

# UNDERSTANDING THE MULTIDIMENSIONAL ISLAMIC FAITH THROUGH ‘ABD AL-GHANĪ AL-NĀBULUSĪ’S MYSTICAL PHILOSOPHY

**Naoki Yamamoto**

*Graduate School of Asian and African Area Studies, Kyoto University, Japan*

## **Abstract**

*This paper tries to present a new perspective on Islamic faith and Muslim identity to Muslim minorities who are challenged in practicing or following Islamic law in non-Islamic countries or non-Muslims in the contemporary world. It will uncover the multidimensional perspective of the concept of faith based on sin (dhanb) and repentance (tawbah) through the mystical philosophy of a Syrian scholar, Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī (d. 1143/1741) of the 18th century Ottoman Damascus who contributed to the field of Sufism particularly based on Ibn ‘Arabī’s thought of waḥdat al-wujūd (oneness of being) and insān kāmil (the perfect man). Nābulusī believes that anyone who lived during the inexistence of prophet’s revelation, inhabited an isolated place cut off from information about Islam, or lived in dār al-ḥarb and did not make a hijra to dār al-islām could not be regarded as sinful in their deeds. However, faith in Allah is essential and infidelity is not forgiven regardless whether or not they live in dār al-islām or dār al-ḥarb. Further, Nābulusī insists that true faith can be achieved by understanding the sin of existence; the ignorance of the difference of existence between Allah and men.*

*[Artikel ini menjelaskan identitas keberagaman umat Islam minoritas yang dituntut untuk menerapkan syariat, namun harus hidup di negara non-muslim, dengan mendiskusikan perspektif multidimensional terhadap konsep dosa dan tobat khususnya konsep waḥdat al-wujūd dan insān kāmil yang dikembangkan oleh Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī (1143/1741), seorang*

*sufi pemikir Syria yang hidup di masa kesultanan Usmani di Damaskus. Nābulusī berkeyakinan bahwa siapa saja yang hidup sebelum turunnya wahyu di masa Nabi, hidup di daerah terpencil yang tidak mengenal Islam, atau hidup di dār al-ḥarb dan tidak hijrah ke dār al-islām, tidaklah dibebani dosa atas perbuatannya. Namun demikian, iman kepada Allah amatlah penting dan kekufuran tidaklah dimaafkan, baik seseorang tersebut hidup di dār al-islām ataupun dār al-ḥarb. Nābulusī beranggapan bahwa iman yang hakiki bisa dicapai dengan memahami dosa eksistensial, yaitu mempersamakan eksistensi Allah dan manusia.]*

**Keywords:** Ibn ‘Arabī, *waḥdat al-wujūd*, *dār al-ḥarb*, *insān kāmil*

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## A. Introduction

Discussions on Ibn ‘Arabī’s school worldwide often limit its focus on scholars in the early days such as Ibn ‘Arabī and his apprentice, *Qūnawī*.<sup>1</sup> This limitation draws Akbarian scholars in the time of Ottoman Empire further from the contemporary religious studies. Most studies focus on the metaphysical side of Akbarian philosophy tends to care less on practical side. Related to the concern of practical problem, it is necessary to highlight that after the end of Ottoman empire and the emergence of globalization and the nation state, the traditional world view of Islam of *dār al-Islām* or *dār al-ḥarb* have become difficult to be held in contemporary world considering the fact that many Muslims also are now living in non-Islamic countries, such as Europe and United States, and facing difficulties in practicing Islamic duties. Many Islamic scholars have been presenting a flexibility of Islamic law as minority *fiqh* (*fiqh al-aqallīyāt*),<sup>2</sup> but few intellectuals show interest in the aspect of faith.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>See William C Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God: Principles of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s Cosmology* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1997) and “The Five Divine Presences: From al-Qunawi to al-Qaysari,” *The Muslim World* 72, 1982, pp. 107-128.

<sup>2</sup>About minority fiqh, see Yūsuf Qaraḍāwī, *Fiqh al-Aqallīyāt al-Muslima* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 2001).

<sup>3</sup>Tariq Ramadan who is one of the most influential Muslim scholar in Europe try to build new theological framework related to Muslim’s identity called abode of testimony (*dār al-shahāda*), for Muslim living in Europe. See Tariq Ramadan, *Western*

The question ahead is then, ‘is there any applicable concept of faith for minority Muslims in the traditional discourse of Islamic scholars?’ This paper will try to answer the question by discussing the concept of faith in *dār al-ḥarb* based on sin (*dhanb*) and repentance (*tanba*) through the perspective of a Syrian mystical philosophy, ‘Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī (d. 1143/1741) who also contributed to the field of Sufism based on Ibn‘Arabī’s thought of *waḥdat al-wujūd*.

