The Debate About Aspects of the Divine in the Sentence of Tauhid and its Relationship with the Plurality of Creation

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Abstract

The term *plurality* is an English noun that refers to the state of being plural; it means a large and diverse amount of something; in politics, it means the greatest number of votes, short of a majority. The word has been absorbed into Indonesian, where it is likewise understood as "many," "various," and "large in number." From this, it can be concluded that plurality is the condition and existence of something in large quantities, something multiple, something that is multifaceted or diverse. In the context of religion, it is defined as "diversity" or as "a diversity of ideologies, beliefs or understandings," as well as of ideas and thoughts.

The word *creature* comes from three letters – *kha*, *lam* and *qaf* – which mean "to determine something;" we find *kha* in the word *khalaqa*, which means to create or make. *Lafaz* means to take the form of an object (item *maf'ul*), which means "created." So creatures are any entities created (by the Creator) that exist in this universe. In the sense of reality, *plurality* is an ontological state of cosmic creation and its contents. It is part of God's grand design, which humans must accept, and challenges humans to transcend all differences. Humans are truly united by a single ontological reality, namely, God. The plurality of God's creation tells humans that God wants to explain that the diverse needs of human life have something to do with God's desire to introduce his oneness to everything humans like in living their lives. God also wants to convey that all diversity belongs to Him and will return to Him.

Keywords. God, Tauhid, plurality.

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Introduction

The discourse on divinity addresses a very complex metaphysical problem. At first, philosophers debated over God profoundly and philosophically, and the issue later became an object of study, and a fierce debate among Islamic theologians ensued, especially arguments related to aspects of divinity itself.[2]

At the beginning of the development of Islamic thought, in terms of theology,[3] there was much thinking about divinity, better known as the science of *kalam*, which is the same as the science of theology for Christians.[4] Now is a time for the science of *kalam* to become an object of study for the modern human sciences.[5] It seems that discussion in *kalam* tends to give rise to theological debates that are never finished—for example, the debate over Jabariyah (Asy'ariyah) and Qadariyah (Mu'tazilah). On one hand, Mu'tazilah-Qadariyah theology gave a critical and robust role to humans and tended to deny the part of God, so that humans are genuinely responsible.[6] On the other hand, the Asy'ariyah-Jabariyah theology considered humans to have absolutely no power, only God is Almighty. These two schools of thought colored the views of theologians in discussing aspects of God.

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[2] Yudian Wahyudi Asmin dari judul asli *"Fi al-Falsafah al-Islamiyyah Manhaj wa Tatbiqub al-Juz al-Sani* (Cet. I; Jakarta: Bumi Aksara, 1995), h. 22.

[3] Hamzah Ya'qub, *Filsafat Agama, Titik Temu Akal dengan Wahyu* (Jakarta: Pedoman Ilmu Jaya, 1991), h. 10-11.

[4] Al-Taftazzani, *Dirasat f i al-Falsafah al-Islamiyyah* (Kairo: Maktabah al-Qahirah al-Hadisah, 1957), 4.

[5] Hasan Hanafi, *Min al-Aqidah ila al-Tawrah al-Muqaddimat al-Nadariyat* (Beirut: Dar alTanwir li al-Tiba"ah wa al-Nashr, t.th.), 25

[6] Asy-Syahrastani, Al-Milal wa An-Nihal, Dar al- Fikri, Beirut, 1985, 87

In subsequent developments, the discourse of Islamic theological thought experienced a reasonably positive shift, where theological study no longer discussed issues of divinity alone, but more often addressed socio-cultural and socio-political issues, for example, culture, power, liberation, the environment, violence, hope, and of course, plurality, but these issues cannot be separated from the divine dimension. We cannot separate the tendency towards the development of theological understanding from diversity - the variety of God's creatures.[7] The plurality of these creatures is an authentic proof of the oneness of God as the Creator of the universe, and these phenomena can be thought out by reason in synergy with revelation. In this connection, this paper will explain the aspects of divinity debated by theologians, especially those related to the sentence of monotheism and to the diversity or plurality of creatures as part of the oneness of this Khaliq, the Creator of nature and all its contents.

Discussion

A. The Debate on Aspects of Divinity in the Tauhid Sciences

The science of *kalam* did not grow all at once but underwent various phases after its origination in the second half of the first Hijri century. It began by considering problems driven by certain conditions. It then developed systematically and regularly, so that in the first years of the third century Hijri, it became a science with its own distinct methods and objects of discussion. Religious groups paved the way and pioneered this science, which was initially based on political

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[7] Ismail Raji al-Faruqi, *Tauhid; Its Implications for Thought and Life* (Pensilvnia: The International Insrtitute of Islamic Thought, 1982), h. 11.

principles. The caliphate was the most critical issue that the Khawarij, Shi'a, and Murji'ah argued about in the study of the religious tenets.[8]

In the history of Islamic theology, three groups – the al-Salaf, the Mu'tazilah and the Ash'ariyah – have contributed significantly to the formation and development of the science of *kalam*, especially through their discussion of the philosophy of divinity related to the attributes of Allah contained in the sentence of monotheism. A debate about the penalties of monotheism was continued by the Maturidiyah group, who tried to take a middle way to negotiate the conflict that occurred between the Mu'tazilah and the Ash'ariyah.

