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Wahdat-al-Khayāl (Unity of Thought): A Psychologist's Response to Wahdat-al-Wujūd (Unity of Being) and Wahdat-al-Shuhūd (Unity of Witnessing)

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ABSTRACT

The quest to comprehend the nature of reality and the essence of selfhood has long animated metaphysical inquiry across civilizations. The current discourse presents the concept of *Wahdat-al-Khayāl* (Unity of Thought) as the foundational ontology. By critically engaging with classical metaphysical frameworks of *Wahdat-al-Wujūd* (Unity of Being) and *Wahdat-al-Shuhūd* (Unity of Witnessing), this work has argued that neither existence nor observation alone can adequately account for the ultimate nature of reality. Instead, *thought*, as the dynamic cognitive activity of Infinite Consciousness, underlies and constitutes all that appears within the cosmos. Crucially, the present philosophy challenges prevailing dualisms between subject and object, mind and matter, and being and witnessing. It posits that the apparent material universe and multiplicity of selves are not independent realities but emanations of thought, emphasizing the inseparability and supremacy of *Khayāl* —thought—as the ultimate ground of all existence. This perspective not only advances metaphysical understanding but also offers profound implications for psychosocial health, suggesting that wellness emerges through the reorientation from fragmented selfhood to authentic unity with infinite consciousness. By grounding reality in thought, the *Wahdat-al-Khayāl* framework integrates ancient wisdom with contemporary insights, offering a novel path for philosophical inquiry and psychological practice. It invites scholars and clinicians to reconsider the nature of self, consciousness, and existence, advocating for approaches that facilitate transcendence, coherence, and holistic wellness. Ultimately, this philosophy affirms that the deepest truth of our being is unity—an indivisible oneness of thought—beyond all illusion of separation and multiplicity.

Keywords: Thought; Infinite Consciousness; Metaphysics; Metaphysical Monism; Philosophy of Self; Reality; Mysticism; Spirituality

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1. Introduction

The historical evolution of metaphysical thought has consistently revolved around fundamental questions of being, consciousness, and the relationship between the self and the universe. Several metaphysical tensions are echoed in various traditions. The illusion of material substance is historically destabilized by religious, philosophical, and scientific paradigms. These traditions reveal the contingency and constructedness of the material world.

Neoplatonism [1–4], particularly in the works of Plotinus [5–9], maintains that all reality emanates from the *One*—an ineffable, self-sufficient source—from which intellect (*nous*) and soul proceed in a descending order of reality. George Berkeley (1685–1753) suggests that material objects do not exist independently of a perceiving mind. Reality is sustained through perception, which ultimately resides in the infinite mind of God [10–16]. Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) argued that space and time are not properties of things-in-themselves but forms of human sensibility—subjective conditions that structure all appearances [17–20]. Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860) proposed that the underlying essence of reality is not matter but will—a blind, striving force that manifests through representation [21–24]. For Schopenhauer, the phenomenal world is a projection shaped by the forms of space, time, and causality, which exist only in the subject. Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), while rejecting traditional metaphysics, also questioned the objectivity of reality, emphasizing the interpretive nature of human consciousness and the perspectival basis of all knowledge [25–29]. Similarly, Ernst Mach (1838–1916), in his empirio-criticism, viewed the world as a set of sensory experiences, rejecting the existence of an independently existing substance [30,31]. More recently, phenomenologists such as Edmund Husserl (1859–1938) and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–1961) have emphasized the centrality of lived experience, arguing that consciousness is not a passive recipient but an active constructor of meaning and worldhood [32,33]. In this view, perception is not a mirror of objective reality but a formative act of intentionality—directedness toward phenomena as they are constituted in consciousness. These philosophical trajectories collectively underscore the mental or ideational constitution of what is conventionally regarded as objective reality, opening a metaphysical horizon wherein thought, perception, and being are deeply intertwined. These insights reinforce the proposition that the so-called material world is deeply dependent on mental operations.

