

AL-KONAWI'S MANUSCRIPT NAMED "NUSUS AND HIS DOCTRINE OF UNIFICATION (VAHDAT AL-VUJUD)

Yrd.Doç.Dr. Şahin Filiz*

First of all, we should briefly examine al-Konawi's life and personal identity.

His complete name is Sadreddin Mohammad bin Isaac bin Mohammad b. Josaef bin Ali Al-Konawi al-Rumi, who was a great Turkish Sufi and Philosopher, was born in Malatya * in 1207 A.D., and died in 1274 in Konya(**)!

Al-Konawi lived in the reign of Turkish Anatolian Seljuks. At the same time, he was Mawlana Jaladaddin Rumi's contemporary who, as is well-known, lived in the XIII century. It is true that people claim that there were very close relations between Al-Konawi and Mawlana. They were very respectful to each other and endlessly discussed various theosophical subjects. In the course of these discussions, they met and chatted about certain mystical and religious matters. After eight months had passed away, Mawlana was taken into God's mercy. Because his

*S.Ü. İlahiyat Fakültesi İslam Felsefesi Anabilim Dalı Başkanı

*Malatya is one of the biggest cities in the south-East Region of Turkey.

**Konya is also one of the biggest cities in the Middle of Anatolia in Turkey.

¹ See H.Zirikli, *Al-Alam*, Cairo, 1927, Vol. VI, p.254

last injunction was that (he) be buried by Al-Konawi, he performed this sacred duty, that is, buried Mawlana.²

Al-Konawi was one of the most distinguished disciples of Ibn Arabi, who was a great mystic of Islam in the same century. So he had become a sophisticated mystic by virtue of Ibn Arabi. Because Ibn Arabi married his mother, Al-Konawi obtained the opportunity to meet with him frequently. On the other hand, it was well-known that Al-Konawi was engaged in a correspondance with Nasır Al-Din Tusi on some philosophical problems.³

He spent his whole life in theological schools, that is, medresse, and used his home as a center of science. Therefore, his home became just like a school. He found the opportunity to make his master's philosophical and msytical doctrine reflect the century in which lived through his authority in the realm of Hadith (The tradition of Mohammed). In conclusion, we note that he had many distinguished pupils and disciples, but never established any religious orders in his name. Furthermore, his son and grandchild were not anonymous figures-identities. We come to our treatment of this summarizes.⁴

In different libraries of Turkey, there are about thirty works and manuscripts, belonging to Al-Konawi. This number has grown to a total of 36 works referring to him.⁵ We will neither enumerate the names of those books individually, nor talk about the topics implied within them. However, we will carefully examine one of them. This book is 'Nusus' as in the title page.

² For further details see, M. Demirci, *Konevi ile Mevlana, Selçuk Dergisi, Sayı:4, Konya, 1989, pp.57-68*

³ *Al-Zirikli, Vol.VI, p.254*

⁴ See Osman Ergin, *Konevi ve Eserleri, Şarkiyat Mecmuası, Ankara, 1956, Vol.I,p.63*

⁵ I discussed this topic at greater length in 'Al-Konawi's Manuscript called 'Mifiah Gayb Al-Cam Wa'l-Vujud:an Some Philosophical Thoughts on it', *Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi, Konya 1994, No:3, pp.171-179*

Firstly, it is very helpful to take notice of certain verses related to the unification or the doctrine of the unity of Being, according to Al-Konawi.

"... are you not aware that God knows what the heavens and the earth contain ? If there men converse in secret, He is their fourth; if five, He is their sixth; Whether fewer or more, Wherever they be, He is with them."(Koran, 58:7)

"It was not you, but God, who slew them. It was not you who smote them: God smote them so that He might richly reward the faithful"(8:17)

"To God belongs the east and the west. Whichever way you turn there is the face of God. He is omnipresent and allknowing."(2:115)

"All things shall perish except Himself. He is the judgement and to Him you shall return."(28:88)

"He is the First and the Last, The Visible and Unseen. He has knowledge of all things." (57:.)

