the manifestation-form (*majlā*) of the Essence wherein appear neither the Names nor the Attributes nor any trace of their Effects; Oneness is then a Name for the purity of the Essence in so far as the Essence is divested of all Divine and creatural aspects (*ṣirāfat al-Dhāt al-Mujarradah 'an al-i'tibārāt al-Ḥaqqiyyah wa 'l-khalqīyyah*).¹⁰² In other words, 'oneness' expresses the Essence by abstraction of relation; attributed to Allāh, the Oneness designates the purity of the Essence isolated from all the Names, from all the Qualities, from all cause and all effect.¹⁰³ The Oneness is the pure Essence abstracted from the Divine and the created.

¹⁰⁰ *Al-a'yān wa isti'dādātu-hā fi 'l-ḥaḍrah al-'ilmiyyah awwalan. Kashshāf*, 4: 303. Cf. *Commentary*, 164-5. On *ḥaḍrah* as 'presence' or 'an ontological state in the world of intelligibles', see p. 161.

¹⁰¹ *Wa wujūduhā wa kamālātuhā fi 'l-ḥaḍrah al-'ayniyyah bi-ḥasab 'awālimihā wa aṭwārihā al-rūḥāniyyah wa 'l-jismāniyyah thāniyan, wa hiya aqdamu marātib al-ilāhiyyah, wa in kānat kulluhā fi 'l-wujūd sawā', lākin al-'aql yaḥkumu bi-taqaddum ba'dihā 'alā ba'ḍ, ka 'l-ḥayāh 'alā 'l-'ilm wa 'l-'ilm 'alā 'l-irādah wa 'alā hādihā al-qiyās. Kashshāf*, 4: 303. Cf. *Commentary*, 165-6. On the distinction of essential priority and posteriority, see pp. 272-4, 281-2, 415.

¹⁰² *Insān Kāmil*, 47; *Universal Man*, 23. In other words, according to al-Jīlī, oneness is the quality of the Essence as far as It is considered as pure from, and absence of, all quality, all name, allusion, relation or analogy, as all is contained in a non-manifested (*bāṭin*) manner.

¹⁰³ *Insān Kāmil*, 47; *Universal Man*, 23-24. According to al-Jīlī, in this sense Oneness is the first becoming manifest (*ẓāhir*) of the Essence.

¹⁰⁴ As none of the Names (*al-Asmā'*) and Attributes (*al-Ṣifāt*) manifest themselves in Oneness; Oneness corresponds then to 'the purity of the Sheer Essence in Itself' (*maḥḍ al-Dhāt al-Ṣīf fī sha'n al-dhāt*). Due to this, the Oneness is superior (*a'lā*) to Unicity, since it is the pure Essence (*Dhāt Maḥḍ*), the superiority of Oneness over the other manifestations of the Essence is like that of the roots over the branches.¹⁰⁵ The Essence pure and simple possesses the Oneness (*aḥadiyyah*), in which is manifested nothing of connections, assignments, Names, Qualities, nor any other thing; It is the pure Essence.¹⁰⁶

For al-Jīlī, some insights into the nature of such a oneness is illustrated when a man's own self absorbs him so completely that he forgets all relations, and he seize such an idea of himself in himself, stripped of all his appearances, so that he is in himself and that all the holy qualities or the creaturely attributes (which belong to him in any case) no longer relate to him.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ *Insān Kāmil*, 47; *Universal Man*, 24.

¹⁰⁵ *Insān Kāmil*, 49; *Universal Man*, 26-7.

¹⁰⁶ *Insān Kāmil*, 77; *Universal Man*, 57.

¹⁰⁷ *Insān Kāmil*, 47; *Universal Man*, 23. Cf. Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *Intuition of Existence* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1990), 9; *Prolegomena*, 184.