2. Wahdat-al-Wujūd and Wahdat-al-Shuhūd

In the Islamic intellectual tradition, particularly within Sufi metaphysics, two prominent doctrines have shaped ontological discourse: *Wahdat-al-Wujūd* (Unity of Being) and *Wahdat-al-Shuhūd* (Unity of Witnessing). *Wahdat-al-Wujūd* is commonly translated as Unity of Existence, Oneness of Being, or Existential Monism. The core tenet of this philosophy is that only God possesses true existence, while creation serves merely as a veil or manifestation of the Divine. In contrast, *Wahdat-al-Shuhūd* is rendered as Unity of Witnessing, Openness of Perception, Phenomenological Unity, Subjective Unity, Phenomenological Monotheism, or Experiential Monotheism. Its central premise is that unity lies not in the ontology of existence but in the experience or perception of the observer. Both these frameworks attempt to reconcile divine unity with phenomenal diversity, yet they approach this reconciliation through differing ontological and epistemological commitments. A critical re-examination reveals that *Wujūd* (Being) and *Shuhūd* (Witnessing) are insufficient to fully encapsulate the ontological substrate of reality and the psychological complexities of mental processes and behavior.

Wahdat-al-Wujūd, most notably articulated by Ibn Arabi (1165–1240), posits that all apparent multiplicity in existence is a manifestation of a single, undivided reality—*al-Wujood al-Haqiqi* (the True Being), which is God. In this framework, creation does not exist independently; rather, it is a theophany (*Tajalli*), a self-disclosure of the divine essence. The cosmos is viewed as a mirror in which God contemplates Himself, and individual beings are loci (*Mazahir*) of divine attributes. Thus, the distinction between Creator and creation becomes metaphysically relative—ontologically, there is only one true existence, and all else is contingent, borrowed, or illusory [34–36].

In response to the metaphysical ambiguities posed by *Wahdat-al-Wujūd*, Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi (1564–1624), a prominent Naqshbandi scholar, advanced the doctrine of *Wahdat-al-Shuhūd* [37,38]. Sirhindi rejected the ontologi-

cal monism implicit in Ibn Arabi's philosophy and argued instead that the perception of unity arises from mystical experience, rather than from an actual ontological identity between God and creation. According to this view, the unity experienced by the mystic is a psychological or epistemological phenomenon—an intense state of witnessing (*Shuhūd*). However, it does not negate the real ontological distinction between Creator and creature. Sirhindi's perspective reasserted a more orthodox theological stance by preserving transcendental theism while still affirming the transformative power of mystical consciousness. In this model, unity is phenomenologically real but ontologically distinct; human perception is elevated through spiritual purification to behold the divine, yet without collapsing into divine being.

3. Wahdat-al-Khayāl

The core aspiration underlying the doctrines of *Wahdat-al-Wujūd* and *Wahdat-al-Shuhūd* is to elucidate the means by which the human self can comprehend, encounter, and ultimately unite with the Absolute Reality, namely, God. In pursuit of the same objective—experiencing and uniting with the ultimate reality—this discourse centers on *Wahdat-al-Khayāl* (Unity of Thought) as a foundational paradigm. It introduces *Khayāl* (Thought) as a more fundamental principle, proposing that all existence and experience in the cosmos are, at their core, manifestations of the thoughts of the *Infinite Consciousness*, namely, God.

Wahdat-al-Khayāl offers a radical ontological departure from both *Wahdat-al-Wujūd* and *Wahdat-al-Shuhūd*. It asserts that what we perceive as the universe is neither only a being (*Wujūd*) nor merely a reflection (*Shuhūd*), but a series of thoughts within the Infinite Consciousness—God. Here, existence is not material or even reflective but entirely mental or noetic in nature. *All entities, including the self, are not real in themselves but are divine thoughts momentarily held within the eternal imagination of the Absolute.*