1. Early Islam

At the time of the conquest of Mecca, the Prophet Muhammad instructed that all idols be destroyed. Umar was compelled to cut down the tree where the pledge of Bai'ah al-Ridwan was carried out because he was worried that humans would purify it. The Qur'an showers Allah with many attributes that contain meanings of majesty, omnipotence, perfection, and mercy, as contained in the following verse:

- It is Allah who created, created, formed the firm, who has Asma'ul Husna. Glorify him what is in the heavens and the earth, and He is the Mighty, the Wise.

- Does Allah who created it does not know (what you give birth to or keep secret); And He is Subtle, All-Knowing?

- Only belongs to Allah Asma'ul Husna, so ask Him by calling Asma'ul Husna and leave those who deviate from the truth (mentioning) His names. Then they will be rewarded for what they have done.

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[8] Harun Nasution, *Islam Ditinjau dari Beberapa Aspek*. Jilid II (Jakarta: UI Press, 1985), h. 31.

From these attributes, the good names of Allah are taken, ninety-nine in all, which indicate the majesty and perfection of Allah. In the Qur'an, some verses give the impression of *tasbih* and *tajsim* (anthropomorphism), namely, the following:

- God the Most Gracious. Who resides above the 'Throne.

- Allah, there is no God (who has the right to be worshipped), but He lives eternally and continuously takes care of (His creatures); no sleep and no sleep. Allah knows what is before them and what is behind them, and they don't know anything of Allah's knowledge except what He wills. Allah's seat covers the heavens and the earth, and Allah does not find it challenging to maintain them, and Allah is Most High, Most Great.
  To Him belongs what in the heavens and the earth there is nothing that can intercede with Allah without His permission.

- That those who pledge allegiance to you pledge allegiance to Allah, Allah's hand is on their hands, so whoever breaks his promise, the consequences of breaking that promise will befall himself and whoever keeps his promise to Allah Allah will reward him greatly.

At the beginning of Islam, these verses opened the door to questions and answers, pros and cons, *ta'wil* and surrender. However, the Muslims dealt with all these problems with submission and surrender, without studying or analyzing them, because they had the sweetness of faith and the sanctity of the creed. They did not need to study or analyze because of the presence of the Prophet Muhammad in their midst, one who could answer questions about all the problems that were faced by the people.

2. The Salaf

The Salaf are those who hold to al-Ma'sur (al-Qur'an and al-Sunnah), prioritizing history over study and *naql* over reason. They believe in Allah without question, understand the verses of the Qur'an globally based on *zahir* principles, and do not interpret and anthropomorphize Allah but purify and leave all matters to Allah.

The creed of the Salaf emphasized that Allah is One; there is no god but Him; He has no wife and no children, and he is all-life, all-knowing, all-powerful, all-hearing, all-seeing, all-willing, omniscient. The Qur'an is the word of Allah, not a creature; Allah has a face and hands but not like the faces and hands of animals. Allah can be seen in the hereafter with the eye. The Salaf criticized their opponents, such as the Jahmiah, Mu'tazilah, Rafidah, and the philosophers; they did not feel the need to affirm the existence of Allah because, in the Qur'an, many verses fill the human heart with confidence and peace of mind, such as the following:

- And on earth, there are signs (of Allah's power) for those who believe. And (also) to yourself, then do you not pay attention?

- Glory be to Allah Who has made in the sky the constellations of the stars, and He has also made the sun and the moon shining in them.

- And a sign (of Allah's great power) for them is the dead earth. We give life to the planet, and we bring out grain from it, so they eat from it.

Indeed, the Salaf could not escape the influence of philosophy because they distinguished the nature of nature (*al-Mausuf*), the name from the named (*al-Musamma*), the properties of matter from the characteristics of *kalam* related to commands and prohibitions. This follows a statement by Abdullah bin Killab, a Salaf figure, that the properties of substance are knowing, hearing, seeing, and

denying the properties of action (*al-Fi'il*), because it gives a temporal impression. The word of Allah, according to al-Killab, is eternal (*qadim*), and the Qur'an was revealed, not created. Meanwhile, Ibn Hazm, another Salaf figure, claimed that Allah is not a form (*jism*), substance, accident, number, genus, species, differentiation, moving or stationary person. There is no God but Him, One for whom there is no like in this universe, the Creator of all that exists and does not resemble His creatures at all.