There are thirty verses in the Koran concerned with the Unity of Being, but those verses in question do not apply.⁶

The mystics of Islam interpreted them from a view the point of their own mystical and philosophical meanings. The most important of the meanings, which was inferred, is the connections between God and the Universe, or God and man. Actually; the mystics, while they were interpreting the verses, used the ontological methodology. Then, they came to the conclusion that being as a being in its reality was to be studied in a sequence: Firstly, God exists and has unlimited existence, in terms of the

⁶ For example: *The Imrans* 3:6, 108; *The Hordes* 39:42; *Repentance* 9:104; *That which is coming* 56:56, 58,63,85; *The Resurrection* 75:18; *The Merciful* 55:1-2, 29; *The Victory* 48:10; *Mohammad* 47:31; *The caw* 2:165, 186; *Al-Furqan* 25:45; *The Bee* 16:3; *Qaf* 50:16; *The Poets* 26:20, 46; *The Spoils* 8:61; *The Winds* 51:21; *Houd* 11:123; *Women* 4:126; *Sheba* 34:35.

metaphysics of oneness of Absolute Being. If we name that term in the Arabic, we call it “Wahdat Al-Vujud”.

According to the Sufis, this Absolute Reality doesn't need or anything to exist, because He exists within Himself and is eternal and unlimited. He has no shape and naturally was not, formed by anything. The existence of multiplicity is in the outer world, not in His own Absolute Reality. It is impossible for Him to change or to transform. To restrict Him with “absoluteness” by means of intelligence does not prove that His own Absolute Being belongs to Himself. Although the mind or intelligence thinks of him as an opponent to the unabsolute, there is no such being.⁷

This Being is only one and designed Oneness. That is to say, Being as being actually belongs to no one but God. There is nothing but God's being, though it is impossible to be have any existence without His unlimited existence.⁸ Thus, God exists as a real being.⁹

On the other hand, the second one is the universe and what it contains. Consequently, we say that there is the universe and that there are creatures, which we call “Reality in appearance”.

If God exists, and if everything has its being in Him, it follows that the universe was not created at one moment in the distant past (ever since evolving on its own) but that it constantly manifests the Divine Existence of its maker. This means that the universe is in a perpetual state of creation. According to the Sufis, especially to Haris bin al-Asad al-Muhasibi (Death 857 A.D.), Bayezid al-Bistami (Death 874 A.D.), Junayd al-Baghdadi (Death 909 A.D.), Khallaj (D..922 A.D.), İbn Arabi (D.1240 A.D.) and his

⁷ I.F. Ertuğrul, *Vahdet-i Vucud ve İbn Arabi, İnsan Y. İstanbul, p.9*

⁸ F.Kam-M.A.Ayni, *İbn Arabi'de Varlık Düşüncesi, İnsan Y., İstanbul, p.77*

⁹ I.F. Ertuğrul, *İbid., p.97*

disciple al-Konawi, creation means simply the coming into concrete manifestation of something already existing in God.¹⁰

To say this in a different way, everything has two aspects: one to itself and another one to its Lord. In regards to the aspect to the aspect to itself, it is a nonentity; but in regard to the aspect of God, it is an entity. Then, since nothing exists except God and His aspect, everything but His aspect is perishing from eternity to eternity..."¹¹ For that reason the multiplicity is always seen in the light of unity.

Afterwards, the idea of unity of being from the philosophy of tasawwuf (Islamic Mysticism) was thoroughly systematized by Ibn Arabi. Then al-Konawi, who was Ibn Arabi's stepson as well as one of the greatest Turkish-Islamic mystics, defended his father's doctrine by adding his own commentaries to the thought of Wahdat al-Wujud. The foremost reason that encourages us to explore al-Konawi's idea of being. A second reason is that is firmly insisted on that it was he who was the one of who had propounded the term of Wahdat Al-Wujud or unification.¹²

The doctrine of unification was discussed in almost all of Al-Konawi's manuscripts at great length. Nevertheless, we pay attention to and focus on the discussions within only some of them. So, one of them is his manuscript book called "Al-Nusus" Wa Tahkik Al-Tawr Al-Mansus, which we are going to examine carefully now.

¹⁰ See, Rom Landau, *The Philosophy of Ibn Arabi*, Ruskin House, London, 1959, p.29

¹¹ DB.Macdonald, *The Religious Attitude and Life in Islam*, Chicago, 1906, p.274

¹² See for further details, H.Erdem, *Panteizm ve Vahdet-i Vucud Mukayesesi*, K.B.Y., Ankara, 1990, pp.34-35,37 (*Anymore we'll call Wahdat Al-Wujud as "Unification"*)

This manuscript, written in Arabic, is now available and registered (numbered) as 677/2 in the Library of Yusufaga in Konya.