Wujūd denotes the sheer fact of being or existence. Classical metaphysics often treats being as the primary reality upon which all else depends. *Shuhūd*, on the other hand, signifies witnessing or conscious observation—an awareness that perceives and contextualizes being. Together, they outline a dual framework where entities exist (*Wujūd*) and are known or witnessed (*Shuhūd*). However, this duality implies an ontological divide between what is and what perceives, reinforcing a subject-object dichotomy. By introducing *Khayāl* (Thought), the dichotomy between existence and observation dissolves into a singular, more profound unity. Unlike *Wujūd*, which implies static being, and *Shuhūd*, which implies passive reception, *Khayāl* embodies dynamic origination: *it is through thought that the Infinite gives rise to the manifold.*

The doctrine of *Wahdat-al-Khayāl* departs decisively from substance-based ontologies by asserting that *thought is the primal and only real existence,* while matter is neither self-subsisting nor foundational but merely a projection of thought. This reversal of metaphysical assumptions challenges both materialist realism and dualist paradigms by positing that what is ordinarily regarded as the external, objective world is ontologically secondary—a derivative of the inner, generative activity of thought. In this framework, what humans perceive as matter, objects, and discrete beings are not independently existing entities but mental multiplicities within the vast ocean of thought. The cosmos itself is thus a mental projection—an elaborate and continuous ideation occurring within Infinite Consciousness. This situates thought not as a property of mind but as the very ground of all reality. In this scheme, *thought is not about reality—it is reality*. Moreover, *Khayāl* transcends the limitations inherent in *Wujūd* and *Shuhūd*. Being a static existence is insufficient to explain the dynamic flux and interconnectivity of all things. Witnessing, as an act of observation, presupposes a duality that fractures reality into observer and observed, subject and object. By contrast, grounding reality in thought unites these poles into an indivisible whole: *the thinker and the thought are coextensive, the observer and the observed are one in the act of infinite ideation.* The world is a cosmic imagination, not a brute fact. It arises through the emanation and diffraction of thought, similar to how light refracts into colours, giving the illusion of plurality while remaining fundamentally one. The cosmos, with all its complexities and multiplicities, is a projection within the field of Infinite Consciousness—a theatre of thought in which the apparent solidity of things is continuously imagined into being. *Everything that exists is a thought*. Reality is not a construct of atoms, energy, or spacetime, but a construct of mental projections

within the psyche of the Creator. All phenomena—cosmic, biological, psychological, or social—are thus permutations of thought within a nested structure of consciousness. *The cosmos is not a machine, but a mind***.** It is not just "mind" in the abstract that constitutes reality, but the thoughts of a singular, sentient, and omnipotent source.

4. Scientific Determinants of Wahdat-al-Khayāl

This *mentalist ontology* is supported not only by metaphysical intuition but also finds echoes in modern scientific inquiry. In modern physics, matter has likewise dissolved into paradox. Quantum mechanics, for instance, reveals the observer-dependent nature of reality, challenging the notion of an independent material world [39–42]. According to quantum mechanics, particles do not possess determinate properties independent of observation; their behavior is probabilistic and entangled, implying that observation—a mental act—is constitutive of the physical state [43–45]. Similarly, neuroscientific debates about the "hard problem of consciousness" reveal the inadequacy of material explanations in accounting for subjective experience [46–48].

The simulation argument, popularized by philosopher Nick Bostrom [49], suggests that if technological civilizations can simulate conscious beings, and if such simulations are common, then it is statistically likely that we are living in one. While not intended as a spiritual theory, this argument suggests that reality may be informational rather than material, rooted in a form of "code" or thought-like abstraction, echoing mentalist ontologies. Physicist John Archibald Wheeler [50] proposed that all physical things derive their function, meaning, and even existence from bits of information—what he called "It from Bit." In his view, information, not matter, is the most fundamental component of the universe. This turns the materialist paradigm on its head, suggesting that mental acts (like observations or measurements) bring physical reality into being.

