

**FINDING MEANINGS OF ISLAMIC LAW SPIRITUALITY**  
**(Ibn ‘Arabi’s Idea of Islamic Law Spirituality)**

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**ABSTRACT**

Shaikh Ibn ‘Arabi’s path is the path of *shariah*, and upholding *shariah* is the only path to Allah, may He be exalted. According to him, *shariah* and *haqiqah* are inseparable. A person who has reached *haqiqah* is he who has worshiped Allah, may He be exalted, according to *shariah* instead of he who worships according to reasons and theories. This is because reason limits the life movement of its user, while *shariah* and *haqiqah* will lead him to truth and safety. Verily, truth belongs to Allah, may He be exalted, and anyone who seeks protection under the shade of *shariah* will be safe because *shariah* is the safest of paths.

In his book *al-Futūhāt al-Makkiyah* Ibn ‘Arabi states that *shariah* is *haqiqah* in manifestation. *Shariah* is a reality, and in every reality lies a substance. Thus, the reality of *shariah* presence is ruled by the presence of its substance, that is, *haqiqah*. The former and the latter are two inseparable things. Ibn ‘Arabi expresses his objection toward those who abandon the inward nature of *shariah* texts. He asserts that it is not permissible to separate *shariah* from *haqiqah* as it is impossible that the two are at odds with each other. He even describes that *shariah* itself is *haqiqah* elsewhere. He posits that *haqiqah* lays a foundation for *shariah*, and *shariah* is a basis for the acquisition of *haqiqah* knowledge. Every *haqiqah* which is not supported by *shariah* is *zindiq*.

The earlier description has explained that regardless of the divine outpour claim, Ibn ‘Arabi’s explanation of law and worship meanings have certain objectives which have the properties of manifestation and teaching. The description above elaborates that, other than for such objectives, spiritual interpretations in his legal works are not without analytic pattern and guide. Despite its unsystematic explanation, this discourse of Ibn ‘Arabi’s Islamic Law Spirituality is present in four main patterns: *al-‘ibrah* method, textuality in the treasury of Arabic language meanings, acceptance of *ikhtilāf* (opinion diversity), and deconstruction of conventional *fiqh* structure.

Keywords: *Islamic law, shariah, haqiqah*

## A. INTRODUCTION

Some time ago we Muslims were struck by a statement by 'Alī Muhammad ibn Yaṭwu that the Jum'ah Prayer performed in congregation at the Hagia Sophia Grand Mosque, Turkey, was invalid since the *imam*, or prayer leader, al-Shaykh 'Ali Arbash, adheres to the Maturidiyyah school of thought and is a *Sufi*. Yaṭwu went as far as saying that the Friday Prayer must be repeated by performing the Dhuhur Prayer (<https://www.facebook.com/langkahsantri/>).

The tangled threads of tension between *sharī'ah* and Sufism as one mentioned above have become incidents that drained the energy and bogged down the minds of the Muslims to untangle. This arises from the conflict of extreme views between one side which sees *sharī'ah* in the sense of outward law as the core and ground of Islam and as the definition of Islam itself and sees spirituality as a mere addition or ornament to one's Islamic religiosity and another side which sees spirituality as the core, ground, and essential meaning of Islam and as the most real expression of Islam and sees *sharī'ah* as merely an empty shell and unable to reach realities of truths.

The Esoterism-Sufism method potentially crashes itself into the Exoterism-Literal one of Islam. The emphasis of Sufism on experiencing and feeling the presence of God is not positioned by literalists as a balancer and refinement for the legitimate worship of God but seen as transversing the law and causing jeopardy to their built worship signs and systems (Renard 2004, p. 199). The Islam world has been undergoing a long history of tensions between Sufism and *sharī'ah*, in which case the latter has been misleadingly confronted with the former. This even endures until today.

In any case, Sufis' views and practices from the beginning have essentially reinforced the assumption that Sufism or spirituality, along with all of its aspects, is an inherent part of Islamic *sharī'ah* and that deviations that arise are no more than misunderstanding and/or misinterpretation on the part of the Sufis rather than on Sufism. This is because Allah, may He be exalted, imposed *taklif* on His servants through two things in this world. The first is *sharī'ah* and the second is *haqīqah*. *Sharī'ah* is outward in nature, a piece of clothing to *haqīqah*. Meanwhile, *haqīqah* is inward in nature. It concerns the heart that is in recognition of and intimacy with Allah, may He be exalted. For those who improve their *'ibādah* outwardly and realize their *ubūdiyyah* inwardly will Allah, may He be exalted, perfect His *nikmat* with a testimony to His *Dzat* and light shone upon His characters, and He will bestow on them the *ladunnī* knowledge with which they will be able to overcome all difficulties in understanding and eventually raise their degree (Hasanī, v. II, p. 333).

Islamic Mysticism will always bear the task of integrating love and *taqwā* into legal compliance (*shariah*). Sufis never disregard their practical role in raising the awareness of legal practitioners or *fuqahā'* for them not to fall into the trap of one-sided, rigid, and arbitrary attitudes by setting up a law based only on outward deeds without any consideration on the inward aspects (the actors' morality and internal awareness). This role of theirs is necessary for the achievement of benefits, both in the world and in the hereafter. This is what Ibn Qayyim referred to as the real *maqāsid al-sharī'ah* (Jundī 2013, p. 255). To generate such benefits, a lot of efforts have been made by Muslim scholars in the enforcement of Islamic law in the field.

When it comes down to the various methods employed in the study of Islamic law, especially vis-à-vis the abovementioned, there is one method that often slips the attention of Islamic law scholars, that is, the method for finding spiritual meanings in Islamic law. This method asserts that the presence of spiritual meanings in Islamic law is a given. This method was first developed by Ibn 'Arabi. Ibn 'Arabi's ideas and thoughts in this

method are contained and scattered across many of his works, but this method has yet to become a complete, concrete one.