Meanwhile, Ibn Taimiyyah, another great Salaf figure, argued that humans must recognize the attributes of God according to the nature that he gave to himself, namely, that He is omnipotent, self-existent, all-hearing, all-knowing, all-powerful, most forgiving, all-*waddud*, all-doing whatever is his will, First and Last, the Birth and the Inner. He also stipulates that Allah resides on the Throne and has hands and a face, as mentioned in the Qur'an. Ibn Taymiyyah took a middle path between the theory of *ta'til* (negating God from attributes) and the idea of *tamsil* (attributing God to physical objects). He does not deny Allah's attributes and nor describe Allah in terms of the nature of things; Allah is above (*fauqiyyah*) and in a particular place (*makaniyyah*).

Even though the Salaf were influenced by philosophy, they used philosophical thought as a tool to logically describe the attributes of Allah according to the explanations of the Salaf figures mentioned above, even though they differed in their appreciation of Allah's substance and qualities. Nevertheless, on the whole, all three schools of thought strove to explain that Allah cannot be imitated by His creatures, even though they can resemble His attributes.

3. Mu'tazilah

The Mu'tazilah were a theological school of thought in Islam, in addition to various other theological schools of thought, such as Shia, Khawarij, Murji'ah, Qadariah, Jabariyah, and Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah. These schools emerged during the early period of Islamic history.[9] One can begin to understand the Mu'tazilah school by understanding the root word of the name, *i'tazala*, which means "to separate," to "get away," or "to keep away."[10] Western historians classify the Mu'tazilah as a rationalist school, whereas Muslim historians classify it as *mutakallimun kufr*, because they argue that the Qur'an is a creature and that humans have freedom of will and the power to act. These two things became the most controversial Mu'tazilite doctrines.[11] The Mu'tazilah theory of divinity is summed up in the debate over the problem of the attributes of Allah, which had previously been inflamed by Ja'd bin Dirham and Jaham bin Safwan. The principles of the theory of divinity according to the Mu'tazilah are *al-Tanzih* and *al-Tawhid* (purification and the oneness of God, respectively).[12] The Mu'tazilites truly purified Allah of matter and all of its accidental nature because Allah is neither a body nor a whole (a totality), is not limited by time or place, has no parents and children, cannot be seen by the eye, cannot be heard by the ear, and ultimately does not resemble a creature. There is no doubt that the Mu'tazilite

[9] Zuhdi Jārallāh, *al-Mu'tazilah* (Beirut: Dār al-Fāris, 1410 H./1990 M.), 20.

[10] Louwis Ma'luf al-Yassu'i, *al-Munjid fial-Lughah wa al-alam*(Beirut: Daral-Mashriq, 2002), 207

[11] Richard Martin C. Martin, Mark R. Woodward, and Dwi S. Atmaja, *Defenders of Reason in Islam, Mu'tazilism from Medieval School to Modern Symbol* (England: Oxford, 1997), 10.

[12] Mustofa Muhammad Asy Syak'ah, *Islam Tidak Bermazhab.* Diterjemahkan oleh A.M. Basalamah dari judul aslinya Islam Bila Mazahib (Cet. I; Jakarta: Gema Insani Press, 1994), h. 314.

theory of divinity is a purely abstract and absolute rational theory that transcends the material. This theory is similar to the views put forward by analytical divine philosophers, in both classical and modern history.[13]

4. Asy'ariyah

At the end of the 3rd century H, two prominent figures emerged, Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'ari in Basra and Abu Mansur al-Maturidi in Samarkand. They were united in their refutation of the Mu'tazilah. Abu Hasan al-Asy'ari (935) founded the traditional theological school of Asy'ariah in reaction to Mu'tazilite theology. In the classification of Islamic theologies, Ash'ariah and Maturidiah are both considered Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jamaah.[14] Ibn al-Jauzî al-Ash'ari reported that he belonged to the Mu'tazilah sect for a very long time, but he left it and handed over a book he had written to critique human creed, while the Ahl al-Hadith had known Abu Hasan al-Hadith's position long ago. -Ash'ari and appreciate his good intentions. This is in accordance with the statement of Ibn Taimiyah in his book *Muwâfaqah Shahîh al-Manqûl li Sharîh al-Ma'qûl* that Abu Hasan al-Asy'ari, after leaving the Mu'tazilah school, followed the path of Ibn Kilâb and leaned towards the experts of al-Sunnah wa al-hadith and joined Imam Ahmad.[15] The Ash'ariyah were the Attributes, and, like the Salaf, claimed that Allah has

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[13] Hamka Haq, *Dialog Pemikiran Islam, Tradisionalisme, Rasionalisme, dan Empirisme dalam Teologi, Filsafat dan Ushul Fiqh* (Ujung Pandang; Yayasan Ahkam, 1995), h. 9.