Recent revivals of panpsychism in analytic philosophy—advocated by thinkers such as Galen Strawson and Philip Goff—suggest that consciousness is a fundamental and ubiquitous aspect of reality, rather than an emergent property of physical matter [51,52]. If consciousness is intrinsic to all things, the world is not built from insensate atoms but from experiential elements, reinforcing a mentalist or psychocentric cosmology. Alfred North Whitehead's process philosophy argues that reality is fundamentally composed of events rather than substances, and that these events are mental in nature [53,54]. The universe is a process of becoming, grounded in experiences or prehensions. This dynamic view resonates deeply with the idea of reality as unfolding thought [55]. Gödel's incompleteness theorems show that within any consistent mathematical system, there are truths that cannot be proven within the system itself [56]. This concept has been employed by Roger Penrose [57,58] to argue that mathematical and logical truths exist independently of the material world, pointing toward a deeper, non-material foundation of reality. These truths—like Platonic forms—suggest a reality more aligned with ideation than material substance.

These inquiries, although empirical, point to a deeper truth long articulated by spiritual philosophy: that *the fabric of reality is mental*. Even time and causality, often treated as inviolable structures of the physical universe, are reframed under this paradigm. Time is not an external sequence but a narrative architecture within thought. Causality is not a mechanical chain but a logical order within the flow of divine ideation. From this vantage, what we call "laws of nature" are not physical necessities but stable cognitive tendencies within the divine mind. Thus, the cosmos is a *mental multiplicity*: a diverse panorama of differentiated thoughts emanating from and returning to a singular source. As such, human beings, too, are not isolated centres of consciousness, but thought-knots in the tapestry of Infinite Consciousness. Each person's inner world—feelings, memories, intentions—is a microcosmic echo of the universal mental field. This is why *transcendence is not a process of acquisition but of alignment*—remembering and resonating with one's origin in thought. Therefore, in *Wahdat-al-Khayāl*, the cosmos is a living imagination, not metaphorically, but literally. Every atom is a thought. Every law is an idea. Every experience is a modulation of awareness. Every self is a window into the Infinite Thinker, whose thought is the only enduring reality.

5. Religious Determinants of Wahdat-al-Khayāl

In Hinduism [59–61], particularly Advaita Vedānta,

metaphysical non-dualism (*advaita*) asserts that *Brahman* (the ultimate reality) is the sole ultimate reality, while the phenomenal world (*jagat*) is *māyā*—an illusory manifestation perceived through ignorance (*avidyā*). The individual self (*atman*) is not separate but identical with Brahman, indicating an illusory duality between self and cosmos. In Buddhist Madhyamaka philosophy [62,63], Nāgārjuna argues that all dharmas are empty of inherent existence; things arise dependently (*pratītyasamutpāda*) and possess no inherent essence. Similarly, in Sikh metaphysics [64,65], the emphasis on *Ik Onkar*—the One Supreme Reality—dissolves the dualism of creator and creation. The world is considered both immanent and transcendent, existing as the divine expression of the formless One (*Nirgun*), yet manifest in form (*Sargun*), evoking a profound metaphysical unity. Christian mysticism [66–69], especially within Neoplatonic-influenced theologies such as those of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite or Meister Eckhart, often regards the material world as a symbolic theophany—creation as a mirror of divine reality. The soul's journey involves transcending material appearances and reuniting with the divine essence. In Jewish mysticism [70–72], particularly Kabbalistic thought, creation is seen as an emanation from the divine source (*Ein Sof*), with the material world emerging through successive layers of divine contraction (*tzimtzum*). The reality perceived by the senses is not autonomous but a veiled expression of the divine light (Or Ein Sof), awaiting re-integration through human consciousness and moral action.