Let's try to ascertain Al-Konawi's thoughts concerning the unification following "Nusus" from its beginning to its end.

In Konawi's mind, the idea of being and its many varieties can't arise without the ultimate Reality that is God. In effect, everything except the Absolute Reality and His knowledge, which pretends to exist within the universe, is only a shadow and absence to its Lord.

Man's deepest longings and highest Divine-Designations (Taayyunat) are at the root of the explanations of what Lord had wished for Himself. Thus, man is only being in appearance with his existing wishes, knowledge and behaviours.¹³

Because God's being is Absolute, it is not contingent in other words, no one can determine Him in any way. If we use al-Konawi's expression, it is not possible for God to be determined by any Judgement, or "his being (wujuduhu) is necessary", or He is not attributed to "oneness" or "Uniqueness". For that reason, this phenomenon requires the designation less before, which means a designation and limiting.¹⁴

These statements of Al-Konawi indicate that the idea of Infallibility or Unerringness (Tanzih) had placed in his own thought of Unification as a dominant character. In fact, Ibn Arabi defended that idea for a long time.

The issue on which he parts company with Ibn Arabi is his advancement of the doctrine of infallibility. Furthermore he had put that idea as a thick-line between God and creatures. It is clearly

¹³ See Al-Konawi, "Nusus", *Leaves (Warak)* 137b. (Then, the term of *Leaves* shall be written such as "L" shortly.)

¹⁴ Al-Konawi, *Ibid.*, 138a

seen in the following statements by al-Konawi. Let's examine carefully what he says now:

All these things we have discussed opposed the concept of Absoluteness. Yet we might imagine the Absoluteness of God, on the condition that God's secret may be understood by way of a contradiction. Or, it is not possible to be thought except this method. Because the opposite of Absolute One is limited one at the same time. Whereas God in His own Absoluteness, is more absolute than oneness, multiplicity and, so much so that all varieties of restrictions and limitations. So, if on those conditions that he was thought considering the idea of Infallibility, in that case, it would be smooth and correct to be thought of Him in way.¹⁵

In concluding his thoughts on infallibility, however, al-Konawi inclines toward the idea of Resemblance (or Tashbih), in order not to sever the firm relationship between God and His creatures. Thus, he tries to build a second pillar in his theory of Unification in saying the following:

"(Yet) unity"; "to be affected by other things", "creative act" and as those attributes were turned to God on the condition that considering His Divine-Determination (or Designation-Taayyun) and personal knowledge. Because things, in the universe exist according to the divine determinations of His universal and detailed rationally, consist His Divine-Determinations. Multiplicity, among other things, is consumed within the unity of God. For that reason, the process of life operates according to reasons which occur one by one within a whole.

In short, the multiplicity within the unity is consumed and vice versa. That is, God, in al-Konawi's view, is both transcendental immanent.

¹⁵ Al-Konawi, *Ibid*, L.138a.

“Thus, the first intelligence is mean between God and the contingent beings which were pre-arranged before, till the day of Judgement.”¹⁶

We understand from al-Konawi's statements that he does not incline entirely either toward the infallibility, nor towards the Resemblance. The two basics on which the doctrine of Unification depend have been balanced ontologically and epistemologically between The Absolute Being or the Relative Beings. As a matter of fact, al-Konawi stresses that point in the following statement:

“Knowledge is derived from the Being. For, the Being becomes knowledge. So there is no difference between them. All the time they never be separated from each other. Namely, the degrees of knowledge are categorised according to the degrees of being.”¹⁷

According to al-Konawi, the only way to distance the idea of Unification from the idea of Infallibility in its extreme form would be to do away entirely with the possibilities which are provided to us for thinking of God and understanding Him.