A Syrian mystic, theologian and Hanafite jurist of Ottoman Damascus period, Nābulusī is a prominent scholar in 18<sup>th</sup> century. He was born in the family of jurist, and started to study Islamic Studies in his early age. His father, Ismā‘īl, was his mentor. Nābulusī lost his father when he was 12 years old. After the loss, he stayed at home and devoted himself to Islamic studies, mystical knowledge such as *waḥdat al-wujūd* of Ibn ‘Arabī in particular. Most of Islamic scholars learned Islamic studies under the teachers through traveling around Arab countries but Nābulusī studied and gained mystical knowledge mostly by reading books of mystics by himself.<sup>4</sup> Later, he traveled to many countries such as Turkey, Egypt, and Palestine and wrote a numerous books of his travels. According to Bakri, Nābulusī left more than 252 writings and most of his books are about Sufism according to Ibn ‘Arabī’s mystical philosophy.<sup>5</sup>

This paper uses *Ḥaqā’iq al-Islām wa-Asrāruhu* and *Khumrat al-Ḥān wa-Ranna al-Alḥān* as the primary sources. It discusses about Islamic mysticism based on ‘Ibn ‘Arabī’s thought especially *waḥdat al-wujūd*. Discussion in this paper will be presented in the following order: in the first section I will talk about the structure of *Ḥaqā’iq al-Islām wa-Asrārūh* and reveal its uniqueness in the history of Sufism. Then I will present the multidimensional aspects of Nābulusī’s concept of faith that can be applied to Muslims in *dār al-ḥarb* and also to non-Muslims. I will also focus on Nābulusī’s concept of Allah’s divine presences and differences of existence between Allah and human beings and the problem of sin in human beings’ entities, a subject which is the most important and

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*Muslims and the future of Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>4</sup>Elizabeth Sirriyeh, *Sufi Visonary of Ottoman Damascus ‘Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī 1641-1731* (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2005), p. 7.

<sup>5</sup>Alauddin Bakri, *‘Abdalḡanī an-Nābulusī (1143/1731): oeuvre, vie et doctrine* (Thèse présentée pour l’obtention du Doctorat ès-Lettres, Université de Paris I - Panthéon – Sorbonne. 1985).

unique in Nābulusī's *waḥdat al-wujūd*. I will also touch upon issues about repentance from sin which prevails over various obstacles including human beings itself. In the end I will reveal the ultimate stage of Nābulusī's mystical philosophy that even includes salvation of infidels from hellfire. Furthermore, it shows the multidimensional Islamic faith trying to overcome traditional framework *dār al-ḥarb/ dār al-islām*, muslim or infidels, and cross-bordering salvation from this world and the next.

## B. Nābulusī's *Ḥaqā'iq al-Islām wa-Asrārūb (Ḥaqā'iq)*

This section will present the structure of *Ḥaqā'iq al-Islām wa-Asrārūb* and show its unique position in the history of Sufism. Nābulusī wrote *Ḥaqā'iq* in 1674/1085<sup>6</sup>, ten years after his journey to Istanbul and joining Qādirīya order.<sup>7</sup> Most of Nābulusī's works are commentary of other famous scholars' books such as 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (d. 561/ 1166) or Ibn al-Fāriḍ (d. 632/ 1235), yet this book is his original book and contains his unique insight from the beginning to the end. *Ḥaqā'iq* was written in seven chapters i.e. Chapter of Sin, Chapter of Repentance, Chapter of Right Creed, Chapter of Infidelity, Chapter of Islam, Chapter of Faith (*imān*) and Chapter of Performing Righteous Deeds (*iḥsān*). These chapters deliberately explain the mystical path for Muslims on how to acquire the true Islamic faith based on Ibn 'Arabī's *waḥdat al-wujūd* and explain the harmony of reality (*ḥaqīqa*) and law (*sharī'a*). Sirriyeh claims that *Ḥaqā'iq* is "his most advanced and sophisticated work of Sufi thought by comparison with the mature production of his fifties".<sup>8</sup> Nābulusī's discussion in the book emphasizes that Muslim must understand the problem of sin existing in the entities of human beings prior to any other subject. In the history of Sufism many Sufi scholars have discussed what constitutes repentance and its place in the level of mystic stairs or path (*maqāmāt*), but attention is not paid to the sin prior to repentance. Nābulusī's view towards the concept of sin has made him unique among Islamic school. *Ḥaqā'iq* itself is started by a chapter in which he believes crucial in Islam, that is, the Chapter of Sin as he believes that

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<sup>6</sup>Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī, *Ḥaqā'iq al-Islām wa-Asrārūb* (Beirut: Dār al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1986), p. 219.