To study this method, this paper first examines Ibn 'Arabi's thoughts on the integrity of *sharī'ah* and *Haqīqah* before investigating the method in question in its position as a juridical and legal rule rather than in its philosophical and ontologic positions. Therefore, the topics of legal thoughts in Ibn 'Arabi's books will be approached and situated in the *sharī'ah* context as a religious law as opposed to its relationship with the whole philosophical concept and doctrinal structure of Ibn 'Arabi's Sufism.

Setting out from the thoughts above, this paper seeks to demonstrate that Ibn 'Arabi, irrespective of the fact that he is among the most controversial and misunderstood Sufis, pays considerable attention to Islamic *sharī'ah* and never wills that his doctrines and thoughts will drive people away from the right understanding and recognition of the practical characters and values of *sharī'ah* as typically discerned by the Muslims in general.

To this end, this study will explain Ibn 'Arabi's juridical principles and their underlying assumptions. This study is highly useful as it adds a reference to this minimally investigated topic and helps develop this newly arising discourse to open a path to discoveries, understanding, or even establishments of Sufism-themed legal concepts and theories as described above.

## B. DISCUSSION

### 1. Ibn 'Arabi's Compliance with *Sharī'ah*

In his book, *al-Futūhāt al-Makkiyah* Ibn 'Arabi states that *sharī'ah* is *haqīqah* in manifestation (Zargar 2020, p. 61). *Sharī'ah* is a reality, and in every reality lies a substance. Thus, the reality of *sharī'ah* presence is ruled by the presence of its substance, that is, *haqīqah*. The former and the latter are two inseparable things (Sha'rānī 2012, p. 104). Ibn 'Arabi expresses his objection toward those who abandon the outward nature of *sharī'ah* texts. He asserts that it is not permissible to separate *sharī'ah* from *haqīqah* as it is impossible that the two are at odds with each other. He even describes that *sharī'ah* itself is *haqīqah* elsewhere (Miftāh 2009, p. 90). He posits that *haqīqah* lays a foundation for *sharī'ah*, and *sharī'ah* is a basis for the acquisition of *haqīqah* knowledge. Every *haqīqah* which is not supported by *sharī'ah* is *zindiq* (Jīlī 2009, p. 15).

He further points out that an 'Arif person is he who worships Allah, may He be exalted, according to *sharī'ah* instead of reasons and theories (Jīlī 2009, p. 150). Reason limits the life movement of its user, while *sharī'ah* and *kashf* will lead him to truth and safety (Walid 2020, p. 141). Verily, truth belongs only to Allah, may He be exalted (Walid 2020, p. 150), and anyone who seeks protection under the shade of *sharī'ah* will be safe and sound ('Arabi 2009, p. 145). Hence, the path of *sharī'ah* is the safest of all (Nāblisī 2009, p. 100).

The best knowledge is one on laws about servitude. In other words, the knowledge that will bring the most benefits concerns the law of *sharī'ah* and its *khushūk* application. Those who hold onto the book of Allah, may He be exalted, and *the sunnah* of His Messenger, peace, and blessings be upon him, will have their paths lighted and the eye of their hearts opened, unless they commit their deeds with '*ujub* and *raya*', in which case their deeds will only perish (Tilmisānī 2005, p. 23). And those who turn themselves from the complete performance of *sharī'ah* have wronged themselves (*zālim*) (Miftāh 2011, p. 138). Abandonment of *sharī'ah* as a guide will lead to the destruction of faith (Kurdī 2006, p. 267). Ibn 'Arabi goes as far as saying in his book *al-Isfār* that all the *sharī'ah* taught by preceding prophets have been included in the one introduced by the

Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him (Jilī 2004, P. 216).

Ibn 'Arabi believes that *taklīf sharī'ah* is precisely compatible with the *Haqīqah* of human existence. Anyone who claims he understands the knowledge of *Haqīqah* but does not acknowledge *taklīf sharī'ah* is the fooliest of human beings (Jilī 2004, p. 229). He even warned anyone against debating *sharī'ah* performers as, to him, they are people of truth. Even if they must debate, they must do so in a proper manner (Jilī 2004, p. 45).

Many are in disagreement with Ibn 'Arabi's *fiqh madhhab*. Before he performed *ijtihad* for himself, as apparent in his work, he followed the *Zāhirī madhhab* (Dimashqī 2013, p. 18; Dudgeon 2018, p. 106; 'Arabi 2011, vol. 1, p. 443; Zysow 2013, p. 281; Winkel 1993, pp. 54-74; Tsafirir 2004, pp. 1-16). The *shaykh* himself is a *mujtahid mutlaq*. His methods always put forth textual *zāhir* before *qiyas* and *ta'wil* without any addition or reduction in meanings. He is unlike other *mujtahids* who seek to maximize their logic use (Dajani 2015, p. 68). *Shaykh* Ibn 'Arabi explains his position in *ijtihad* in chapter 88 of the book *al-Futūhāt al-Makkiyyah* (hereinafter *al-Futūhāt*) (Miftāh 2009, p. 56).

Abd al-Bāqī Miftāh in the book *Buhūth Hawla Kutub wa Maḥāhīm al-Shaykh al-Akbar Muhyī al-Dīn Ibnu 'Arabī* states that one of the proficiencies one must be in possession to discern Ibn 'Arabi's texts is the mastery of the law of *sharī'ah* (Miftāh 2011, p. 52). There are a vast number of other books of his explaining the importance of holding onto *sharī'ah* both inwardly and outwardly (Miftāh 2011, p. 56; 'Arabi 2007, p. 287; Kurdī 2006, pp. 266, 452–470; Zayd 2002, pp. 207–229). The path of *Shaikh* Ibn 'Arabi is the path of *sharī'ah*, and upholding *sharī'ah* is the only path to Allah, may He be exalted.