The concept of *Wahdat-al-Khayāl* finds implicit resonance in various Qur'anic verses that describe creation as an act of divine command [73,74]. The Qur'an repeatedly asserts that creation arises not from a material substrate independent of God but from His mere will and command: *"When He decrees a matter, He only says to it, 'Be,' and it is"* (Qur'an, 2:117; 36:82). This performative "*kun fayakūn*" ("Be, and it is") formulation reflects an ontological immediacy akin to the emanation of thought—where the boundary between volition, utterance, and creation is fluid and non-dual. It implies that reality is not created distantly or mechanically but unfolds within the sphere of divine intentionality and consciousness. Moreover, the Qur'an presents the heavens and the earth as *āyāt*—signs—whose ontological function is to reveal or manifest the Divine (Qur'an, 41:53). This epistemological orientation suggests that creation does not possess independent being but is intelligible only through its referentiality to the Creator. In this way, *Wahdat al-Khayāl* finds further support in the Qur'anic notion of the world as a mirroring surface or symbolic projection of Divine Names and Attributes. The verse *"We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the Truth"* (Qur'an, 41:53) affirms the view that phenomena are theophanic expressions—projected not for their own sake but as vehicles of divine recognition. Furthermore, the Qur'an undermines the solidity of material reality by highlighting the illusory nature of worldly life. *"The life of this world is nothing but play and diversion"* (Qur'an, 6:32), and *"The life of this world is but amusement and diversion; and the Hereafter is better for those who fear Allah"* (Qur'an, 6:32; 29:64). These verses diminish the metaphysical weight of the physical world, aligning with the metaphysical intuition behind *Wahdat al-Khayāl*—that the phenomenal realm is a temporary, dream-like projection without ultimate substance, a veil rather than an ontological counterpart to God. Thus, when viewed through a metaphysical lens, the Qur'anic worldview does not posit an ontologically independent cosmos but one that is continually imagined, sustained, and dissolved through Divine Thought.

The Qur'anic declaration "إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَالِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ " (*"Indeed, Allah is the Creator of all things"* – Qur'an 39:62) affirms a comprehensive ontological stance: that every phenomenon within existence, whether material or immaterial, concrete or abstract, originates from the creative act of Allah. This assertion is not limited to physical entities—such as mountains, planets, and bodies—but extends to all ontological registers, including thoughts, intentions, feelings, behaviors, and mental faculties. The universal scope of "كل شيء" (*everything*) necessarily includes psychological and cognitive phenomena, dismantling any dualistic separation between divine creation and human mentation. Under the metaphysical framework of *Wahdat-al-Khayāl* (وَحدَةُ الخَيال)—the Unity of Thought—the cosmos itself is understood as a manifestation of Divine Thought. All forms of experience, including mental images, conceptual structures, affective responses, and even moral intuitions, are expressions within the field of divine imagination.

In this view, the human mind does not generate thought autonomously but *participates in* and *modulates* divine ideation. The ontological infrastructure of consciousness is not human-made—it is divinely scaffolded. Thus, if Allah is the creator of all things, He is also the creator of every thought that emerges in the mind, every perception that configures the world, and every emotional state that colours the inner life. Human behavior and cognition, therefore, are not ontologically self-originated but are contingently and continuously grounded in divine authorship.

This interpretive framework provides a scriptural foundation for the notion of *Wahdat-al-Khayāl*—a vision of reality in which the universe is not a self-subsistent entity but a metaphysical tapestry woven from the thread of God's creative consciousness—the Infinite Consciousness. Consequently, Wahdat-al-Khayāl provides an ontological continuity between the divine and the psychological. Mental life is not a closed system; it is a locus of divine reflection. In moments of insight, ethical clarity, or creative ideation, what we encounter is not merely a brain process but an echo of divine intentionality. Mental health, from this standpoint, is not merely the absence of pathology but the degree to which one's mental life is aligned with its divine origin—that is, the purity, harmony, and coherence of thought as it resonates with the Source of all thought.