<sup>7</sup>Sirriyeh, *Sufi Visionary of Ottoman Damascus*, p. 20.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 21.

that understanding the concept of sin in Islam is the most important consideration in any Muslim's life and ultimate salvation.

### C. Multidimensional Faith in *Dār al-Ḥarb*

In *Ḥaqā'iq*, Nābulusī discusses every subject from both the aspect of law (*sharī'ah*) and aspect of reality (*ḥaqīqa*). In the field of Sufism the relationship between *sharī'ah* and *ḥaqīqa* often explained as outer (*ẓāhir*) side of Islam and inner (*bāṭin*) side of Islam, Nābulusī believes that true faith can be achieved by understanding both law and reality. Before he starts a discussion about the problem of sin, he starts by talking about Islamic faith and *sharī'ah* in *dār al-ḥarb*.

Those who lived in a time which they had not received revelation from a prophet could not be regarded as sinful and the same applied to those who lived in an isolated place cut off from information or those who lived in *dār al-ḥarb* and did not make a *hijra* to *dār al-islām*. However, sin of infidelity will not be forgiven.<sup>9</sup>

Nābulusī further claims that acting against *sharī'ah* is not considered sinful in the place where there is no rule of Islamic law or revelation from the prophet. But faith is required to any people whether he lives in *dār al-islām* or *dār al-ḥarb*.<sup>10</sup> In addition to this, Nābulusī insists that faith of Islam can be shared between Muslim and non-Muslim.<sup>11</sup> This means that if one is able to understand the problem of sin, he can achieve the faith of Islam even if he lives in the place not ruled by Islamic law or in the time in which no prophet were sent to the people. Even though Nābulusī lived in the Ottoman Empire which was ruled by Islamic law, his eyes got an unobstructed view beyond *dār al-islām* and reached to *dār al-ḥarb*.

Nābulusī's concept of Islam proposes a quite controversial idea on sin as not only Muslim can gain faith but even non-Muslim also can share the same opportunity. He proposes a wider dimension of Islamic faith in his book. In the stage of salvation he even claims the salvation

<sup>9</sup>Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī, *Ḥaqā'iq al-Islām*, p. 31.

<sup>10</sup>The idea that faith is required to the people in *dār al-Islām* is based on the Māturīdī's concept of Faith. See Nakata Ko, "Kyusai no Kyokai: Islam ni okeru Ikyouto no Kyusai (A Border of Salvation: Salvation of Non-Muslim according to Islam)", *JISMOR* 2, 2005, pp. 63-77.

<sup>11</sup>Al-Nābulusī, *Mas'āl Tanḥīd wa-Taṣanṣuf* (Cairo: Dār al-Āfāq al-'Arabīya, 2008), p. 86.

of the infidels in the hellfire.

#### D. Nābulusī's *Waḥdat al-Wujūd*

The following paragraphs deal with Allah's divine presences and the problem of sin and its structure according to Nābulusī.

##### 1. *Allah's Divine Presences According to Nābulusī*

In order to understand reality (*ḥaqīqa*) of sin, Nābulusī claims that firstly one must understand the structure of Allah's self-disclosure and his entities as human being. Many Akbarian scholars discuss and elaborate their own concept of Allah's divine presence (*ḥaḍra*). They believe that this world is the consequence of Allah's self-disclosure and all creature are actually Allah himself. This problematic mystical philosophy have become a magnet of controversy since this concept seemed to perpetrate the fundamental Islamic creed of *tawḥīd* (oneness of God).<sup>12</sup> Before elaborating Nābulusī's *waḥdat al-wujūd*, the typical structure of divine presences will be briefly explained by referring to one of the most famous scholars in the school of Ibn 'Arabī, 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī (d. 735/1334-5). Al-Qāshānī divides Allah's divine presences into five levels. The very first level is of absolute oneness (*aḥadiyya*) which is above all attributes or names.<sup>13</sup> The second level is relative oneness (*wāḥidiyya*) which integrates Allah's entire attributes and names.<sup>14</sup> The third level is the world of *jabarūt* which contains all divine names and attributes.<sup>15</sup> The fourth level is the world of *malakūt*. Spirits and images appear in this world<sup>16</sup> and the last level is the world of *muluk* where all creatures live.<sup>17</sup> These presences are aimed at explaining how the world is created and related to Allah's various attributes.