[14] Al-Imam Muhammad Abu Zahrah*, Taariikh al-Mazaahib al-Islamiyah fi as-Siyaasah wa al'Aqaaidi wa taariikhu al- Mazaahibi al-Fiqhiyah,* (al-Qaahirah: Daar al-Fikr al-Arabiy, 1996). h.163

[15] Syaikh Ahlu as-Sunnah wa al-Jamaah al-Imama Abu Hasan Ali bin Isma'il al-Asyari, Maqalaat al-Islamiyah wa Ikhtilaaf al-Mushalliin, Juz I. (Bairut: al-Maktabahal-Ashriyah, 1411H/1990M), h. 24-25

attributes. They affirmed the nature of Allah as it is and distinguished His characteristics. Allah is all-knowing, all-powerful, all-life, all-seeing, and omniscient. All of these are eternal qualities; to affirm nature means to negate the natured, just as to refuse action means to negate the subject in motion.

The Ash'ariyah rejected *al-Ta'til*, namely, the view that empties God of attributes. They also rejected *al-Tashbih* and *al-Tajsim* and they submit to Allah the religious texts that give such an impression or allow such an interpretation, because Allah is not equal to His creatures. He is not substance, not *jism*, not accidental, not located in space and time, nor can He accept random and temporal things. God's power is one and is fixed on all the entities that are the objects of His power, so whatever is in nature must be born of His passion. Allah's knowledge is eternal and includes all learning without passing through the senses or requiring proof. Seeing God with the eyes is possible because everything that exists can be seen. However, recognizing that Allah can be seen does not mean *Tasybih* or *Tajsim*, because seeing here is not the same as seeing things in the world, as explained in the following verse;

The faces of (the believers) on that day will be radiant. To their Lord, they see.

There are two views put forward by al-Ash'ari regarding the nature of seeing God. First is the idea that this seeing is a special kind of knowledge, in the sense that it is more concerned with the existing than with the non-existent; second is the idea that it is a perception beyond knowledge, which does not demand an effect on the perceived object, nor an effect derived from it.[16]

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[16] Abi al-Fath Muhammad Abdi al-Karim Ibn Abi Bakri Ahmad asy-Syahrastaany, *al-Milal wa an-Nihal*, Libnan-Bairut: Daar al-Fikri, t.th., h. 100.

5. Maturidiyah

If the experts agree that the Ash'ariyah emerged in opposition to Mu'tazilah thought, this was not so for the emergence of Maturidiyah. The popular view states that Maturidiyah emerged as a reaction to Mu'tazilah thought, while another view, represented by Ceric,[17] states that Maturidiyah during al-Maturidi's lifetime was not aimed directly at opposing Mu'tazilah thought. Moreover, apart from these differences, al-Maturidi, Ash'ari, and the Mu'tazilites gave different and sometimes contradictory answers to the question of the role of human reason and will. The differences can be seen in the formulations of their epistemologies and their substance. Al-Maturidi came up with a quite elegant formulation, combining tradition and reason in an organic unity by synthesizing methods of knowledge. (This will become clear in the discussion of his theory of knowing God.)

Based on observations of some of al-Maturidi's works, as well as the situation and conditions of society at that time, we can identify factors behind the emergence of his theological thinking which in subsequent developments gave birth to the Maturidiyah school, as follows:

1. Dissatisfaction with the concept of Mu'tazilah theology, which was excessive in giving authority to reason. This can be seen from several titles of his writings, which explicitly describe his rejection of the Mu'tazilah, such as the *Kitab Radd Awa''il al-Adillah li al-Ka'bi*, the *Kitab Radd Tahdhib al-Jadal li al-Ka'bi*, and the *Kitab Bayan Wahm al-*

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[17] Mustafa Ceric, *Roots of Synthetic Theology in Islam A Study of the Theology of Abu Mansur Al-Maturidi* (d. 333/944), (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1995), h. 23.

Mu''tazilah.[18] At the same time, al-Maturidi was dissatisfied with the theological concepts of the Salaf scholars, who ignored the use of reason.

2. Concern over the spread of Shi'a teachings, especially the Qaramithah sect, which strongly opposed the Salaf scholars. Especially in the Central Asian region, this school was heavily influenced by Mazdakism, a communist sect initiated by Mazdak bin Bambadh, a militant reformer in the 5th century AD during his reign.[19] The teachings of this school are related to Manichaeism, which mixes Christian teachings with Zoroastrianism and Buddhist teachings.[20] Al-Maturidi's *Kitab al-Radd Kitabala Qaramitah* is an indication of his concern over the influence of Shi'a teachings on society.