The One Essence and Worship

In his summation of the Ṣūfis's theological ontology, Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas cautions that when the Ṣūfis identify the Real-Truth (*al-Ḥaqq*)—which is one of the Names of Allāh—with *the reality of existence*, referring to the Absolute as It manifests Itself in all the plane of Existence, they are not implying thereby that Allāh has no individuality, or that Allāh is a vast, vague, pervasive and dynamic Being, contrary to the theological God of religion.¹⁰⁸ On the contrary, they do affirm the divine individuality of Allāh, for it is not inconsistent for the Absolute to have an individuation as God in the way that He has described Himself according to His Beautiful Names and Sublime Attributes at the plane of the Divine Oneness, whose self-revealing aspect is characterized by the names and attributes of divinity.¹⁰⁹ In other words, while the Ṣūfis affirm a higher, unmanifested and hence unknown level of Allāh's Oneness, in which His Essence is only known to Himself, they also affirm the theological Divine Unity, which corresponds, in their formulated scheme of the degrees of the 'descent' of the Absolute in analogical gradations, to the level of *wāḥidiyyah* in the planes of the first and second determination and individuation, where the Absolute as God is already invested with the names and attributes of divinity.¹¹⁰ As such, the Ṣūfis affirm the dual nature of the truth of Islām, i.e., as a religious monotheism and its authentic philosophical counterpart or metaphysical complement, the *taṣawwuf* that projects the Islamic vision of

¹⁰⁸ The dualistic dilemma, to believe in either an existential or personal God, is an issue that has plagued the West, perhaps more so in the modern scientific period. See, for examples, *Albert Einstein: Philosopher-Scientist*, ed. Paul A. Schilpp, 3rd. ed. (Ill.: Open Court, 3rd. pr. 1982), 103, 659-60.

¹⁰⁹ *Commentary*, 43.

¹¹⁰ *Commentary*, 45.

Reality and Truth as *tawḥīd*, the Unity of Allāh, of the Absolute Being and Existence.¹¹¹

Indeed, in one crucial passage in the *Futūḥāt*, Ibn al-'Arabī forbids us, firstly, not to worship the Essence that is not described as God (*al-Ilāh*); and secondly, he tells us not to worship God without the godhead being related to He who is rightly described by It,¹¹² otherwise, the worship would be wrongly directed, whether to the Absolute Essence (in the first case mentioned), or to the false god (in the second case), whose god is not the One correctly understood in *tawḥīd*.¹¹³ In other words, Ibn al-'Arabī tells us not to perform worship to the very reality of the Real, which is Oneness (*ḥaqīqat al-Ḥaqq wa huwa 'l-Aḥadiyyah*),¹¹⁴ the degree of the Essence as It is in Itself, unconditioned by any condition, including the condition of godhood. Indeed, the designation 'God' here is inappropriate, since as God He is in a sense already conditioned by determination and qualified by relation between Him and the creatures, whereas considered as Absolute Being He demands that Absolute Oneness wherein no trace of the initial stirrings of multiplicity are discernible (i.e., oneness at the stage of *aḥadiyyah muṭlaqah*).¹¹⁵ Rather, the servant should consciously and willingly perform the worship to Allāh—the One God—in Whom is combined the most beautiful Divine Names¹¹⁶ and Attributes (*al-asmā' wa 'l-ṣifāt*); here, His Oneness, at the stage of being God, already includes the forms of potential multiplicity, already pregnant with infinite possibilities towards

¹¹¹ *Commentary*, 129-30.

¹¹² *Futūḥāt*, 2: 591. *lam ta'bud al-Dhāt mu'arrāh 'an waṣfi-Hā bi 'l-ulūhiyyah, wa lam ta'bud al-ulūhiyyah min ghayr nisbatī-Hā ilā mawṣūf bi-Hā.*

¹¹³ See *Commentary*, 109-10.

¹¹⁴ *Futūḥāt*, 2: 591. On the identity of Reality (*ḥaqīqah*) with One (*aḥad*), Essence (*Dhāt*) and Being (*wujūd*), see *Commentary*, 309-10.

¹¹⁵ *Commentary*, 154, 159.