The five levels of presences are the typical categorization of the

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<sup>12</sup>This controversy about Ibn 'Arabī's thought have been continuing today, see Elizabeth Sirriyeh, *Sufi and Anti-Sufi: The Defense, Rethinking and Rejections of Sufism in the Modern World* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1999).

<sup>13</sup>'Abd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī, *Iṣṭilāḥat al-Sufīya* (Cairo: al-Hai'a al-Miṣrīya al-ʿamma li'l-Kitāb, 2008), p. 25.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 47, 156.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 106.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 106.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 106.

world within school of Ibn ‘Arabī. However this categorization only concern with the detail of mystical world view of Islam and it doesn’t provide the practical theory for life of Muslims. For example, Ibn Taimīya (d. 728/ 1328) who was the hardest critic against Ibn ‘Arabī’s thought denied the worth of discussing about mystical world view based on *waḥdat al-wujūd*. Ibn Taimīya divides *tawḥīd* into two types, the *tawḥīd* of divineness (*tawḥīd al-ilāhīya*) and *tawḥīd* of lordship (*tawḥīd al-rubūbiya*). *Tawḥīd* of lordship is a belief that Allah is the creator and *tawḥīd* of divinity is a belief that Allah is the only being that should be worshiped. Ibn Taimīya insists that *tawḥīd* of lordship was shared even among the non-Muslims in the Mecca during the time of the prophet Muhammad,<sup>18</sup> thus this belief does not make human beings Muslim but only the *tawḥīd* of divinity makes people Muslims. According to Ibn Taimīya Islamic theology and philosophical Sufism belong to the *tawḥīd* of lordship,<sup>19</sup> thus their theory cannot be “Islamic”. He believed that understanding mystical worldview or philosophical cognition will not necessarily make one a Muslim. One has to practice Allah’s order to be a Muslim. This notion then leads to a question on whether or not philosophical Sufism is lacking of practical side. Since the word “Islam” means “submission to God” this can be understood as whenever Muslims do some deed for Allah, it is important to value practical side of Sufism.

Nābulusī uses the framework of Ibn ‘Arabī’s *waḥdat al-wujūd* to discuss the true faith and problem of sin within human beings. Understanding the self-disclosure of Allah is essential for anyone who seeks a reality of Islamic faith. On self-disclosure of Allah, Nābulusī explains that there are four levels of divine presences of Allah and one level of pure nothingness (*‘adam maḥḍ*).<sup>20</sup> The first presence is a level of essence (*dhāt*), which is Allah himself and also described as the one who is worshiped, or self (*‘ain*). The second level is of attributes (*ṣifāt*), a level to which the prophet Muhammad belongs. The second level is also described as the one who guides human being to Him (Allah), intellectual (*‘aql*) being and knowledge itself. The third level is of actions (*af‘āl*),

<sup>18</sup>Ibn Taimīya, *Qawā'id Tawḥīd al-Adyān* (Amman: al-Maktaba al-Waṭaniya, 1994), pp. 25-6.

<sup>19</sup>‘Abd al-Raḥmān bin Nāṣir al-Barrāk, *Sharḥ al-‘Aqīda al-Tadmuriya* (Riyad: Dār al-Tadmuriya, 2011), p. 582.

<sup>20</sup>Al-Nābulusī, *Ḥaqā'iq al-Islām*, pp. 35-6.

and pious Muslims belong to this level. This level is also described as linguistic (*qanlī*) beings, worshipers and supreme pen. The last presence is a level of trace of actions (*munfa'alāt*) and described as the level of devil, constative beings, obstacles and *lawḥ al-mahfūz*. Nābulusī believes that ordinary worshippers are located in this level. And finally, the fifth level is called the pure nothingness.

Nābulusī's *maḥdat al-wujūd* has quite unique structure compared to that of al-Qāshānī. The first and third presences are regarded as a level of eternity, but the fourth level is regarded as the level of mortal. These existences or beings of 1) essence, 2) attributes, and 3) actions which derived from Allah's three *tawḥīd* in the field of Islamic theology and only belong to Allah.<sup>21</sup> Allah is believed as only being from these three factors. Thus these three presences can be regarded as eternal beings that belong to Allah. The prophet and pious Muslims are also placed in these presences at the same time despite the fact that they are mortal beings. Nābulusī says the difference of divine presences in the world as follow:

The essence (*dhāt*) is eternal, the attributes (*ṣifāt*) are eternal, and actions (*af'āl*) are eternal. However, as for the traces of the actions, when they belong to Allah they are eternal, when they belong to us (human beings), they are finite.<sup>22</sup>

Nābulusī further suggests that on the level of essence, attributes and actions are always eternal but only the level of traces of action can be both eternal and mortal. In addition to this, he highlights that changes depends on the perspective.

