

Exploring Ibn Arabi's Qur'anic Tafsir: The Spiritual Significance of Wahdat al-Wujûd in the Qur'anic Verses

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Abstract

This article scrutinized Ibn Arabi's interpretations of several Qur'anic verses, particularly his efforts to bolster the doctrine of Wahdat al-Wujûd. As a leading Sufi thinker, his interpretations often stirred controversy due to their departure from literal meanings. This qualitative study examined Ibn Arabi's works (Al-Futuhât al-Makkiyyah, Fushush al-Hikam) and the diverse views of scholars on his exegesis. The findings revealed that Ibn Arabi's exegesis was a shufi nazhari interpretation, seeking to align the Qur'anic text with the Wahdat al-Wujûd concept. This approach frequently contradicts literal (zahir) interpretations and Arabic linguistic norms, sparking heated debate among scholars. While some scholars were receptive to his views, the majority vehemently rejected them as deviant. The significance of his exegesis lies in its unconventional yet sincere attempt to integrate spiritual experience with textual understanding.

Keywords: Ibnu Arabi; Sufi Exegesis; Wahdat al-Wujûd

Abstrak

Artikel ini menganalisis penafsiran Ibnu Arabi terhadap beberapa ayat Al-Qur'an sebagai penguat ajaran Wahdat al-Wujûd. Meskipun dikenal sebagai pemikir sufi terkemuka, penafsirannya seringkali kontroversial karena cenderung melampaui makna harfiah. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif untuk mengkaji karya-karya Ibnu Arabi (Al-Futuhât al-Makkiyyah, Fushush al-Hikam) dan pandangan ulama terkait tafsirnya. Hasil studi menunjukkan bahwa tafsir Ibnu Arabi adalah tafsir shufi nazhari, yang berupaya menyelaraskan teks Al-Qur'an dengan konsep Wahdat al-Wujûd. Pendekatan ini sering bertentangan dengan tafsir zahir dan norma bahasa Arab, memicu perdebatan di kalangan ulama. Meskipun sebagian menerima, mayoritas menolaknya karena dianggap menyimpang. Pentingnya penafsiran ini terletak pada upayanya mengintegrasikan pengalaman spiritual dengan pemahaman tekstual, meskipun dengan cara yang tidak konvensional.

Keywords: Ibnu Arabi; Tafsir Sufi; Wahdat al-Wujûd

Introduction

The Qur'an, the holy book of Muslims, is not a static text, but one that is always relevant for all times. Its relevance is not confined to a specific era or location, but can be seen in the guidance it provides to humans in all aspects of life.¹ This is why Muslims are always engaged in efforts to understand the Qur'an, as they strive to apply its teachings to the needs and challenges they face. The Qur'an is also called '*shâlih li kulli zamân wa makân*', a phrase that underscores its dynamic nature and adaptability to changes in civilization.² This adaptability is a key factor in the ongoing process of interpreting the Qur'an, a process that is driven by the active engagement of Muslims and ensures that the divine message remains alive and applicable in an ever-changing

¹Taufiq Adnan Amal dan Syamsu Rizal Panggabean, *Tafsir Konkrektual Al-Qur'an: Sebuah Kerangka Konseptual* (Bandung: Mizan, 1989), 15.

²Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition* (The University of Chicago Press, 1982).

context.³

In the early period, Muslims did not face many social (religious) issues. However, after the Prophet's death, they began to experience various difficulties with the emergence of new problems that had never occurred during the Prophet's lifetime. This, of course, required solutions to be found. This situation continued to unfold in line with the rapid development of Islamic thought at that time. The expansion of Islamic power brought Muslims into contact with completely new legal systems, traditions, and socio-economic issues, which were not explicitly regulated in the sacred texts.⁴ The need to respond to this new reality significantly triggered the birth of the discipline of tafsir as a systematic field of study, marking a crucial turning point in Islamic history.⁵

In an effort to address these various problems, Muslims were encouraged to study the guidance of Allah more deeply, as contained in the Qur'an. It is not surprising that, within a relatively short period of time, various works of interpretation emerged, each with its own style and orientation. This diversity of styles not only demonstrates the depth of the Qur'an, which can be read from various perspectives, but also reflects the disciplinary background, theological tendencies, and socio-cultural context of the exegete.⁶ Among them are those who focus more on the description and discussion of linguistic aspects, whether related to nahwu, sharaf, or balâgah, as well as linguistic criticism, commonly referred to as *tafsîr lugawi*. Similarly, there are exegetes who tend to focus their descriptions and discussions on *fiqhîyyah* issues derived directly from the Qur'an. This orientation is called *tafsîr fiqhî*. There are even those who place more emphasis on exploring *batini* and implied meanings as well as esoteric and mystical matters (tasawuf),⁷ this type of interpretation is called *tafsîr shûfî*.