## 2. Islamic Law Spirituality: The Union of *Sharī'ah* and *Haqīqah*

In this section, Ibn 'Arabi's thoughts on *sharī'ah* in its position as a juridical and legal rule rather than in its philosophical and ontological positions are to be examined. Therefore, the *sharī'ah* topics in Ibn 'Arabi's books, especially *al-Futūhāt* (Fina 2018, p. 162) will be approached and situated in the *sharī'ah* context as a religious law as opposed to its relationship with the whole philosophical concept and doctrinal structure of Ibn 'Arabi's Sufism (FaḥihSutan 2005, p. 25). Discussions of themes have been held by Ibn 'Arabi 700 years past (Winkel 1997, p. viii).

Those who read the topics of *sharī'ah* in his books will know that Ibn 'Arabi is severe in his reproach to the religious practitioners ('*ulamā*') in his time. However, he is different from other Sufis because, in support of Morris' statement, his critiques of the '*ulamā*' *al-sharī'ah* and religious elites contain no apologetic elements, and they are non-polemic in maintaining and defending his Sufism doctrines. He has a considerable desire and far-reaching target to raise his colleagues'—the *fuqahā*'—sensitivity to the substantive and essential purpose of *sharia* along with its deeper meanings and their true responsibilities (James W. Morris 1990, p. 39).

Not only is he concerned with correcting the understanding and practice of *sharī'ah* through his critiques, but Ibn 'Arabi also includes several specific chapters in which he explains his thoughts regarding the concepts and issues of *sharī'ah*. The scholarly studies abovementioned, especially those of Mahmūd Mahmūd al-Ghurāb and Eric Winkel, have consolidated the thesis that Ibn 'Arabi has unique, thorough thoughts not only on the theoretical and philosophical concepts of *sharī'ah* but also the technical principles of its implementation and its practical legal formulation methods. Ibn 'Arabi has a clear concept on theories of Islamic law such as *al-hadīth*, *al-qiyās*, *al-ijtihād*, and so forth (Ghurāb 1993, pp. 49-95).

This finding by Mahmūd Mahmūd al-Ghurāb was then developed by Eric Winkel who discovered **Ibn 'Arabi's *sharī'ah* and *fiqh* formats with spiritual insights**. Eric Winkel's studies have successfully elevated

the uniqueness and values of Ibn ‘Arabi’s *sharī’ah* and *fiqh* thoughts to the surface (FaqihSutan 2005, pp. 22-23). It is undeniable that Ibn ‘Arabi is in essence a Sufi. This means that his thoughts are founded more on contemplative, spiritual frameworks and world views (Hussain 2019, p. 153).

To him, *sharī’ah* is capable of offering knowledge beyond reasons with the aid from Allah, may He be exalted. This knowledge, as we have known, paves a way toward ultimate happiness. In other words, humans will never gain Allah’s, may He be exalted, mercy without *sharī’ah* (Chittick 2001, p. 101). *Haqīqah* proponents state that the reason of a servant may give him knowledge on something which, although partial, help him get closer to Allah, may He be exalted.

However, there is no truth in this statement as no one knows which way can lead a servant to Allah, may He be exalted, and to eternal happiness unless he knows the *Haqīqah* of himself. And no creature of Allah, may He be exalted, knows it except with the knowledge bestowed directly by Him, may He be exalted, as stated in His verse, “And they cannot comprehend anything out of His knowledge except what He wills” (QS 2: 255). He says no subject in this book and any other books can provide understanding on this matter (‘Arabī 2011, p. 28).

*Sharī’ah* offers vast knowledge which can be divided into two chief themes, *al-hukm* and *al-khabar*, and further divided into sub-chapters as derivatives of the themes. In his opinion, this division states the *Haqīqah* of inspirations (*al-kalimah al-ilāhiyyah*) revealed by Allah, may He be exalted, by means he often describes in his work (Chittick 2001, p. 103). He says:

“*Sharī’ah* has shown you forms of good deeds and explains, so you have understanding of them, and has shown you forms of evil deeds, so you have understanding of them and tell them apart from good deeds (‘Arabī 2011, vol. III, chapter 6, p. 34; Chittick 2001, p. 49).”

*Sharī’ah* is the outward dimension of reality (*al-haqīqah*), whereas reality is the inward dimension of *sharī’ah*. In this case, against the opinions of other Sufis, Ibn ‘Arabi rejects the distinction between *sharī’ah* and *Haqīqah*, the law with its stating divine reality. Some believe that *sharī’ah* touches only something outward and must be practiced by an individual for him to come into the divine presence, which encompasses all forms within which no further distinction can be made (Chittick 2001, p. 50).

*Haqīqah* is the actual reality of manifestation (*ma huwa’alayhi wujūd*) with which manifestation exhibits diversity, interconnectedness, and conflict. If we do not acknowledge *haqīqah*, we will not acknowledge this reality of manifestation. *Sharī’ah* is identical to *haqīqah*. No reality is at odds with *sharī’ah* as *sharī’ah* is one of a range of realities that share similarities and likeness. Law negates and at the same time affirms (‘Arabi 2011, vol. II, chapter 563, pp. 4, 14; Chittick 2001, p. 51).

A Sufi regards that both selected ones and novices practice *sharī’ah*, but only the former has the knowledge of *Haqīqah* and the ability to differentiate between *sharī’ah* and *haqīqah*. They align *sharī’ah* with its hidden *haqīqah* (‘Arabi 2011, vol. II, chapter 563, pp. 4, 14; Chittick 2001, p. 51). Those who go on a spiritual journey without a basis on doctrines believe that they no longer need *sharī’ah* (Chittick 2001, p. 51).