¹¹⁶ *Futūḥāt*, 2: 591.

self-diversification, already adumbrated with the latent possibilities of articulation in multiple and diverse forms. i.e., oneness at the stage of *wāḥidiyyah*, wherein the inner articulations that are comprised in the unity are discernible. This is the stage of unity in multiplicity or the unity of the many.¹¹⁷

Ibn al-'Arabī would question whether one could worship the Essence at the level of Oneness, since the veil of incomprehensibility (*ḥijāb al-'izzah*) is never removed from It, so much so that none but Him may see Him in the transcendent oneness. The reality is that it is impossible to see Him in the transcendent oneness. The transcendent One—as Ibn al-'Arabī poetically expresses it—is 'the Sanctuary that is Incomprehensible, Unknowable, and Unapproachable' (*'azīz manī' al-ḥīman*), Who has never ceased to be in the Dark Mist (*al-'amā*), and to whom no self-manifestation can ever be attributed as Its Reality forbids manifestation. The transcendent One is 'the face to whom belongs the burning splendors' (*al-subḥāt al-muḥarriqah*).¹¹⁸ 'Therefore my brothers,' Ibn al-'Arabī continues, 'do not aspire to the lifting of this veil, for then you will be acting in an ignorant fashion and will wear yourselves out. But strengthen your aspiration

¹¹⁷ *Commentary*, 154, 160, 276, 410.

¹¹⁸ *K. Aḥadiyyah*, 3-4. *B. Unity*, 16-18. The Dark Mist there refers to the well-known Prophet's answer to the question where was our Lord before He created the creatures?: 'He was in the Dark Mist'. It is echoed in contemporary Islamic metaphysics: '...the nature of the Ultimate Reality as not conditioned by any condition whatever is, strictly speaking, not conditioned even by transcendence, and can never be accessible to our knowledge and cognition, and remains eternally unknown and unknowable except to Himself. We refer to this first and highest degree of existence as the self-concealing aspect of the Ultimate Reality, as His inmost Self and very Essence (*al-Dhāt*) alluded to in the sacred tradition as the 'Dark Mist' (*al-'amā*)...' *The Degrees of Existence*, 4. The state of oneness is the first self-descent (*tanazzul*) of the Essence from the darkness of the Mist towards the light of manifestations. *Insān Kāmil*, 47; *Universal Man*, 23.

to the attainment of the Divine Unicity, for it is in It that you are conceived and It is the inclination which is proper for you.¹¹⁹

To recall al-Jīlī, how could one worship the One, when in the Oneness, none of the Names (*al-Asmā'*) and Attributes (*al-Ṣifāt*) manifest themselves, as Oneness corresponds to 'the purity of the Sheer Essence in Itself' (*maḥḍ al-Dhāt al-Ṣīf fī sha'n al-dhātī*)? Contrast this with the Unicity, where the Names and the Attributes and their effects (*mu'aththarāt*) are manifested, but with regard only to the Essence, not in a separate mode, so that each one therein is identical with the other. And what more with the Divinity, where the Names and the Attributes are manifested according to that which is appropriate to each one of them. Indeed, the Divinity encompasses in its locus (*majlā*) the properties of all manifestations, and gives to all possessor of reality its reality.

It is for that, that the Oneness is superior (*a'lā*) to Unicity, since it is the pure Essence (*Dhāt Maḥḍ*), and it is for the same reason that the Divinity is superior to the Oneness, since the Divinity gives the Oneness its reality; for the properties of the Divinity consist in the fact that Allāh is the supreme (*a'lā*), the most complete (*ajma'*), the most noble (*a'azz*) and the most excellent (*arfā'*) Name; its superiority over Oneness is like the superiority of the whole over the part, whereas the superiority of Oneness over the other manifestations of the Essence is like that of the roots over the branches. As for the superiority of

¹¹⁹ *K. Aḥadiyyah*, 3-4. *B. Unity*, 16-18. Ibn al-'Arabī says that it is in the Divine Unicity (rather than in the transcendent Oneness) that we are conceived, as it is out of the inner depths of the unicity of the absolute Being that Its modes and aspects appear, disappear and reappear. See, for example, *Commentary*, 42.

Unicity over the rest of manifestations, it is like that
of the Union over the Separation.¹²⁰

¹²⁰ *Insān Kāmil*, 49; *Universal Man*, 26-7.