The name Ibn 'Arabi stands out as the most visionary and controversial figure in the realm of *tafsîr shûfî*. In his monumental works *al-Futhât al-Makkiyyah* and *al-Fushûsh al-Hikam*, he wrote several sections of his book containing interpretations of Qur'anic verses oriented towards *tafsîr shufî*. He explains these sacred verses not in their literal meaning (*ẓâhir*), but rather interprets them to reveal their inner meaning (*bâthin*). This became the philosophical basis for his belief that all existence is a manifestation (*tajalli*) of the One Being.⁸ His hermeneutic approach immediately established a methodological tension, sparking a lively debate and giving rise to the suspicion that he was projecting the pre-existing Wahdat al-Wujûd philosophical system onto the Qur'an, rather than objectively discovering it from the text of the Qur'an itself. This practice sharpens the dichotomy between the accepted *tafsîr bi al-ra'yi* (reason) and the polemical *tafsîr bi al-isyari* (signs).⁹

As part of the intellectual heritage of Muslims, Ibn 'Arabi's work is not just important, but crucial to study more intensively. Prompted by these circumstances, this paper attempts to reveal some of Ibn 'Arabi's interpretations of Qur'anic verses that became references in developing his Sufi teachings. Ibn 'Arabi's interpretation is not merely a variation in *ijtihad*, but a paradigm shift in epistemology that boldly places the authority of *kasyf* above the authority of *naql* and reason.

³Farid. Esack, *Qur'an, Liberation and Pluralism: An Islamic Perspective of Interreligious Solidarity against Oppression.*, *Studies in World Christianity*, 3.2 (1997), pp. 240–41, doi:10.3366/swc.1997.3.2.240.

⁴Wael B Hallaq, *An Introduction to Islamic Law* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), doi:DOI: 10.1017/CBO9780511801044.

⁵C. H. M. Versteegh, *Arabic Grammar and Qur'anic Exegesis in Early Islam* (E.J. Brill, 1993).

⁶Johannes J. G. Jansen, *The Interpretation of the Koran in Ancient Egypt* (Brill, 1974).

⁷Ahmad Athaillah, *Pengantar Studi Al-Qur'an dan Tafsir* (Banjarmasin: Lambung Mangkurat University Press, 1991), 88–89.

⁸A. D. Knysh, *Ibn 'Arabi in the Later Islamic Tradition* (State University of New York Press., 1999).

⁹Th. Emil Homerin, 'The Study of Islam within Mamluk Domains', *Mamluk Studies Review*, 9.2 (2005), pp. 1–30, doi:10.6082/M1TM7881.

Through a qualitative study of his works and the responses of scholars, this research analyzes how Ibn 'Arabi mobilized verses from the Qur'an and attempted to integrate them with Sufi teachings within the framework of *Wahdat al-Wujūd*.

Research Method

This study uses a qualitative-descriptive approach with library research methods and a hermeneutic-philosophical approach to analyze Ibn Arabi's interpretation of several verses of the Qur'an that support the teachings of *Wahdat al-Wujūd*. Data was collected from Ibn Arabi's major works, such as *Al-Futuhât al-Makkiyyah* and *Fushûsh al-Hikam*, as well as a wide range of secondary literature discussing scholars' views on Sufi interpretation and the teachings of *Wahdat al-Wujūd*. The analysis was conducted by examining these texts in depth, using a hermeneutic approach to understand the inner and symbolic meanings in Ibn Arabi's interpretation, as well as a philosophical approach to relate his interpretation to the underlying mystical and philosophical thoughts.