Abd al-Wahhāb al-Sha’rānī in the book *Latā’if al-Minan wa al-Akhlāq* in defending Ibn ‘Arabi from the Hulul and Wahdat al-Wujud creeds says:

Muhyī al-Dīn ibn ‘Arabī in the book *al-Futūhāt al-Makkiyah* has quoted the consensus among *ahl al-tahqīq* that among the conditions under which one can be referred to as *al-kāmil* is that he never

says any *syathah* words that will cause him to violate the outward manifestation of *sharī'ah*. Conversely, he must always keep his obligations, says what is *haq* as *haq* and what is *batil* as *batil*, and will always make the best efforts to exit any dispute between '*ulamā*' (Sha'rānī, p. 390).

Al-Sha'rani in the introduction of the book *al-Kibrīt al-Ahmar* says that the work of Ibn 'Arabi in *al-Futūhāt al-Makkiyyah* has advantages never before revealed by preceding Sufi scholars. This is especially so in the discussions of secrets in Islamic teachings and in discussions of differences in opinions between *mujtahid* scholars' indirect reference to the grounds on which they rely in *istinbath* (Sha'rānī 2012, p. 3).

Still in al-Sha'rani analysis, the primary grounds on which Ibn 'Arabi founds his work are the teachings of Muhammad, peace, and blessings be upon him. Ibn 'Arabi never in the least bit writes about new teachings or introduces unprecedented ideas. Regarding such consistency, Ibn 'Arabi himself in *al-Futūhāt al-Makkiyyah* chapter 367 firmly writes, "All praise be upon Allah, may He be exalted, never will we perform *taqlīd* but toward the Messenger, peace, and blessings be upon him, as the carrier of *sharī'ah*." Similarly, in the discussion on *adhān* in the same book, he also writes, "Be informed that I—all praise be upon Allah, may He be exalted—never write in the least bit in this book of mine anything that originates beyond *sharī'ah*, and I never deviate from the Qur'an and *sunnah*." (Sha'rānī 2012, pp. 3-4).

The dichotomy between *sharī'ah* and *haqīqah*, according to him, is so immense and fatal a mistake as this idea will lead to rejection of the teachings of *sharī'ah* itself. Meanwhile, Sufis are a group of individuals who strongly uphold the teachings of *sharī'ah*. Their constancy in upholding *sharī'ah* is unveiled by al-Kalābadzī in the book *al-Ta'āruf*, in which he says Sufis are the most cautious when it comes to practicing *sharī'ah*. In every issue disputed by *madhhab* leaders, what is practiced by Sufis is 'the hardest' or 'the most cautious.' They rarely, or constantly attempt not to, practice remissions (*al-rukhsah*) in implementing the law of *sharī'ah* (Kalābadhī 1969, pp. 101-102).

Ibn 'Arabi shares this notion, seeing that drawing a line between *sharī'ah* and *haqīqah* is a grievous mistake. In the following, some of his statement in *al-Futūhāt al-Makkiyyah* regarding this question is provided. In chapter 180, he writes:

"It is worth mentioning that the *sharī'ah* scale placed on earth is the teachings in the hands of *sharī'ah* scholars in and of themselves. If a *wali* strays away from such a *sharī'ah* scale despite his sound reasons (a *shāhi* person), then it is a must to dismiss him. If he is overcome by his circumstances (to the point that he turns into a *majdhūb* or someone who loses his reasoning faculty)—in straying away from *sharī'ah*—then we should accept him as who he is and never refuse him for what he is dealing with will never be emulated by individuals with sound reasoning ability. Nonetheless, if in this (*majdhūb*) person there is anything on which *sharī'ah* and jurists find it is mandatory to impose a penalty, then the penalty must be imposed."

It is firmly stated by Ibn 'Arabi that anyone who violates the teachings of *sharī'ah* must never be consulted as a reference in any of his deeds and words. This statement of his clearly explains that those who observe the *Hulūl* or *Wahdah al-Wujūd* creed are intolerable and must never be described as belonging to the *Sufi-falsafi* group. This is because anyone who claims this way justifies them and their belief as part of Islam. It is more fatal a mistake if the *Hulūl* and *Wahdah al-Wujūd* creeds are believed as a belief in Islam (Fateh 2016, p. 264).

After discussing this matter at some length, at the end of his work Ibn ‘Arabi says:

“Thus, a jurist who imposes a penalty or *ta’zīr* upon people of this sort will be rewarded.”

In chapter 246 of the book *al-Futūhāt al-Makkiyyah* Ibn ‘Arabi writes:

“Take care not to let go the *sharī’ah* scale from your hands in formal knowledge. Instead, hasten in practicing anything ruled by *sharī’ah*. In the case you understand a thing among the teachings of *sharī’ah* differently from people—*‘ulamā’*—in general, in which case it revolves around yourselves and the rule of outward law, then never rely upon such understanding of yours (‘Arabī 2011, chapter 246).”

Still in this chapter, he also writes:

“Please be noted that placing *kashf* above *sharī’ah* texts to us has no meaning at all (i.e., it is misleading). This is because oftentimes *kashf* is shrouded from the men who have it. Nevertheless, if indeed *kashf* is purely true, then it must be parallel with the outward manifestation of *sharī’ah*. And anyone who puts his *kashf* before these *sharī’ah* texts has broken out from the discipline of *Ahl Allāh* chain, and he has met people who are lost in their deeds (‘Arabī 2011, chapter 246).”