Encouraged by these two factors, al-Maturidi developed a synthesis of the methods of *al-Naql* and *al-aql* in *kalam* thought, a middle way between the Mu'tazilah-style rational school and the Hambali-style traditional school. It is interesting to note that in his theological thinking, al-Maturidi gives considerable authority to reason, at least when compared to al-Asy'ari, who is known also as a figure who combines *al-Naql* and *al-aql* in his theology. For example, according to al-Maturidi good and bad can be known through reason even though

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[18] Abu al-Fath Muhammad al-Syahrastani „Abd al-Karim ibn Abiy Bakr. t.th. *Al-Milal wa al-Nihal, Beirut*: Dar al-Fikr. H. 76-77

[19] Reynold A. Nicholson t.th. "Mazdak" in James Hansting (ed.), Encyclopaedia of Religion & Ethics. Vol. VIII. New York: Charles Scribner"s Sons. H. 508-509

[20] Bevan, A.A., t.th. "Manichaenism" in James Hansting (ed.), Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics. Vol. VIII. New York: Charles Scribner"s Sons. H. 394

there is no revelation, because good and bad are judged based on their substance, whereas, according to al-Ash'ari, good and bad are judged according to Syara'.[21]

The followers of the Maturidiyah school, like the Asya'ariyah school, hold fast to religious texts (al-Ma'sur), even though they give space to reason, yet they are closer to the Ash'ariyah than the Mu'tazilites, especially in the debate about the nature of the religion. They affirm that Allah has qualities different from all that is temporal, so Allah is all-knowing, because a knowledge that is unlike the sciences known to creatures is also all-powerful because its power is not the same as the power of animals. The word of Allah is eternal, *qadim*; this word refers to an attribute in the substance of Allah, not a type of letter or sound that is temporal and of the Creation.

Al-Maturidi argues that seeing Allah is a right and must not require a description of how to see Him. The Maturidis proposed a theory of divinity that unites Allah, and they confirmed His attributes, such as all-knowing, all-powerful, all-willing, all-hearing. These attributes are clear understandings and are part of Allah's essence, but they are neither of His substance nor not of His substance. They purify Allah of the dimensions of space and time. They submit to Allah through an understanding of the religious texts that mention this or through an acceptable interpretation. Al-Maturidi uses deductive cosmological arguments (a posteriori) to prove the existence of God, as opposed to inductive teleological, arguments.[22]

When al-Maturidi built his theology, there were two aspects to its development. On one hand, the influence of the Mu'tazilah began to decline and

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[21] Muhammad Abu Zahrah. 1996. *Aliran Politik dan Aqidah dalam Islam. terj. Abdul Rahman Dahlan dan Ahmad Qarib*. Cet. I. Jakarta: Logos Publishing House. H. 210.

[22] William L. Rowe, *The Cosmological Argument*, (Prince ton: Princeton University Press, 1975), h. 3.

was marked by the decline of the caliphate's power, due to political problems. The use of reason to study religious issues was increasingly being challenged by traditionalist groups. On the other hand, al-Maturidi lived in the midst of an abundance of intellectual treasures, because at that time the movements and teachings of the major schools of jurisprudence had already been formed, and al-Hadith had been compiled in the Pole as-Sittah. At-Tabari's major commentary books had also been compiled, and literary, historical, Sufi, and philosophical movements were undergoing rapid development. In addition, there was a wave of translations of Greek and Persian books into Arabic in various fields by knowledge institutions such as Jundi Shapur (Gondeshapur) and through Bait al-Hikmah (the House of Wisdom).[23]

The supporters of the Maturidiyah agreed with the Ash'ariyah regarding the fundamental elements underlying the theory of divinity, but they differed on subsidiary issues. For example, the Ash'ariyah considered the nature of *al-baqa'* (eternal) to be an additional attribute of Allah, but the Maturidiyah rejected this attribute; they argued that al-*baqa'* is the fact of the existence of matter through the ages and not something added to matter; the nature of the universe (of *al-Maani*), that is, the nature that exists in the matter, is augmented by the Maturidiyah with one more attribute, namely, the nature of *al-takwin* (the supreme Creator), which they base on the word of God, namely,[24]

> Verily, when he desires something, he only says to him: "Be!" So it happened.

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[23] W. Montgomery Watt, *The Influence of Islam on Medieval Europe*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1972), h. 31

[24] Murtada Muthahhari *Allah Dalam Kehidupan manusia.* Diterjemahkan dari judul aslinya; Allah fi Hayah Al-Insan (Cet. I; Bandung: Yayasan Muthahhari, 1994), h. 7-10.

The differences in the views of the theologians above on aspects of God's nature were much influenced by the rational thought inherited by the Mu'tazilite school, which was also influenced by Greek philosophical thought. Therefore, the theological understanding of this group is very rational, in contrast to that of the Asy'ariyah group, which tended to understand the attributes of God based on the intuition of reason obtained from revelation. These two groups were engaged in debates over aspects of divinity, such as the substance of God and His attributes, and these classical debates continued to evolve to this day, even though the arguments about the form of the divine aspects are no longer related to the meaning and nature of God but to the religious aspects of God's wisdom, made manifest in all His creations in the heavens and on earth.