Ibn 'Arabi: A Brief Overview of His Life and Works

The name Ibn Arabi is well-known in the world of Sufism. He is known to his students and followers as *al-Syaikh al-Akbar* (the Great Teacher).¹⁰ His full name is Muhyi al-Dîn Muhammad Ibn 'Ali Ibn 'Arabi. His real name is Muhammad Ibn 'Ali, while Ibn 'Arabi is the name given to him by his followers as a sign of respect. However, it is his last name that is more popular and familiar in the world of Sufism.¹¹

Ibn 'Arabi was born into a deeply religious family on 27 Ramadan 560 AH (August 17, 1165 AD) in the municipality of Murcia, Spain, which was then under the rule of Muhammad Ibn Mardanis. His father, the chief minister of Ibn Mardanis, was a well-known and influential figure in politics and education. The family's religious fervor was evident in the fact that his three uncles were followers of Sufism.¹² This early exposure to Sufism laid the foundation for Ibn 'Arabi's spiritual journey.

In 568 AH/1172 AD, Ibn 'Arabi then only 8 years old was taken by his parents to Lisbon, then to Seville. At that time, Seville was not only a major city in Andalusia but also the headquarters of the Andalusian Sufis. Ibn 'Arabi lived in that city for no less than 30 years. However, he did not just stay there. Between his daily activities, he often took the time to visit various cities in Andalusia and traveled to several cities in North Africa for several years. It was in Seville that Ibn 'Arabi began to formally study science under the guidance and tutelage of prominent scholars. After that, he continued his studies in Córdoba, studying under the students of Ibn Hazm, the famous leader of the Zahiri school of thought, such as Abu Bakr Ibn Khaif and Ibn Basykual. The subjects he studied included 'Ulum Al-Qur'an, Hadith, Kalam, and Philosophy. While in Cordoba, he met and conversed with the Muslim philosopher Ibn Ruysd, who was then serving as Qadi al-Qudhat.¹³

Ibn 'Arabi did not formally devote himself to Sufism until he was 20 years old, but it is

¹⁰William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge Hermeneutika Al-Qur'an Ibnu 'Arabi* terj. Achmad Nidjam (Yogyakarta: Penerbit Qalam, 2001), 4.

¹¹Ahmad Athaillah, "Konsep Wahdat al-Wujud Menurut Ibnu Arabi," *Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Usbuluddin* 3, no. 1 (2004): 61–62.

¹²Muhyiddin Ibnu 'Arabi, *Fushûsh al-Hikam, Mutiara Hikmah 27 Nabi terj. A. Sabidah dan Nur Jannah Arianti* (Yogyakarta: Islamika, 2004), 1.

¹³Athaillah, "Konsep Wahdat al-Wujud Menurut Ibnu Arabi," 62.

clear that he often associated with Sufis and studied their teachings from a relatively young age.¹⁴ At the age of 20, he joined a Sufi group. This was not surprising, given that his family environment included Sufis, combined with the social conditions in Seville that supported him. Thus, Ibn 'Arabi had acquired deep spiritual insight when he was still in his teens.¹⁵

Like most other Sufis, Ibn 'Arabi was also someone who liked to travel to gain experience and knowledge. There is considerable data to support this, but the author does not elaborate on it in detail in this article. Ibn 'Arabi's thirst for knowledge and experience led him to travel extensively. He visited cities such as Tunis, Mecca, Egypt, Iraq, Syria, and Rum (now Turkey) for extended periods, but interestingly, he never ventured into Iran. His travels were not in vain, as he was warmly welcomed and respected in the areas he visited, both by the residents and the rulers.

Finally, after Ibn 'Arabi's long journey, in 620 AH/1223 AD, he settled in Damascus with his students. He spent his time studying, writing, and teaching. At the same time, he also involved himself in the social and political life of his community and established good relations with the authorities. In a document written in 632 AH/1240 AD, Ibn 'Arabi requested permission from Ayyub Mudzaffar al-Dîn Mûsa who ruled Damascus from 627 AH/1229 AD to 632 AH/1234 AD to teach all of his teachings, which he had compiled in 290 writings. Two of his most widely read and studied writings are *Al-Futûhât al-Makkiyyah* and *Fushûsh al-Hikam*.

After a decade of residing in Damascus, Ibn 'Arabi passed away on 22 Rabi' ats-Tsani 638 AH/September 16, 1240 AD, at the age of approximately 78 years. His departure marked the end of a life dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and spiritual enlightenment. However, he left behind a rich legacy in the form of monumental writings that continue to inspire and challenge scholars and Sufis alike. His teachings, though complex, remain a fascinating subject of study and discussion.