The level of attributes exists when it sees the level of essence (Allah), but it doesn't exist from the level of actions. Likewise, the level of actions exists when it sees the level of attributes, but it doesn't exist from the level of traces of actions. The level of traces of actions exists when it sees the level of actions, however it does not exist by itself but it is pure nothingness.<sup>23</sup>

The three presences (attributes, actions and traces of actions) only can exist when creatures (*manjūd*) sees the upper level of self-disclosure

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<sup>21</sup> Al-Nābulusī, *Rashḥat al-Aqlām Sharḥ Kifāyat al-Ghulām* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiya, 2005), p. 55.

<sup>22</sup> Al-Nābulusī, *Ḥaqā'iq al-Islām*, p. 36

<sup>23</sup> Al-Nābulusī, *Ḥaqā'iq al-Islām*, p. 32.



of Allah which guides to the highest presence as one will not be regarded as beings when he is unable to see the upper presences. The “see” means seeking Allah in this context. Thus the beings can only exist if they seek their creator that is Allah.

The individual existences (*manjūd*) cannot exist by themselves since their essences are mere nothingness. The entities can only exist completely relying on its relationship to Allah. Everything returns to the existence of Allah. Because Allah’s existence is the existence of all existences. Thus, every entity is void or nothingness without Allah’s existence. There is no true existence but Allah.

It is hard to believe that Allah’s existence can live on every creature or become parts of it, which is posed and decided by Allah. Because all destined, obligated beings are pure nothingness. How can existence (*wujūd*) live on the nothingness!<sup>24</sup>

Even the entities are positioned in divine presences, Allah’s eternal existence will never be embodied in human beings. Human beings, in any possible matter, will never be like Allah. Human beings can only find their meaning to exist by relating to Allah’s divine presence such as his essence, attributes and actions. His cosmology is not a mere blueprint of the world but a track chart which shows Muslim to understand what is a true entities for Allah and guides to the ultimate beings who can only give us the meaning of life.

## 2. *The Problem of Sin and its Structure*

The human beings cannot be regarded as righteous one if they become corrupted and face to the lower level of presence which leads them to the nothingness. Thus, in order to prevent this, one must seek the true relationship with Allah.

Nābulusī emphasizes the importance of the level of actions because this is the level where sin against Allah is possible to be committed. Muslims must understand the structure of this level in order to gain a correct relationship with Allah. Discussion on sin places the first chapter of *ḥaqā’iq*. Sin and repentance is the entrance to Islam according to Nābulusī. He discusses the structure of Allah’s divine presence in the

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<sup>24</sup> Al-Nābulusī, *Īdāḥ al-Maqṣūd min Ma’nā Waḥdat al-Wujūd* (Cairo: Dār al-Āfāq al-‘Arabīya, 2008), p. 66.

chapter of sin for he believes that understanding the concept of *waḥdat al-wujūd* enables us to overcome the problem of sin.

Our discussion is about the passive entity-which is the level of demon and the sin originates from this level. Those who carry on self-manifestation besides Allah obviously or secretly commit unacceptable deeds and do what Allah does not. Because the self-manifestation of the mortal entity is only intended for the segmentation of the presence of divine attributes, and to making its perfection clear. But separation from Allah is not intended.<sup>25</sup>

All entities are created by Allah's divine word "be". But it does not require human beings to be "like Allah". What we are required to do is to carry out His various divine attributes, and not His essence. Nābulusī confirms that if one doesn't understand this philosophical meaning of Allah's divine words, then he is committing sin against Allah; either willingly or unwillingly.

The essence of sin is self-manifestation and this is a passive fifth presence. It originates from the former passive presence by facing its ego. Thus it is called "sin (*dhanb*)" referring to an extra part "tail (*dhanab*)". And ego facing to the former passive presence produces it and makes us to commit sin.<sup>26</sup>

This passive presence is the level of demon, and this is a fourth presence where ordinary Muslims are living. According to Nābulusī, when the people who belong to this level seek the lower level of nothingness, their ego produce sins, which belong to the fifth presence. The above quotation shows that the self-manifestation of entities has a close relation to the problem of sin. He believes that one must understand what his self-manifestation is in order to overcome the sin against Allah. First, he quotes a verse about Allah's creation from Quran.

Allah is the originator of the heavens and the earth. Whenever He decides to do anything, He just commands it to exist and it comes into existence<sup>27</sup>

The verse shows that all creatures are created by Allah's single divine word. However Nābulusī's interpretation on this verse proposes this divine word as something not intended to mere mortal creatures. He asserts that only divine existence can receive and understand this word

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<sup>25</sup> Al-Nābulusī, *Īdāh al-Maqṣūd*, p. 37.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>27</sup> Qur'ān, 2:117.

completely, that is Allah.