It is true that the idea of Infallibility is not able to provide us with a proper or rightful understanding of God. A simple “Infallibility” makes all the relations between God and the other beings a puzzle and confuses that relation with other things. Such a case gets difficult when we think of the universe in the framework of an ontic unity and it also does away with the epistemological possibilities leading man to the knowledge of the Ultimate Reality. On the other hand, the simple idea of Resemblance has some problems. When we carefully examine the Resemblance, we can easily understand it. The Ultimate Reality turns into an energy identified with the universe. In the same way, God and the universe, the infinite and finite, the complete and incomplete, the

¹⁶ Al-Konawi, *Ibid.*, L, 138a-138b.

¹⁷ Al-Konawi, *Ibid.*, L, 139a.

unlimited and limited, all change into each other. Eventually, due to this ontological identification, naturally appears that someone who perceives the universe or anything which belongs it. And at the same time this situation requires that the man comprehend The Absolute Reality in this way.

If the idea of Resemblance is considered without the idea of Infalliability, this view would be resulted in pantheism not unification.¹⁸ Whereas such an understanding, breaks the unity within being and also knowledge, and the balance between them.

Like that al-Konawi by following his master's method, namely Ibn Arabi, approached equally to both of the Infalliability and the Resemblance in order to constitute the unification.

In his opinion, when we consider only the Infalliability, God can be perceived "entirely". The condition of "entirely" clearly proves that the Resemblance was considered too. al-Konawi says:

"No doubt, man comprehends all things known one by one or as a whole by means of his thinking, intuition called al-Hads, sense-perception or imagination. (His acts) rise to the highest points in this way. His comprehension by the means of this way goes upto comprehension of the background of what man perceives -and knows his self-consciousness and its universal characteristics, of course this situation occurs immediately following that comprehension. However, he can't get a perfect understanding at this level. All the same time His thought can not exactly surround the Ultimate Reality. Because God is one with His personal in truth; so no name, no sentence, or no picture can determine Him. It means that there is pure non-existence except the Ultimate Reality. Thus, according to al-Konawi, the highest

¹⁸ For further details on this discussion see, F.Kam-M.A.Ayni, *Ibid.*, pp., 9, 21, 26, 27, 45, 55, 63; I.F.Ertuğrul, *Ibid.*, p. p. 65; H.Erdem, *Ibid.*, pp., 7-26, 90-102

way of our knowledge of God is the taste (zawq) and witness (shuud).¹⁹

At the end of the "Nusus", al-Konawi gives a sharp form to his own original view of Unification by uniting the Infalliability and the Resemblance. And says:

"God knows Himself by the means of Him again. He knows everything in themselves by His knowledge in itself. God is not anything but only God. There was anything together Him... so, the characteristics of oneness reflect within the multiplicity or outer world and, vice versa. And the oneness unified the multiplicity like these words may be said about man. God's Divine-Designation and appearances for man are infinite due to His positions which mean that his ultimate Personal's Absolute designations and the varieties of His appearances.²⁰ For God it is possible to say that both exterior and manifestation are same things.²¹

Al-Konawi, in his last argument, seems to imply that Ultimate Reality-Relative Reality were identified. But according to him, with his own term, it may be indicated that "the view belong to the authorities" Infalliability, who say that they get intuitively their all of knowledge from God. And continues as following:

"Rational Infalliability provide us a comprehension of God whose being has never being materialized in reality.

The meaning of the Infalliability is to clear God from all the negative attributes as if aims at purifying from some deficiencies supposed only in the minds. Whereas, according to Al-Konawi, the mystics who don't defend "Infalliability" in this way, have different idea of Infalliability from the other. "Infalliability in question

¹⁹ Al-Konawi, *Ibid.*, L.145b

²⁰ Al-Konawi, *Ibid.*, L.146a.

²¹ Al-Konawi, *Ibid.*, L.148a

confirms everything on the side of Ultimate Reality without swerving to any redundant manner.²²

Again, in the last arguments of al-Konawi, he doesn't try to rescue any absolute reality whose relations are broken. On the contrary, he aims at sending all the truths of relative beings which reflect on the mirror, to the Absolute Reality. Because the reflection on the mirror and the realities in their reality are not same things.²³

Like that, al-Konawi sets down an original thought of unification. For that reason, we firmly can say that al-Konawi as one of the greatest Turkish mystic, has been looking forward to be discovered.

²² *Al-Konawi, Ibid.,L.147a*

²³ *Al-Konawi, Ibid.,L.141a*