The Forms of Ibn Arabi's Tafsir

Ibn 'Arabi is more popular as a Sufi than as an exegete. This is because his field of study focuses on Sufism, as seen in his books *Al-Futûhât al-Makkiyyah* and *Fushûsh al-Hikam*. However, this does not mean that Ibn 'Arabi ignored the issue of interpretation, because in fact, in both books, he quoted many verses from the Qur'an to reinforce the teachings of Wahdat al-Wujûd that he developed and provided interpretations that were very different from those of mufassir in general.

Ibn 'Arabi's approach to interpreting the Qur'an is notably distinct. He ventures far beyond the literal meaning of the text, delving into a symbolic understanding. As William C. Chittick observed, he sought to dismantle the 'single model of interpretation' that had been widely accepted among Muslims. Unlike those who view the Qur'an as an untouchable relic, Ibn 'Arabi treats it as a 'dialogue partner' for understanding socio-cultural reality through the lens of faith and revelation as revealed in the Qur'an.¹⁶

The Qur'an can be likened to a mirror or a camera, capable of reflecting a myriad of interpretations depending on the reader's perspective. The meaning that emerges from the Qur'an is significantly influenced by the reader's mindset, culture, and language. Every reader, whether consciously or unconsciously, engages in hermeneutics or interpretation that is suitable and authentic for themselves. In a way, everyone performs *ijtihad* for themselves. When reading the

¹⁴Ibnu 'Arabi, *Fushûsh al-Hikam, Mutiara Hikmah 27 Nabi, 2*.

¹⁵Athaillah, "Konsep Wahdat al-Wujud Menurut Ibnu Arabi," 62; Ibnu 'Arabi, *Fushûsh al-Hikam, Mutiara Hikmah 27 Nabi, 2*.

¹⁶Mukaddimah Penerbit dalam William C. Chittick, vi.

Qur'an and its translations, we encounter a variety of interpretations. The understanding we derive is a product of this diverse chain of interpretations.¹⁷

To facilitate an understanding of how Ibn 'Arabi's interpretation of the verses of the Qur'an legitimizes his Sufi teachings, the author presents several examples, including the words of Allah in QS. al-Isra: 23 as follows:

وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ ... ﴿١٣﴾ (الاسراء/17:23)

"Your Lord has commanded that you not worship except Him..." (QS. Al-Isra'/17:23)

Ibn 'Arabi interpreted this verse by saying that scholars who tend to look at the written statements (text) in the verses of the Qur'an give the word *qadha* the meaning of "commanding," but Ibn 'Arabi interpreted it as "deciding to open," and this is the true meaning according to him; because the polytheists believed that they were actually worshipping these idols in order to get closer to Allah. Therefore, this is why Allah created these visible objects as substitutes. According to them, these idols were meant to be the embodiment of the "form" of God. Therefore, Allah fulfilled their needs when they used intermediaries (*washilab*) in the form of objects or idols to connect with Him, and He was also concerned that the position of these objects would be threatened. Even if they were mistaken in attributing divine qualities to them, according to Ibn 'Arabi, they were clearly not mistaken in their respect for the position of these objects.¹⁸

It seems that for Ibn 'Arabi, the attribution of attributes and worship of Allah by the polytheists of Jahiliyyah was still tolerable, because they still believed that it was Allah who created the heavens and the earth and provided for them, while the idols they worshipped were only an attempt to get as close to Him as possible. Ibn 'Arabi explains this more clearly when interpreting QS. al-Baqarah: 163:

وَالْهَكْمُ إِلَهُ وَاحِدٌ ... ﴿١٦٣﴾ (البقرة/2:163)

"Your God is the One and Only God..." (QS. Al-Baqarah/2:163)

According to Ibn 'Arabi, in this verse, Allah speaks to Muslims, saying that those who worship objects other than Allah in order to draw closer to Him are actually the same as worshipping Allah. Remember when they said, "We only worship these objects to draw closer to Allah," while giving their reasons. Then Allah says to us that your Lord and the Lord that the polytheists worship through objects of worship in order to get closer to Him are the same. Therefore, you are all the same in your belief in the One God.¹⁹

Another example of Ibn 'Arabi's interpretation, which was influenced by the views of the philosophers, is the word of Allah in Surah Maryam: 57 concerning the story of Prophet Idris AS, which reads:

وَرَفَعْنَاهُ مَكَانًا عَلِيًّا ﴿٥٧﴾ (مريم/19:57)

"We have raised him to a high position." (QS. Maryam/19:57)

According to Ibn 'Arabi, that high place is where celestial bodies orbit, namely our solar system. That is where the spirit of Prophet Idris (as) is located. Below it are seven orbits, and seven other orbits are above it, making a total of fifteen. Ibn 'Arabi then mentions the orbits

¹⁷Chittick, vii.