Those who believe that he is worth for following Allah's divine word "Be" actually goes against Allah and commits sin against Him. Because His word "Be" calls for eternal being. It requires a beings existing in the eternal. And there is no eternal being except Allah. In this point, this speech is toward Allah.<sup>28</sup>

The entities are originated by Allah's divine word. But if they think that it means they are worth for His word and try to follow it, they will go against Allah's will. Because the divine word comes from eternal essence of Allah, and its attributes is also eternal. It is impossible for the mortal entities to be its object. Only Allah and nothing but Allah is worth for taking the divine will. In Nābulusī's philosophical understanding, the stage in only for Allah.

There is no doubt that there are two presences in Allah. First presence is a presence of the one who speaks (*qā'ila*). And second presence is a level of attributes and is a presence of the one who is spoken (*mukhāṭaba*) which is realized by His divine word "Be"<sup>29</sup>

It is thus revealed that the presence of the one who speaks is Allah's active side of presence and the presence of the one who is spoken is Allah's passive side of presence, but its subject is the same existence, that is Allah. Thus, the fourth presence of actions traces is an extra presence which is not intended by Allah and it hinders Allah from realizing His two presences. Thus Nābulusī's *waḥdat al-wujūd* is actually not a mystical explanation of creation of the world. In his view, this world was not supposed to exist. The reality is a sole conversation within Allah himself. Then the question arise might be, 'what about the third presence?' Answering this question, Nābulusī believes that there is a pious Muslim in the third level but they do not commit sin even they can become more than ordinary mortal beings. This will be achieved by making repentance from sin of self-manifestation.

### **E. Repentance from Sin of Self-Manifestation (*Ta'ayyun*)**

In this section, another treatise called *Khumrat al-Hān wa-Ranna al-Alḥān* will be briefly explained. In addition to this, the practical aspect

<sup>28</sup> Al-Nābulusī, *Ḥaqā'iq al-Islām*, p. 33.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

of Nābulusī's philosophy will also be presented. This treatise discusses about the *tawḥīd* and *shirk* based on Sufism and how to overcome the sin of existence originated from self-manifestation by ego. *Khumra* is mentioned in his other treatise called *Īdāb Maqṣūd min Ma'nā Waḥdat al-Wujūd* which tells us on how to overcome one's ego and get closer to Allah and it is obvious that the treatise is one of the most important texts of his Sufism. As mentioned in the last section, only Allah is worth for taking His divine order and human will remain to be sinner unless we do not understand this truth. Islam is a way of repentance from sin according to Nābulusī. It is explained in *Khumra* that there are two possible approaches to overcome one's sin.

Those who only know that there is no existence besides Allah are imperfect. However those who believe there is an existence besides Him are more imperfect. The perfect man stands in the wisdom which integrates these two stages. The perfect man gives his right to lordship and understand there is not his existence besides Him, and gives his right to servitude and understands he is alongside with Allah...in the first understanding, he acknowledges his sin and makes repentance from it. And in the second understanding in order to ask forgiveness from Allah, he will return into Allah.<sup>30</sup>

First, in order to deny the existence besides Allah's, one must give his right to lordship (*rubūbiyya*); there is no existence but Allah who has true lordship. Thus it means that human beings have to submit all will to Allah only. Second, one must submit his right to servitude (*'ubūdīya*). It means his servitude is only to surrender to Allah's mercy. At a glance denying the existence beside Allah and understanding the existence with Allah is a contradiction but in *Khumra*, Nābulusī says denying the existence besides Allah can be achieved by overcoming depending on others (*aghyār*) and self (*nafs*). Because as I explained Nābulusī's view of *waḥdat al-wujūd* is a sole self-conversation of Allah, our entities hinder Allah from achieving this reality. An understanding of the existence of Allah can be achieved by diving into (*dukbūl*) Allah, which means following His order and feeling His divine love. These two approaches can be realized in two different stages. This proposed idea will be further

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<sup>30</sup> Al-Nābulusī, *Khumrat al-Ḥān wa-Rannat al-Alḥān* (Cairo: Maktaba al-Qāhira, 2005), p. 15.

discussed in the next section.

## F. Overcome Dependence on Worldly Matters

Those who realize the problem of sin in the fourth existence must regard other entities as obstacles to make repentance because these entities, including all human beings, are originated from the level of nothingness and cannot lead to the reality of faith. If one depends on other entities, ego and practices, he cannot seek Allah purely. Nābulusī further claims that repentance has two levels.