That is why Muslims today are always looking for the secrets contained in the divine dimension as the human mind becomes increasingly advanced. Developments in science and technology can bring humans closer, and even humans can easily find God and believe in him. The perfect example of this phenomenon is humans who work in outer space or deal with creatures that have not been seen before. They are confronted with the question of who created them. By visiting these oddities, they can see and capture the unity of God in all of His creations. The greatness of God can only be seen in the diversity or plurality of His creatures, which provide evidence of the oneness of God as the Creator of this universe.

B.   The Concept of the Plurality of Beings and the Oneness of Khaliq

From the perspectives of philosophy[25] and Sufism[26] The terms "plurality"[27] and "oneness," and "Khaliq" can be found in the Qur'an, for example, in QS. Qaf (50:38), which reads;

> And indeed, We have created the heavens and the earth and what is between them in six days, and we are not in the least bit tired.

This verse shows that God's creatures exist between heaven and earth, ranging from planets to stars, clusters of stars, and multitudinous clusters of galaxies.[28] Even the most recent findings of astronomy suggest that other creatures of God's may exist and live in this universe. In addition, God's creatures on earth are very diverse, encompassing humans and animals, plants, and other creatures that complement human life in the world.

The description above shows that the plurality of God's creatures is vast; for example, humans are possessed of various ethnicities, races, physical realities, ideas, languages, professions, cultures, and religions; even the complexity of human life is not limited to such diversity but the fact of pluralism. Humans start with a brilliant mind, which develops continuously along with human physical development, as described in QS. Al-Hujurat (49:13), which reads

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[25] Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan RI, *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1992), h. 1012

[26] Milton Cowan & Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written* (London: Macdonald & Evan Ltd, 1974), h. 982

[27] Abd Moqsith Ghazali, *Argumen Pluralisme Agama* (Jakarta: Kata Kita, 2009), h. xiii.

[28] Ahmad Mahmud Soliman, *Scientific Trends In The Qur'an* (London: Ta-ha Publishers Ltd, 1985), h. 28

> O humanity, We created you from a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another. Verily, the most honourable of you in the sight of Allah is the most pious among you. Verily Allah is All-Knowing, All-Knowing.

As a reality, plurality is an ontological state of cosmic creation and its contents. It is part of God's grand design, which humans must accept, and it requires that humans transcend all the differences that exist. Humans are united by a single ontological reality, namely God.[29] The plurality of God's creation is God's way of explaining to humans that the existence of the diverse needs of human life has to do with God's desire to introduce his oneness to everything that humans like in living their lives. God also wants to convey that all the diversity belongs to Him and will return to Him, as explained in the QS. Al-Maidah (5:48), which reads,

> We provide clear rules and paths. If Allah had willed, He would have made you one people (only), but Allah wants to test you against His gift to you, so compete in doing good deeds, to Allah all of you will return, and He will inform you of what has been done. You dispute it.

Based on information in the Qur'an, it can be understood philosophically that the creation of the universe and everything in it went through six phases. God created a creature called man from the ground (the Prophet Adam) and then made Eve from the rib of the Adam until finally marriage took place and they had Qabil and Abel. Then grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and so on, followed. Just as Adam came from the ground, so did Adam's children and

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[29] Khaeronih dkk, *Islam dan Hegemoni Sosial* dalam Syamsul Arifin, Sosialisasi Nilai-nilai Toleransi Beragama di Kalangan Dosen Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang (Cet. 2; Jakarta: PT. Mediacita, 2002), h. 61-62.

grandchildren: the essence of the food and drink consumed by humans comes from the soil, and humans die back into the ground.

However, from a philosophical point of view, the plurality of beings and the oneness of Khaliq can be explained through the process of emanation and *Wihdatu al-Wujud*. Neoplatonism first introduced the theory of emanation,[30] which was then developed and rearranged by a Muslim philosopher named al-Farabi, Ibn Zina, giving it an Islamic coloring. In the realm of Sufism, the idea of *Wihdatul al-Wujud* was developed by Ibn Arabi.

In the author's view, it seems that al-Farabi deliberately adopted Neoplatonism's theory of emanation because he wanted to explain philosophically the process by which a plurality of creatures came about and the oneness of Khaliq in this universe, and especially to explain how multiple processes originate from one (God).[31] The essence of the emanation theory is the assertion that God is the basis for the formation of all that exists, Who from His knowledge gave birth to nature (creatures). Therefore, God as Khaliq is the initial principle of everything that exists and which must exist while nature and animals are possible. The theory of emanation shows that there is a universe and that it is governed by God.