¹⁸Muhyiddin Ibnu 'Arabi, *al-Futūhāt al-Makkiyyah*, vol. III (Kairo: al-Maktab al-Arabiyyah, 1975), 117.

¹⁹Muhyiddin Ibnu 'Arabi, *al-Futūhāt al-Makkiyyah*, vol. IV (Kairo: al-Maktab al-Arabiyyah, 1975), 160.

above and below our orbit and says: "The place above the orbit of the sun (our solar system) is our place, the ummah of Muhammad, as stated in the words of Allah in Surah Muhammad: 35."²⁰:

... وَأَنْتُمْ الْأَعْلَوْنَ وَاللَّهُ مَعَكُمْ ... ﴿٣٥﴾ (محمد/47:35)

"... while you are the most honored. Allah is with you..." (QS. Muhammad/47:35)

Next is Ibn 'Arabi's interpretation, which can be seen, for example, in QS. al-Fajr: 29-30:

فَادْخُلِي فِي عِبَادِي ﴿٣٠﴾ وَاَدْخُلِي جَنَّتِي ﴿٢٩﴾ (الفجر/89:29-30)

"Then enter among My servants (29); And enter My Paradise!" (30) (QS. Al-Fajr/89:29-30)

The verse discussed is actually quite straightforward in its meaning. However, Ibn 'Arabi provides an extensive and somewhat complicated explanation. He interprets the phrase "Enter into the congregation of My servants" to refer to those who understand their Lord, are content with Him, and do not turn to any other deity. This includes a recognition of the unity of His essence. He further explains that entering "My paradise" means entering into a state where one experiences closeness to God, emphasizing that His paradise is essentially His essence. Therefore, whoever truly knows Him will also come to know themselves in a different way. Once you have entered His paradise, you attain a deeper self-knowledge (ma'rifah) than what you had when you understood Him solely through intellectual means. This experience grants you two forms of ma'rifah: one is your personal understanding of Him, and the other is His perspective on you, which transcends your individual viewpoint.²¹

Exploring Ibn 'Arabi's Perspective on Qur'anic Interpretation

From the examples of Ibn 'Arabi's interpretations above, it is evident that he approached the verses of the Qur'an through the lens of his concept of wahdat al-wujûd (the Unity of Being). His interpretations are highly controversial compared to those of other exegetes.

For instance, in interpreting QS. Al-Baqarah: 163, Ibn 'Arabi equates idol worshippers with believers who worship Allah, arguing that the ultimate goal of both groups is to worship Allah. This notion of the unity and similarity of religions (wahdat al-adyân) is considered a dangerous doctrine within Islam. Logically, if all religions are deemed true, it contradicts Allah's purpose in sending messengers to clarify which religions are valid and which are not. While it is reasonable for each community to believe its own religion is the most true, it is illogical for Muslims or any other community to also accept the truth of other religions. The clear differences in beliefs among religions highlight the rationale behind Muslims being tolerant of people of other faiths, as long as they do not engage in conflict or harm Muslims.²²

Similarly, Ibn 'Arabi's interpretation of QS. Al-Fajr: 29-30 reveals a controversial pattern of thinking in contrast to the views of other exegetes. This is also evident in his interpretation of QS. Maryam: 57. These interpretations suggest that Ibn 'Arabi's thought was significantly influenced by Eastern (Indian) philosophy and the theories of Plotinus. He adopted and developed Plotinus' theories in his concept of divine emanation (al-Faidh al-Ilah), which follows a cyclical pattern that begins and ends with Allah, existing within the unity of that cycle.²³

²⁰Muhyiddin Ibnu 'Arabi, *Fushûsh al-Hikam* (Kairo: al-Zaman, 1304 H), 26.