In chapter 263 he writes:

“Be noted that the core of *sharī’ah* is the same as the core of *Haqīqah*. This is because *sharī’ah* comprises two circles (or parts): upper part and lower part. Belonging to the upper part are those who have *kashf*, and belonging to the lower part are those who think. If the latter seeks to find out what is stated by the former but fails to find it out in their intellectual realm, they will say, “This is beyond *sharī’ah*.” In this condition, the latter dismisses the former, but it does not hold true the other way round. And anyone who can wed intellectualism and *kashf*, then he is the wisest in his time. Thus, while intellectual knowledge is one part of the *sharī’ah* domain, *kashf* knowledge is another part of the same *sharī’ah* domain. The two are an integral whole (‘Arabī 2011, chapter 246).”

Ibn ‘Arabi, according to Winkel, seeks to integrate law and spirituality, and he offers spirit and encourages people to integrate *sharī’ah*, *fiqh*, and spirituality. The basic concept of this discourse is that *sharī’ah* is the essence of Islamic teachings. The Messenger of Allah, Muhammad, peace, and blessings be upon him, was sent to be mercy for the entire world and to be an ideal model for the implementation of *sharī’ah*. Meanwhile, *fiqh* is the application of *sharī’ah* in various spaces and times whose formulation is based on in-depth, Ernest studies under standardized procedures and methods (*uṣūl al-fiqh*). Spirituality is derived and expressed in the *sharī’ah* framework (Winkel 1997, p. 15). They are integrated into a discursive system, where our worldly body and life will achieve perfection through imaginative touch and spiritual life, or, conversely, our spiritual life will achieve perfection through our physical life medium (Winkel 1997, p. 15).

Not only knowledge but also the channels by which we achieve it are varied. Ibn ‘Arabi develops proportional classifications (or judgments which are expressed in proportions) based on this principle. He posits that under a normal condition, all knowledge is acquired through six senses, including the five basic senses and intelligence. According to him, though they are segregated into six, they essentially are one (‘Arabī 2011,

chapter 1, p. 278). However, he goes on, some do not follow this normal law: they do not acquire the entire knowledge through the senses, not even one ('Arabī 2011, chapter 1, p. 279).

Due to the existence of *shāri'* and revealed guidance, and due to the presence of a messenger who carries them, this spirituality-nuanced legal discourse focuses on the implementation of religious guidance in the ever-changing life context. In this case, Ibn 'Arabi works with the approaches of perfect language, legal context, and situations faced by human beings. Since Allah, may He be exalted, uses human language (in this case the Arabic language used in the Qur'an) and a human messenger (in this case Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him) to deliver life guidance, the study focus of *fiqh* then is the aspects of human language, history, and social context. In every change of situation, an expert in law in the face of several choices must decide correctly, properly, and following *sunnah* and revelations (Winkel 1997, p. ix).

Of the sorts of knowledge above, the last (intuitive knowledge) is the most important. This knowledge is the gist of Ibn 'Arabi's mystic philosophy on knowledge. Just like his other mystic theories, he believes in the possibility of some kind of knowledge that is most unlike knowledge from discursive understanding. This knowledge is directly perceived, concerning not the knowledge of present external objects but the knowledge of 'truth' itself, that is, the knowledge of the realities of everything as it is which is distinguished from intellectual knowledge which is all about possibilities and merely conjectures ('Arabī 2011, chapter 1, pp. 38-39). This knowledge is extremely akin to Spinoza's third knowledge (*Scientia intuitiva*), which, according to him, is a condition under which human consciousness is absorbed into "*amor intellectualis* die (Affifi 1989, p. 149)."

Sufis themselves consciously name knowledge of this sort 'taste' (*dhawq*), a term denoting direct experience and the condition of a cognitive act. Sometimes they also call it holy knowledge (*'ilmu ladunnī*), knowledge of mysteries (*'ilm al-asrār*) ('Arabi 2011, chapter 1, p. 38, compare with chapter 1 p. 375, chapter 2 p. 403, and chapter 3 p. 341 and p. 343), knowledge of the invisible (*'ilm al-ghayb*) ('Arabi 2011, chapter 4, p. 394), and knowledge of people who, in this world, have the characters of the future world (*al-nash'ah al-ukhrāwiyah*) such as prophets, saints, and so forth ('Arabi 2009, p. 169). Thus, we can use the term intuition, or insight, or direct perception of truth (*haqq al-yaqīn*) (Sha'rānī 2012, p. 105) or maybe other terms for knowledge of other sorts, as long as we can distinguish these other types of knowledge, especially within reflective thinking.

One day al-Kumi asked Ibn 'Arabi, "What sin has been committed by a person who passed by in front of another person who is in the midsts of observing a prayer that he is willing to stand still for 40 years?" Ibn 'Arabi replied, "I'll try to answer based on the answer that comes into myself." And he looked pleased with my answer." ('Arabī 1994, p. 74)

Certainly, the question posed by al-Kumi to Ibn 'Arabi is a normal question that is posed by any Islamic legal expert, or typically called *fuqahā'*. However, what al-Kumi tried to stress is not just a matter of the law ruled for a person who passed by in front of another person who is observing a prayer, but the secrets behind it. That is to say, some sort of secrets which are present through Sufistic revelation behind the law of such a deed. There is a Sufistic touch to the answer provided by Ibn 'Arabi for his teacher al-Kumi. He spoke not only about whether one thing is sinful or not but also about how the sin is placed within a Muslim's piety for him to be far from. This seems to also be influenced by how Sufis understand *shalāt* as to them *shalāt* is not only an outward act of worship as generally understood. To them, *shalāt* is also an inward act of worship as a form of *munājāt*.



Thus, passing by in front of a person who is in the midst of his prayer is the same as disturbing his intimacy with Allah, may He be exalted, and the sin inflicted is far heavier (Masrukhin 2015, p. 96).