6. Philosophical Implications of Wahdat-al-Khayāl

The implications of this idea are profound. First, it dissolves the rigid boundary between subject and object. If all that is perceived exists within thought, then perception is not an act of receiving information from an external world but an act of inner awareness. The seer, the seen, and the seeing are united in the same stream of thought. Second, it unifies the multiplicity of the cosmos under a singular ontological ground—Infinite Consciousness—of which all individual thoughts (selves, things, phenomena) are differentiated expressions. This unity is not a poetic metaphor but a literal existential truth. This position also resolves the longstanding tension between unity and multiplicity. In most philosophical systems, unity is the metaphysical ideal while multiplicity is treated as either illusory (as in Advaita Vedanta) or ontologically real (as in pluralism). *Wahdat-al-Khayāl* reconciles both: multiplicity is real, but only as differentiated thoughts within a unifying consciousness. The countless forms of the universe—the stars, the laws of physics, living beings, languages, desires, histories—are not separate substances, but distinct mental contents within a single, unified psyche. This is not to deny the empirical reality of individuals or the experiential reality of difference. Instead, it is to assert that their ultimate reality is mental and derivative, arising from the singular consciousness which alone is real in the ultimate sense. Hence, self-transcendence involves moving beyond the false identification with discrete selfhood and participating consciously in the unified ocean, where multiplicity is embraced as waves within a boundless sea. In this way, *Unity Versus Infinity* reframes existential ontology from a fragmented plurality to a holistic totality, guiding psychosocial wellness through the reclamation of authentic unity. Therefore, to transcend the illusions of separateness and materiality, one must recognize that *there is nothing in the cosmos except the thoughts of Infinite Consciousness*. This recognition is the pinnacle of metaphysical insight and psychosocial wellness, dissolving existential fragmentation and fostering unity with the transcendent source.

7. Psychological Implications of Wahdat-al-Khayāl

Wahdat-al-Khayāl carries significant implications across various domains of psychology. Modern psychology, mainly grounded in empirical naturalism, often omits metaphysical inquiry from its theoretical and clinical frameworks. However, as growing fields such as transpersonal psychology, spiritual psychology, and existential psychotherapy suggest, human mental health cannot be fully understood in the absence of ontological and spiritual contexts [75,76]. This metaphysical repositioning has deep implications for our understanding of the psyche, identity, pathology, and healing.

The concept of self is central to the metaphysics of *Wahdat-al-Khayāl*, wherein the self is conceived not as a fixed psychological entity but as a dynamic and ontologically stratified manifestation of consciousness. Drawing from the premise that all reality is constituted by thought, the self, too, is understood as a modality through which Infinite Thought becomes reflexively aware of itself. In this framework, human life is not a random accumulation

of experiences, but a purposive and transcendental unfolding through four ontological layers of selfhood: the Outer Self, the Inner Self, the Ideal Self, and the Real Self. These four selves represent stages in the progressive unveiling of thought—from its most veiled, socially conditioned appearance (Outer Self), to the inward emotional and cognitive world (Inner Self), to the aspirational and morally attuned consciousness (Ideal Self), and finally to the unitive, luminous presence of Being itself (Real Self). This model is grounded in the metaphysics of *Wahdat-al-Khayāl*, which posits that reality is neither an inert substance nor a passive observation, but rather the dynamic becoming of thought. The journey through the four selves mirrors the journey of thought from fragmentation to unification, from illusion to truth. The concept of the Dominant Self posits that individuals inhabit these layers to varying degrees over time, influenced by moral clarity, existential insight, and experiential integration. The ethical imperative of life, then, is to ascend through these ontological planes—not as a psychological adjustment, but as an alignment with the unfolding of divine thought within the cosmos. This ascent culminates in the dissolution of the fragmented self and the realization of unity—*Wahdat*—in which the human being is not merely a moral agent, but a revelatory locus through which Infinite Consciousness recognizes itself. In this light, the model of the four selves is not incidental but foundational: it embodies the metaphysical grammar of *Wahdat-al-Khayāl*, where the structure of subjectivity reflects the very structure of reality. It challenges earlier models of identity—whether social or biological—by positing the self as a layered, luminous unfolding of thought's inherent drive toward unity.

In light of *Wahdat-al-Khayāl*, behavior cannot be reduced to mere mechanistic outputs of neurological circuits or social conditioning. Instead, behavior must be understood as an ontologically rooted phenomenon that emerges from Divine will and manifests within human consciousness. From this perspective, human behavior is neither fully autonomous nor entirely reactive—it is a complex interplay of natural, nurtural, and supernatural forces, intricately woven into the divine tapestry of existence. Rejecting Free Will, this philosophy reveals that actions are not wholly self-generated but are influenced by neurological, environmental, and spiritual forces, many of which are beyond conscious control. This stands in stark contrast to dominant psychological paradigms that often marginalize metaphysical or supernatural influences. By integrating Wahdat-al-Khayal, behavior is reinterpreted not merely as a psychosocial response to stimuli, but as a dynamic reflection of Divine orchestration realized through the human mind's creative and interpretative faculties.