Another proof of the plurality of creatures and the oneness of Khaliq is the *Wihdatu al-Wujud* process. The first fundamental concept of Ibn Arabi's philosophy is the acknowledgement that there is only One Being and that nothing exists other than that. The Arabic term for *manifesting* indicates a being that can be equated with personality (existence), and Ibn Arabi does not make the distinction that is widely made today between being and being, so when he states that there is only a single

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[30] Oliver Leaman, *Pengantar Filsafat Islam, Sebuah Pendekatan Tematis* (Bandung: Mizan, 2002), h. 4.

[31] Sudarsono, *Filsafat Islam* (Jakarta: Rineka Cipta, 1977), h. 38.

substance, he means that all that exists is a single substance. The singular is not divided into parts, and there is neither excess here nor deficiency there. Therefore, there is nothing but the One Being, which is indissoluble, divisible, and uniform in every personality.[32]

Therefore, matter is self-determining, and its self-determination (*ta'ayun*) gives riset to distinction and difference, and multiplicity develops from unity. In this process, matter neither divides nor divides itself in the same way as the single substance existing in the whole. As an actor, God appears in various characters with different names and performs multiple functions, for instance, in His relationship with His creation and in the world as part of His essence.

Even though God and the world are one substance, God and the world are not a relationship between cause and effect nor a connection between the Creator and creation, as scholars believe, nor a relationship between the One and His emanation (radiance), as was the belief of the neo-Islamic Platonic philosophers. Because this concept fails to reveal the truth, Ibn Arabi uses the term *tajalli* (self-disclosure or self-realization), which tries to explain the relationship between God and the world by saying that matter is the same, single and inseparable from the homogeneous, which, when viewed from one side is God and when viewed from the other side is the world.

The unification of God's Essence as *al-Haq* with the world as *al-Khalq* is another term from Ibn Arabi's understanding of the notions of *al-Ittihad* and *al-Hulul*, introduced by Abu Yazid al-Bustami and al-Khallaj, by which Allah has these two primary attributes, which are the nature of God. Divinity is called *layout*, and human nature is called *budding*.[33]

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[32] Muhammad Lutfi Abd. Haq Ansari, *Antara Sufisme dan Syari'ah.* Ed. 1 (Cet. 2; Jakarta: PT. Raja Grafindo Persada, 1993), h. 149-150.

[33] Muhammad Lutfi, *Tarik al-Falsafat al-Islamiyyah wa al-Maghrib* (Mesir: Najib al-Mishriy, 1927), h. 100.

Ibn Arabi's theory of *Wahdatu al-Wujud* was criticized by Sheikh Sirhindi, who said that this doctrine contradicted various basic principles of Islamic teachings. For example, this doctrine justifies the existence of idol worship, because Ibn Arabi's philosophy identifies the world with God, so the worship of various objects can be equated with worshipping God, because what is honoured is the manifestation of God. The doctrine also holds that God is a sole actor where no two substances are, meaning there are no two wills, so whatever is chosen or carried out by humans is chosen and carried out by God.

The theory of *Wahdatu al-Wujud* is the result of Ibn Arabi's philosophical reflection, packaged in Sufism by elaborating the *Ittihad* views of Abu Yazid al-Bustami and al-Hululnya al-Khallaj; therefore, this theory is compatible with the theory of emanation developed by al-Farabi and Ibn Zina, and both theories have been used to explain rationally and philosophically the existence of a plurality of beings and the oneness of Khaliq. Furthermore, the relevance of the theories of emanation and *Wahdatu al-Wujud* to the ideas of the plurality of creatures and the oneness of Khaliq is illustrated in the view of Ibn Arabi, who says that the beast has a desire for *al-Khaliq* (philosophy) or *al-Haq* (Sufism); because the creature has a pure nature (perhaps exists but may not live), its form certainly depends on something else which has a form that is obligatory and independent and does not desire others in its structure, even as God gives shape to others (creatures). That creature also has a compulsory nature, but obligatory depends on *al-Khaliq*. Thus, only God has one form, while animals are only shadows.[34]

The dependence of God's creatures is seen in the handiwork of God, who created the universe and its creatures and endowed it with pairs. For example, there are day and night and males and females; if there were day without night or males

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[34] Harun Nasution, *Filasafat dan Mistisisme dalam Islam* (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1992), h. 94.

without females, life would be chaotic. The concept of plurality is manifested dynamically in the spectrum of human life. The dynamics of human life are born from the brilliance of the human mind in designing and managing an active life. Nevertheless, the dynamics of human life sometimes bring excesses and positive and negative implications for the environment, especially in the socio-political context, by making religion a patron and control in appreciating the friction. For example, conflicts among the plurality of cultures, ethnicities, races, and religions, which often involve humans and their respective interests, deny God's purpose to have His creatures (humans) get to know each other, complement each other, and help each other to become full and dignified human beings. God is the Creator of this plurality.