If Ibn 'Arabi's internal insight and disclosure are spread in society, the truths must be consistent with *fiqh*. And this is how it is. Furthermore, the truths are closely fitting to *fiqh* to the extent of challenging *fiqh* and urging every textuality whose heart is ready for a greater degree of compatibility with explicit indications (*naṣṣ*) and internal insights into the inconceivable truths ('Arabi 2015, p. 23).

Rarely does Ibn 'Arabi bind himself to the opinions of certain *alim* or *madzhab*. After detailing one by one the opinions of 'ulamā' through a metaphorical interiorization process, he will start estimating the internal field which is aligned with such opinions. Hardly ever does he completely refute an opinion. Contrarily, he will shed light on the 'true rationale' (*sirr*) behind every opinion ('Arabi 2015, p. 23).

Ibn 'Arabi often refers to Allah's, may He be exalted, guidance which is fused into the prophets as '*sharī'ah scale*' (*al-Mizān al-Sharī*). To the Muslims, this is the law revealed by Allah, may He be exalted, in the Qur'an and exemplified by the *sunnah* of Muhammad, peace, and blessings be upon him (Chittick 2001, p. 63). They accept it for themselves to follow the *sharī'ah* scale which is revealed by Allah, may He be exalted, to guide their activities. And in any case, Allah, may He be exalted, guarantees perpetual happiness for those who comply with *sharī'ah* to expand their capacities, whether they can reach perfection or not (Chittick 2001, p. 66). This is why Ibn 'Arabi gives suggestions to his readers.

If they conform with the rule of *sharī'ah*, that is, the directives for moral, spiritual, and intellectual development revealed through the Qur'an and *hadith*, then they develop harmoniously with the divine form from which they were created (Chittick 2001, p. 63). Likewise to the *sharī'ah* rule which gradually takes souls into balance and integrates them into the right relationship between *ruh* and the body, human beings evolve in a climbing direction. In other words, through the guidance granted by revelations, the soul will become tougher and better able to adapt to the attributes of divine *ruh* which are reflected in the body as light and knowledge. Without the rule of *sharī'ah*, human beings will tumble down from the vertical axis and fall to the lowest of places (QS, 95: 5).

### 3. Islamic Law Spirituality Interpretation Methods

The earlier description has explained that regardless of the divine outpour claim, Ibn 'Arabi's explanation of law and worship meanings have certain objectives which have the properties of manifestation and teaching. This sub-chapter will elaborate that, other than for such objectives, spirituality interpretation is not without analytic pattern and guidance. Despite its unsystematic explanation, this discourse of Ibn 'Arabi's Islamic Law Spirituality is present in three main patterns: *al-'ibrah* method, textuality in the treasury of Arabic language meanings, and acceptance of *ikhtilāf* (opinion diversity) ('Arabī 2011, vol. I, p. 742, vol. 6, p. 281–282).

#### a. Al-'Ibrah Method

Ibn 'Arabi's law interpretation is the result of an analysis which he refers to as *the al-'ibrah* method (Manzūr, vol. 6, p. 203), whose initial meaning is to cross or trespass. According to Ibn 'Arabi, the *al-'ibrah* method is applied by capturing divine signs and signals in everything through activation of divine spiritual features in a heart that is pure and well-kept. He applies the *al-'ibrah* method to generate spiritual meanings of law.

He says, " *I'tibar* of *sharī'ah* is to cross (*al-mujāwazah*) from the rule of *sharī'ah* within the sensual domain (*al-hiss*) toward something associated with your essence, or your divine side, which serves as a direction

toward God.” (‘Arabī 2011, vol. I, p. 742, vol. 6, pp. 281–282) *Al-‘Ibrah* even is a keyword in Ibn ‘Arabi’s method to gain a divine understanding of everything rather than just legal acts.

According to Ibn ‘Arabi, only by crossing and going beyond empirical realities will an individual be able to enter and understand realities that are real, in which case this serves as a servant’s life goal. *Al-‘Ibrah*, therefore, is a connector or bridge between one reality and another reality that ontologically arose earlier and is more real. This method is applied because Ibn ‘Arabi positions all empirical realities as imaginal realities.

In semiotic terms, Ibn ‘Arabi posits that all empirical realities are signs awaiting to be given meanings, where, according to him, meanings must be dug and unveiled through the sharpness and clarity of the spiritual soul. Hence, he says, *al-‘ibrah* objects cover textual domain, imaginal realm, dreams, and cosmic realm as a whole. In other words, *al-‘ibrah* encompasses meanings, that is to say, through crossing from literal meanings to spiritual ones, crossing from imaginal experiences of dreams to the meanings behind them, and crossing from superficial realities to true realities. This is what Ibn ‘Arabi considers the scope of *al-‘ibrah* definition in the Qur’an which reveals the process of ‘lesson learned through the depth of sight and understanding’ (e.g., QS 3: 13, 59: 2, 79: 26) (‘Arabī 2011, chapter 54, pp. 226, 272, 188, 372; Winkel 1993, p. 5).

The crossing of meanings based on Ibn ‘Arabi affirms the two sides of realities and does not disregard or reduce the significance of both sensual realities and literal meanings. For instance, the *al-‘ibrah* of water toward knowledge as a means for purification does not blur the interest and position of physical water as a bodily means of purification. The physical purification with water is not undermined by the internal meaning of ‘faith purification with the water of knowledge’ in *wudū`*.

As explained by Eric Winkel, in the thoughts of Ibn ‘Arabi no degrading tone toward the physical aspect is found as in the Neo-Platonic philosophy and Gnostic current. Ibn ‘Arabi is not fixated on symbols but carries those symbols up and down, crossing and back to their symbolic meanings (Chahanovich 2019, pp. 61-108) without losing the existential and *wujūdiyyah* side of the symbols themselves (‘Arabī 2011, vol. 5, pp. 491-493; Chittick 2001, pp. 199-204, 244-246; Zayd 1993). Hence, Ibn ‘Arabi’s infinite exploration into the sea of spiritual meanings of Islamic law does not detach him from the textual ties and outward aspects (Buana 2017, p. 436).