The repentance for ordinary people is tearing off the mask of other (*aghyār*) from the faces of secret. And this is a fight (*mujābadā*) against yourself and killing your ego (*naḥs*).<sup>31</sup>

First one must overcome the obstacles of others (*aghyār*). Human being tend to depend on something can be seen than something cannot be seen. But as long as people rely on the tangible creatures, they cannot escape from the fourth level of existence, which is connected to nothingness. Also this ‘others’ doesn’t include only entities in the level of traces of actions but also deeds of worship or disclosure of wisdom of Allah.<sup>32</sup> Ordinary Muslim believe that their worship can be performed through their will. But this understanding comes from self-reliance, not purely devotion to God. Even a behavior for Allah can be an obstacle when one seeks a pure relation between Him.

When he gets away from others, the veil will be erased from his ego. When he knows about himself, he gets away from himself and knows about his Lord (Allah).<sup>33</sup>

After overcoming the dependence on other entities, one must face his inner self. Nābulusī insists ‘killing self (*qaṭl al-naḥs*)’ in order to make full repentance.<sup>34</sup> Of course this is not committing suicide but it is about two things, overcoming the ego and escaping from one’s lower existence. First, one must be able to overcome his ego. Every Muslim has a desire to get close to his Lord Allah or get a reward in afterlife. But in the way to the true repentance, this desire can be an obstacle to seek only Allah

<sup>31</sup> Al-Nābulusī, *Ḥaqā’iq al-Islām*, p. 62.

<sup>32</sup> Al-Nābulusī, *Khumrat al-Ḥān*, pp.17-19.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>34</sup> Al-Nābulusī, *Ḥaqā’iq al-Islām*, pp. 64-65.

himself.<sup>35</sup> Nābulusī criticizes the worshippers who regard the difficulties as a trial from Allah and enjoy those.<sup>36</sup> According to Nābulusī, their minds are caught by the desire that they want to be a pious Muslim and it comes to be prior to seeking Allah. This state is a stage of ego which hinders us from being a true seeker of Allah.<sup>37</sup> He explains the two types of human beings who seek *tawḥīd*.

*Tawḥīd*, faith (*īmān*) and true knowledge (*ma'arifa*) and firm belief are attributes of perfection and obligate for every responsible people (*mukallaf*). They are described with two types. The one is those who practice by themselves. Their perfection relies on their deeds. When *tawḥīd* turns into polytheism, faith turns into denying, true knowledge turns into ignorance, a firm belief turns into doubt, they fall into infidelity and the name of happiness disappear. They are pious Muslim. Another one perform everything not by themselves but by their Lord...as “I become the ear through which he listens and eye by which he sees” He come down to their attributes. This kind of people are getting close (to Allah)<sup>38</sup>

He criticizes Muslims who believe their religious practices carried out by their free will. Even though they are called pious Muslim, their faith is so fragile because it is based on the will of mortal creature. One must build the faith which is granted by Allah. If one manages to overcome all entities or emotions or desires which has been an obstacles from making repentance, there is only a pure bond between us and Allah in the world. And it opens the last stage, the stage of diving into Allah's oneness.

### G. Ultimate Salvation by Diving into Allah's Oneness (*Tawḥīd*)

The last stage of the repentance is diving into Allah's will. This stage is called as “the self-disclosure of oneness of entities in the way of perfect transcendence.<sup>39</sup>” This stage can be achieved in the stage of love (*maqām al-maḥabbā*) and the stage of lost (*maqām al-faqd*). One will enter the stage of love by extinguishing the fire of ego and to become the one who is lived by Allah. When Allah's will come to the existence of a worshipper, the person will realize that everything he does, feels or

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> Al-Nābulusī, *Ḥaqā'iq al-Islām*, 1986, p. 72.

<sup>39</sup> Al-Nābulusī, *Ḥaqā'iq al-Islām*, 1986, p. 69.

thinks is coming from Allah, not from his ego. In the stage of lost, one loses all desires and just accepting his destiny which will eventually let everything to Allah's will. I assume the expression of the stage of lost is unique term in Nābulusī's *wahdat al-wujūd*.<sup>40</sup>

The entities standing by (*bi*) Allah disappear from themselves. And its existences lose its existences. There will be no action or no rest. Even the state of the rest disappears just as the state of action disappears in the stage of lost. And Allah's existence comes down to the place where its (human beings') existence stand. This is the stage of being lost (*maqām al-mafqūd*) and the last stage leading us to Allah.<sup>41</sup>

Oh the travelers on the way to Allah, when you understand Allah in the way Allah teaches and explains to you, you will sit besides Him, and your arms and legs cease outwardly and inwardly and surrender to actions or obstacles in various states in life and afterlife. You have no move, no rest to go back to your origin of nothingness being protected by Allah.<sup>42</sup>

When others and ego vanish from one person and become an entity standing by Allah's Love, he returns to his essence of nothingness with Allah's protection. This time he does not commit practicing idolatry (*shirk*) by self-manifestation but accepting every divine word without ego. He lets his will to his destiny.