In this author's view, the root cause of the conflict and racial friction that occurs in society is caused by stigmatizing other tribes and ethnicities as different from one's own ethnicity and race, ignoring the paradigm that the divine religion is cognate, a religion brought by God's prophets who teach the principles of equality and brotherhood. That is why the Prophet Muhammad SAW believed that the previous holy books came from Allah, conveyed by the prophets and messengers of Allah. It is not surprising that Muhammad, as the last Prophet, acknowledged the prophethood and apostolate of Abraham AS, Musa AS, Jesus AS, Noah AS, and others. This attitude grew more vital to the Prophet Muhammad after it appeared that the followers of the previous holy books had faith in the Qur'an and in his prophethood, such as Waraqa bin Naufal, who had known of the coming of a prophet whose characteristics were as he described. Read in the Bible.

To overcome the negative stigma above, enlightening people through science and increasing dialogue to seek equality, by forming joint forums consisting of both cultural and religious meetings, would eliminate the conflicts caused by the excesses of pluralism in society. To optimize dialogue, the vital commitment that must be adhered to is an attitude of tolerance toward pluralism itself; patience without a

pluralistic perspective will not guarantee lasting harmony between religious communities.[35]

In addition, improving the quality of faith and piety can enlighten the mind, so that the heart and mind can capture the light of God's oneness and so that humans do not get caught up in the conflicting interests of momentary pluralism. Therefore, the plurality of cultures united by the bonds of monotheism would be a cultural plurality that leads people to piety under Allah. This can be realized if humans, both individually (male and female) and in society (ranging from minor groups to ethnic and national groups), show each other things of actual value and try mutually to suppress falsehood and evil inequality. This is the meaning of the concept of "getting to know each other" (*lita'arafuu*) as a teaching of the Qur'an. The plurality of cultures recognized in the Qur'an can be united by human values and the value of monotheism. The hope of the Quran is relevant to the concepts of *hablun min al-nas* and *hablun min Allah*.

Therefore, this author assumes that the existence of a plurality of creatures (the universe and everything in it) shows the oneness of Khaliq as the Creator of the universe and all animals living on earth and those who might inhabit other planets. All of this is rational evidence for the oneness of Khaliq as explained by the Qur'an in Surah al-Shaffat (37: 4-6), which reads,

> Verily, your Lord is One. Lord of the heavens and the earth and what is between them and the Lord of the places where the sun rises. Indeed, We have adorned the nearest heaven with decorations, namely stars.

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[35] Alwi Shihab, *Islam Inklusif, Menuju Sikap Terbuka dalam Agama* (Cet. VII; Bandung: Mizan, 1999), h. 41.

The oneness of Khaliq in managing all His creations proves that there is only one God who regulates and controls the universe and all living things in it. If there were two Gods, it can be imagined that the competition between them would destroy the universe.[36] The order of the universe is proof that there is only one God in this universe.[37] Therefore, all of Allah's creations in the form of matter – such as fire, which contains the burning power of destruction,[38] light, and earth, which includes good and evil – have real wisdom and signs that show that Allah cannot be equalled by anything, as in the word *Him* in QS as-Shura (42:11):[39]

> (He is) the Creator of the heavens and the earth. He made for you from your kind pairs and pairs of livestock (also); he made you breed in that way. There is nothing like Him, and He is the All-Hearing and All-Seeing.

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[36] Achmad Baiquni, *Al-Qur'an Ilmu Pengetahuan dan Tekhnologi*. Ed.1 (Cet. 3; Jakarta: Dana Bhakti Wakaf, 1995), h. 29

[37] Muhammad Jamalauddin El-Fandi, *Al-Qur'an Tentang Alam Semesta* (Cet. 3; tp: Amzah, 2000), h. 19

[38] Mulyadhi Kartanegara, *Merintis Teologi Baru, Apresiasi Terhadap Penggagas Islam Rasional dalam Teologi Islam Rasional* (Jakarta: Ciputat Press, 2005), h. 98.

[39] Hisyam Thalbah, *Ensiklopedia Mu'jizat Alquran dan Hadis* (Bekasi: Sapta Sentosa, 2008), h. 52.

Conclusion

From the discussion above, several things can be emphasized, namely: The study of aspects of divinity has taken place since the arrival of Islam. Still, the Muslims have accepted the provisions of religious texts more because of the purity of *aqidah* and faith. Likewise, at the time of the Salaf scholars, the debate about aspects of divinity began only with the birth of the theological schools in Islam. The concept of the plurality of creatures and the oneness of Khaliq in the perspective of Islamic philosophy and Sufism was interpreted rationally and philosophically by al-Farabi, Ibn Zina, and Ibn Arabi, who introduced the theories of emanation and *Wahdatul al-Wujud*. Both are philosophical views that Muslim philosophers have Islamized. The oneness of Khaliq can be understood from information in the Qur'an and from scientific arguments. Technology and the logic of science provide evidence of the oneness of Khaliq as the Creator of the universe, for example, by showing the order of the universe.

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