This *al-‘ibrah* method directs Ibn ‘Arabi’s legal interpretation to the point that it can uncover the internal meanings of law and reach the apex spiritual effect of the law. Ibn ‘Arabi’s legal meanings formulation seems to use a range of means, namely, allegorical interpretation, exoteric/esoteric understanding, rationalization-analogization, and various symbolism or sign techniques. This, from the perspective of semiotics, may cover index symbolism (meanings of causal relationships), icon (meanings of identity similarity), and symbol (conventional meanings), which in the literary terms are each expressed in figurative meanings (*majāz*), comparative meanings (*simile*), partially or in full, that is, through metaphors/imageries/connotations (*tashbīh/tamthīl*) and associations/personifications (*isti‘ārah*), and Sufistic-symbolic meanings (Keraf 1993, pp. 10-11).

#### **b. Textuality and Strictness to Literal Meanings of the Arabic Language**

In this context, what is meant by Ibn ‘Arabi’s textuality is the reliance on and utilization of strictness to literal meanings in the Arabic language in all the internal meanings he expresses. As to the Arabic language referred to in Ibn ‘Arabi’s utilization, it is the Arabic language used by the user communities around the times of the Qur’an revelations. Ibn ‘Arabi has performed Arabic language sacralization with his austerity in appreciating,

using, and applying all the meanings in existence or in use by the Arab communities in the times of the Qur'an revelations and legitimized it for religious explicit indications (of the Qur'an and *hadīth*).

In effect, in his usage of the Arabic language, Ibn 'Arabi applies a spectrum of word meanings or creates a 'corpus' of meanings (Ruslani 2000, p. 100). The corpus of words refers to the language use of the Arab communities around the times of the Qur'an revelations itself. Therefore, a Qur'anic Arabic word may have many meanings that exist in the treasury and use of the communities during the revelations. This Arabic language is not the Arabic language used by numerous Arab nations to date, which has developed and will still continuously develop, grow, and undergo changes, but the Arabic language at the time, which is permanent and at the same time transcendental. In the opinion of Ibn 'Arabi, it is this Arabic language with which the Quran was revealed and the Messenger, peace, and blessings are upon him, communicated. Ibn 'Arabi strictly implements this concept, that is, by defining the Arabic words he uses and the Arab audience used during the times of the Qur'an revelations (Winkel 1995, pp. 7, 8, 13; Sells 1994).

In applying the *al-'ibrah* method Ibn 'Arabi makes use of any means and methods to derive the meanings of his intention, such as rationalization, analogies, and associations, allegorical expectations, metaphorical interpretations, among others (Manzūr, vol. 15, p. 244). But interestingly, with any methods he uses, Ibn 'Arabi is always able to imprint meanings from his adventures throughout the Arabic language. It is, for this reason, a must for anyone to understand the Arabic foundation and framework used by Ibn 'Arabi.

In understanding Ibn 'Arabi's legal interpretations—and even the entire text of *al-Futūhāt*—, as stated by Erick Winkel, what is required is not translations, but explanations in the semantic field. One must realize that the key to opening a meaning which is proposed by Ibn 'Arabi lies in the unique meaning contained in the Arabic vocabulary. Keeping this in mind, explains Winkel, he will not become confused about a verse or *hadith* which seemingly is arbitrarily quoted for a certain passage.

Ibn 'Arabi is using one meaning of one keyword in the said *hadith* or verse which, according to him, is appropriate and able to direct his explanations. Ibn 'Arabi makes the best, and the most literal, use of the Arabic vocabulary whereby the Qur'an was revealed to say realities which are unutterable, innumerable, and teemed with symbols opened up by Allah, may He be exalted, for him in Makkah (Winkel 1995, p. 14).

Ibn 'Arabi's consistency to utilize any meanings in the Arabic vocabulary, which is one used during the Qur'an revelation times, is attributed by Denis Grill to his Sufi doctrine, namely, *ādab*. Grill brilliantly finds that the basic theme of Ibn 'Arabi's hermeneutics, the foundational idea in his literalist conception, is absolute politeness in the presence of Allah, may He be exalted. He means to promote poverty, destitution, and lowliness which is demanded of a creature before its creator by asserting that Allah, may He be exalted, is the one who speaks, instead of us, so literalism and attention to detail are mandatory. Allah, may He be exalted, has chosen the Arabic language as a medium for His revelations, not our languages (be they the local languages in the Arab area or otherwise). It is Allah, may He be exalted, who commands and decides on a matter, not us (Grill 1993, p. 173).

### c. *Ikhtilāf* Pattern

In this case, Ibn 'Arabi's Islamic law meanings discussion format seems to adopt *fiqh* discursive pattern, that is, *ikhtilāf*. This means that Ibn 'Arabi discusses the internal meanings of every *fiqh* opinion of all *madhhab* (Sunni). So, what Ibn 'Arabi does first is to represent each *fiqh* opinion of all *madhhab* on *masā'il fiqh*. This states that the application of the internal and meaning aspect of an act of *worship* will not necessarily erase the

reality of the formal existence of law with each postulate status. Instead, from differing opinions and through each internal meaning exploration, Ibn 'Arabi presents the riches and vastness of his spiritual treasury and releases pettiness and narrowness of movements resulting from such diversity in legal views.