²¹Ibnu 'Arabi, 26; Lihat juga Ahmad Athaillah, "Tafsir Shufi Dalam Perspektif Para Ulama Sunni," *Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Usbuluddin* 2, no. 2 (2003): 12.

²²Athaillah, "Tafsir Shufi Dalam Perspektif Para Ulama Sunni," 13.

²³M. Laily Mansur, *Tasawuf Islam : Mengenal Aliran dan Ajaran* (Banjarmasin: Lambung Mangkurat University Press, 1992), 74–77.

Given this context, the difference between Ibn 'Arabi's interpretative approach and that of other exegetes is understandable. Ibn 'Arabi was a Sufi figure who advanced the Sufi teaching of *wahdat al-wujûd*, which posits that the entire universe reflects Allah's existence. Consequently, his interpretations consistently center on explaining this doctrine.²⁴

This leads to a question: "Are there any arguments that can serve as references for Sufis, including Ibn 'Arabi, in their interpretations of the Qur'an?"

To address this question, the author presents the views of Muhammad Husain adz-Dzahabi, an expert in Qur'anic sciences. Adz-Dzahabi asserts that the Sufi approach to symbolic interpretation (*tafsîr Isyârî*, *tafsîr Faidhî*) is primarily based on a hadith attributed to the Prophet, which states that the Qur'an contains both an outer meaning and an inner meaning. Sufi scholars contend that those who only examine the text of the Qur'an can grasp its external meaning. In contrast, the inner meaning can only be understood by individuals with pure hearts and souls before Allah. According to them, only these individuals can attain certainty (*inul yaqîn*) regarding the inner meanings that cannot be comprehended through mere knowledge (*ilmul yaqîn*) by those who approach the Qur'an solely in terms of its text.²⁵

Adz-Dzahabi does not dispute the authenticity of the hadith that Sufis rely on for interpreting the Qur'an; instead, he questions the distinction between the outer and inner meanings. He challenges whether the outer meaning refers to an easily comprehensible aspect of the Qur'an and whether the inner meaning represents a hidden interpretation accessible only to Sufis. According to adz-Dzahabi, this is not the case.²⁶ The word of Allah QS. Al-Qamar: 17, QS. Al-Maidah: 15, and QS. Al-Baqarah: 99.

وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْآنَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِنْ مُدَكِّرٍ ﴿١٧﴾ (القمر/54:17)

"Indeed, We have made the Qur'an easy to remember. So is there anyone who will be reminded?" (QS. Al-Qamar/54:17)

...قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ نُورٌ وَكِتَابٌ مُبِينٌ ﴿١٥﴾ (المائدة/5:15)

"... Indeed, there has come to you from Allah a light and a clear Book." (QS. Al-Ma'idah/5:15)

وَلَقَدْ أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ آيَاتٍ بَيِّنَاتٍ... ﴿٩٩﴾ (البقرة/2:99)

"Indeed, We have certainly sent down to you clear verses..." (QS. Al-Baqarah/2:99)

Adz Dzahabi's perspective on the Qur'an is centered on the distinction between the apparent and inner meanings. He asserts that the apparent meaning, as affirmed by Allah, is that the book of Allah, revealed in clear Arabic, is understood by those who comprehend the Arabic language itself. On the other hand, the inner meaning is what Allah SWT intends and aims for, beyond the Arabic words and sentence structure. Adz-Dzahabi's argument is that all meanings from a linguistic (Arabic) perspective fall under the category of the literal meaning of the Qur'an. Therefore, to understand the apparent meaning of the Qur'an, mastery of the Arabic language is the only requirement. Any interpretations taken from the Qur'an that do not align with the norms among Arabic speakers cannot be considered as interpretations of the Qur'an, either explicitly or

²⁴M. Laily Mansur, *Tasawuf Islam : Mengenal Aliran dan Ajaran* (Banjarmasin: Lambung Mangkurat University Press, 1992), 74–77.

²⁵Muhammad Husain Adz-Dzahabi, *Penyimpangan-Penyimpangan dalam Tafsir Al-Qur'an terj. Hamim Ihyas dan Machnun Huseim* (Jakarta: Raja Grafindo Persada, 1996), 98–99.