There is no difference between a person who stands by Allah's love and person who stands by practicing worship on the surface, but the difference lies in their heart.<sup>43</sup>

There is no difference between a person who realizes the divine love and ordinary Muslim on the surface. But in the heart of the person who is standing by Allah's love will know that he must ask Allah's guide in every situation and let his will to His. What is required is not arguing about the detail of Islamic law or following but knowing Allah's love through trying to overcome the sins of existence. One who stands in the stage of being lost is actually filled with Allah's divine love and will. He

<sup>40</sup> For example Qāshānī does not mention the term of lost (*faqd*) in his glossary of Sufism called *Iṣṭilāḥat al-Ṣūfīya*. See 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī, *Iṣṭilāḥat al-Ṣūfīya* (Cairo: al-Hai'a al-Miṣriya al-Āmma, 2008) and al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī, *Kitāb al-Ta'arīfāt* (Beirut: Maktaba Lubnān, 1985).

<sup>41</sup> Al-Nābulusī, *Khumrat al-Ḥān*, p.61.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 80

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66.

becomes a pure instrument of His order. Furthermore, He also believes that this salvation can be achieved even after a person is falling into the hell. Even one who lived in infidelity and fell into the hell, if he sees Allah's divine will in the hellfire, his pain (of being burned in hellfire) will banish and never thinking about seeking happiness in heaven (of realizing the will of Allah).<sup>44</sup> Because seeking Allah is his ultimate goal and this is a reality of faith. The true faith is not expecting reward or fearing the punishment from Allah but just seeking only Allah and letting everything to Him. The veil of infidelity remains hiding us from Allah unless we reach this understanding.<sup>45</sup>

Nābulusī insists that true Islamic faith and salvation can be obtained even after going to hell if he can manage to realize his divine will in the hellfire. As previously mentioned, expecting reward and fearing punishment which are intended by following *shari'ah* are mere obstacles unless Muslims does not let his destiny to Allah. If human beings can realize this truth, even hellfire cannot harm him, but they feel ecstasy in this ultimate pain in the hell, as this fire is created by Allah's pure will and that must be pursued by true Muslim.

Nābulusī's concept of salvation is not limited to Muslims in this world but it also covers salvation of the infidels in afterlife. It clearly shows that Nābulusī's concern is purely concentrated to seek Allah's will not for our happiness or reward in the afterlife.

## H. Conclusion

Followers of Ibn 'Arabī tend to explain philosophical worldview by using Allah's divine presences. In contrast, Nābulusī use this framework to show how human beings can achieve ultimate salvation from Allah. Nābulusī's concept of faith and salvation are not only limited to the Muslims in *dār al-islām* but also for Muslims in *dār al-ḥarb* that only true faith in the heart is required to human beings. Furthermore, following *shari'ah* is not required. But the true faith cannot be achieved when people understand the sin of self-manifestation and making repentance. The sin of self-manifestation will occur when people are not trying to follow *shari'ah* with ignorance of Allah's divine self-disclosure (*tajallī*) and realise

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<sup>44</sup> Al-Nābulusī, *Ḥaqā'iq al-Islām*, p. 124.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 124.



the difference of existences between human beings and Allah holding that human being's existence is nothingness. Making repentance is possible to be completed by extinguishing ego and every desire. According to Nābulusī, even religious deeds such as prayers are mere obstacles for extinguishing the sin of self-manifestation if Muslim does not realize the reality of faith.

If someone is able to understand the problem of sin and making repentance, Allah will forgive his sin and raise people up to the level of entity protected by Allah's love. Furthermore his concept of salvation covers the people in hellfire. If they notice Allah's divine will from his punishment, the pain of hellfire will turn into an ecstasy for the infidels, and they no longer feel any pain.

Nābulusī's concept of faith is not limited to traditional framework as commonly understood by ordinary Muslims, but he proposes multidimensional faith that can be applied to Muslim/non-Muslim in *dār al-ḥarb*, and his concept covers the infidels in the hell. I believe his mystical philosophy can give us a new theological/philosophical perspective for Muslims living in non-Islamic states in nowadays world.

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