To Ibn 'Arabi it seems that *ikhtilāf* or differences in *fiqh* opinions conjure up different pictures. As has been widely known, the main character of *fiqh* is recognition of opinion differences (*ikhtilāf*) (Winkel 1995, p. 9; Yafie 1995, pp. 58-59). But still, the idea of the *ikhtilāf* tradition in conventional *fiqh* is to support an opinion with the strongest underlying postulates which will serve as the most justified opinion. Otherwise, the idea is to select an opinion a *mujtahid* wishes to justify and support most, be it in the process of *takhrīj*, *tarjīh*, or *tashīh* (Hallaq 2002, pp. 43-56, 121-145; Jackson 1996).

This process is incapable of avoiding refutation, undermining, and marginalization of one or some other opinions. This is unlike the outcome of Ibn 'Arabi's internal meaning processing method, in which case all opinions become parallel and uniform in credibility. Ibn 'Arabi accommodates all opinions and reconciles one opinion with another. This he does through the search of spiritual meaning and significance of every opinion as well as the functionality of each in varying situations and contexts of individual spirituality of legal actors. Therefore, even though sometimes Ibn 'Arabi conveys his opinions by choosing or approving of one among the existing opinions, this does not end up in dismissal of the validity of other opinions because these other opinions are placed and are to assume their respective functions under other spiritual situations. In short, the format of Ibn 'Arabi's legal meaning discussion is the explanation of the spiritual meanings of each *fiqh* opinion in all Sunni *madhhab*.

#### d. Conventional *Fiqh* Structure Deconstruction

Likewise to Ibn 'Arabi, conventional and traditional Muslim scholars are of the view that only Allah, may He be exalted, and His Messenger, peace, and blessings are upon him, are entitled to deciding on the law of something (e.g., the law of *al-halal* and *al-harām*). Yet, while Ibn 'Arabi attempts to maintain the immediacy of prophethood, that is, when the Qur'an descended and set natures of law, and when the Messenger, peace, and blessings are upon him, was still alive to set natures of law, when there was no mediator between the commander and the commanded—between Allah, may He be exalted, and His Messenger, peace, and blessings are upon him—, conventional Muslim scholars erect mediating structures which oftentimes lead to the substitution of the authority of Allah, may He be exalted, and His Messenger, peace, and blessings be upon him, for their authority instead. Ibn 'Arabi's *fiqh* method in and of itself deconstructs, breaks the transparency illusion of the mediating structures, reveals the murkiness, and restores the transparency (relationship) of divine orders and servile obedience (Arabi 2015, p. 18).

What happens is that Ibn 'Arabi has been bestowed with mystic explanation and outpouring which he articulates within years. The fashions in which he makes all his disclosures include forms of legal discourses (*fiqh*), theology, exegesis, anecdotes, and poetry. In any case, the entirety of his narratives is based upon the Arabic language for people to understand the Arabic foundation and framework he uses to speak about unutterable realities, teemed with signs and signals (apophatic), and infinite, opened up by Allah, may He be exalted, for him in Makkah (Arabi 2015, p. 18).

### C. CONCLUSION

*Shaikh* Ibn ‘Arabi’s path is the path of *sharī’ah*, and upholding *sharī’ah* is the only path to Allah, may He be exalted. According to him, *sharī’ah* and *haqīqah* are inseparable. A person who has reached *haqīqah* is he who has worshiped Allah, may He be exalted, according to *sharī’ah* instead of he who worships according to reasons and theories. This is because reason limits the life movement of its user, while *sharī’ah* and *haqīqah* will lead him to truth and safety. Verily, truth belongs to Allah, may He be exalted, and anyone who seeks protection under the shade of *sharī’ah* will be safe because *sharī’ah* is the safest of paths.

The best knowledge is one on laws about servitude. In other words, the knowledge that will bring the most benefits concerns the law of *sharī’ah* and its *khushū’* application. Those who hold onto the book of Allah, may He be exalted, and *the sunnah* of the Messenger, peace, and blessings be upon him, will have their paths lighted and the eye of their hearts opened, unless they commit their deeds with ‘*ujub* and *riyā’*’, in which case their deeds will only perish. And those who turn themselves from the complete performance of *sharī’ah* have wronged themselves (*ẓalim*). Abandonment of *sharī’ah* as a guide will lead to the destruction of faith. Ibn ‘Arabi goes as far as saying in his book *al-Isfār* that all the *sharī’ah* taught by preceding prophets have been included in the one introduced by the Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

In his book, *al-Futūhāt al-Makkiyah* Ibn ‘Arabi states that *sharī’ah* is *haqīqah* in manifestation. *Sharī’ah* is a reality, and in every reality lies a substance. Thus, the reality of *sharī’ah* presence is ruled by the presence of its substance, that is, *haqīqah*. The former and the latter are two inseparable things. Ibn ‘Arabi expresses his objection toward those who abandon the inward nature of *sharī’ah* texts. He asserts that it is not permissible to separate *sharī’ah* from *haqīqah* as it is impossible that the two are at odds with each other. He even describes that *sharī’ah* itself is *haqīqah*. He posits that *haqīqah* lays a foundation for *sharī’ah*, and *sharī’ah* is a basis for the acquisition of *haqīqah* knowledge. Every *haqīqah* which is not supported by *sharī’ah* is *zindiq*.

The earlier description has explained that regardless of the divine outpour claim, Ibn 'Arabi's explanation of law and worship meanings have certain objectives which have the properties of manifestation and teaching. The description above elaborates that, other than for such objectives, spiritual interpretations in his legal works are not without analytic patterns and guide. Despite its unsystematic explanation, this discourse of Ibn 'Arabi's Islamic Law Spirituality is present in four main patterns: *al-‘ibrah* method, textuality in the treasury of Arabic language meanings, acceptance of *ikhtilāf* (opinion diversity), and deconstruction of conventional *fiqh* structure.

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