²⁶Adz-Dzahabi, *Penyimpangan-Penyimpangan dalam Tafsir Al-Qur'an*, 99.

implicitly.²⁷

Adz-Dzahabi's view on understanding the inner meaning of the Qur'an is distinctive. He argues that it requires more than just mastery of the Arabic language; it also necessitates other conditions, particularly sharp vision and clarity of mind. These conditions, he asserts, are a result of the divine light entering a person's heart. This unique perspective means that *bathini* interpretation is inseparable from the connotative meaning of the words of the Qur'an. Therefore, in assessing the truth of the inner meaning, the scholars put forward two fundamental conditions:

1. The meaning is definitively accurate according to the accepted literal interpretation in Arabic, firmly aligning with the understanding relevant to that language.
2. This meaning must be emphatically supported by evidence, such as a text or a literal interpretation from another source, that confirms its validity without contradiction.²⁸

In another book, Adz-Dzahabi formulated several criteria for acceptable *Isyârî* (*shûfî*) interpretation, namely:

1. It does not deviate from or contradict the apparent meaning of the verses of the Qur'an.
2. It is supported by rational arguments or strong evidence from the Shari'a.
3. It does not contradict Sharia or common sense.
4. It does not claim that *isyârî* interpretation is the only one intended by Allah in that verse.²⁹

Meanwhile, according to Manna' Khalil al-Qattan, several requirements for the acceptance of this type of interpretation include:

1. It does not contradict the (*zâhir*) meaning of the verse.
2. The meaning itself is valid.
3. There are indications of the (*isyârî* meaning) in the interpreted wording.
4. There is a close relationship between the *isyârî* meaning and the meaning of the verse.³⁰

If these criteria are applied in Sufi interpretation, then the interpretation will be *mahmûd* (praiseworthy) and can be used as guidance for the ummah. Conversely, interpretations that do not meet these criteria are flawed (*madzmûm*), meaning they are not praiseworthy and should be rejected because they will mislead and confuse the ummah.³¹

Regarding Ibn 'Arabi's interpretation, there are indeed differences of opinion among scholars; some accept it, such as Ibn 'Athallah and those of his school of thought. In general, those who accept it have good intentions towards the Sufis, with the understanding that what the Sufis have achieved including in interpreting the verses of the Qur'an is something that Allah has

²⁷Adz-Dzahabi, *Penyimpangan-Penyimpangan dalam Tafsir Al-Qur'an*, 100.

²⁸Adz-Dzahabi, *Penyimpangan-Penyimpangan dalam Tafsir Al-Qur'an*, 101.

²⁹Muhammad Husain Adz-Dzahabi, *al-Tafsîr wa al-Mufasssîrîn*, vol. 2 (Kairo: Dâr al-Kutub al-Hadîsah, 1976), 377.

³⁰Manna' Khalil al-Qattan, *Membahas Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur'an terj. Mudzakir AS* (Jakarta: Litera Antar Nusa, 1992), 490.

³¹Baidan, *Tafsir Maudhu'î, Solusi Qur'an atas Masalah Sosial Kontemporer*, 243.

inspired in the hearts of people who are 'arif billah (very knowledgeable about Allah). Meanwhile, many other scholars reject it, because according to them, the interpretations developed by the Sufis lead to religious corruption and disbelief in the verses of Allah.³²

Conclusion

After presenting Ibn 'Arabi's interpretations of the verses of the Qur'an that serve as the basis for strengthening the teachings of Wahdat al-Wujûd, it can be seen that Ibn 'Arabi's interpretation is classified as tafsîr tahlîlî in terms of method and as tafsîr shûfî in terms of orientation, which in this case is tafsîr shûfî nazharî.

When it comes to interpreting the verses of the Qur'an, Ibn 'Arabi didn't shy away from pushing the boundaries of rationality. His interpretations, he claimed, were not mere fabrications, but a true reflection of the verses' meanings, the ultimate truth as he saw it.

Many of Ibn 'Arabi's interpretations contradict the apparent meaning of the verses and the qath'i texts, because he has ignored the linguistic aspects of the Qur'an. Therefore, although there are scholars who accept Ibn 'Arabi's interpretations, there are also many scholars who reject them, because they are considered to deviate from religious teachings.

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³² Adz-Dzahabi, *al-Tafsîr wa al-Mufasssîrîn*, 2: 346.

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