In *Wahdat al-Khayāl*, pathology is understood not simply as dysfunction but as disconnection from the Divine, from the self, and the imaginal coherence of existence. Modern disorders such as existential anxiety, meaninglessness, and spiritual despair are symptomatic of a world disenchanted by materialism. When *khayāl* is not understood as sacred or divine, it becomes distorted: imagination is reduced to fantasy, intuition to irrationality, and the cosmos to inert matter. The ego, when cut off from the cosmic imaginal, collapses into a self-referential loop that leads to fragmentation and despair. Thus, healing involves re-imagining oneself within the divine narrative—restoring a sense of sacred embeddedness in the *khayāl* of God.

Wahdat-al-Khayāl offers a compelling vision for self-transcendence. Unlike frameworks that advocate self-abnegation or ego death in dualistic terms, this model posits that transcendence is a matter of imaginal expansion: to see the self not as the centre but as a vessel through which the Divine Thought flows. Self-transcendence, then, is the realization that "I" am not the origin of thought but its conduit. This vision resonates with the Qur'anic ideal of *tazkia* (purification) and *taḥqīq* (realization), where the seeker moves from the multiplicity of appearances to the unity of divine presence. In psychological terms, self-transcendence is the highest mode of flourishing: a state of harmony with the imaginal flow of reality, marked by compassion, humility, creativity, and insight.

Wahdat-al-Khayāl invites psychologists, clinicians, and scholars to reimagine the foundations of mental health, not as secular or purely biological phenomena, but as participatory engagements with a living, imaginal cosmos. It posits that healing, meaning, and self-realization emerge from aligning human consciousness with the divine flow of thought that sustains all being. As we enter an era marked by technological acceleration and spiritual dislocation, the call for metaphysical depth in psychological science becomes increasingly urgent. Wahdat al-Khayāl offers not

merely a theory but a sacred cosmology—one that unifies ontology, psychology, and spirituality in the pursuit of a coherent, dignified, and transcendent human life.

8. Conclusions

The doctrine of *Wahdat-al-Khayāl* proposed in this paper represents a paradigmatic shift in metaphysical and psychological understanding, as it locates thought—not being or witnessing—as the ultimate substratum of reality. Unlike the doctrines of *Wahdat-al-Wujūd*, which posits an ontological monism grounded in divine existence, or *Wahdat-al-Shuhūd*, which prioritizes the phenomenology of spiritual experience, *Wahdat-al-Khayāl* transcends both by positing that all existence is, in its essence, a projection within the Infinite Consciousness. It thus reframes metaphysical questions through a cognitive-ontological lens, where thought is not a secondary mental operation but the very fabric of cosmic and subjective reality.

The earlier traditions—Neoplatonism, idealism, phenomenology, and process metaphysics—questioned the presumed objectivity of material substance. These traditions converge upon the insight that perception, consciousness, and ideation are not peripheral to reality but foundational to its structure. Against this backdrop, metaphysical critiques of *Wahdat-al-Wujūd* and *Wahdat-al-Shuhūd* were developed, highlighting their respective limitations in accounting for the totality of ontological emergence and subjective experience. The need for a more integrative and explanatory model led to the articulation of *Wahdat-al-Khayāl*.

Wahdat-al-Khayāl presents a non-dualistic framework in which thought is the singular, ontological substance from which the multiplicities of the universe emanate. It dissolves classical dualisms—such as subject and object, mind and matter, and knower and known—by framing them as poles within the same unified field of divine ideation. Here, the cosmos is not a physical structure to be dissected but a living thought-form, continuously imagined into being by *Infinite Consciousness*. This reconfiguration of reality has profound implications not only for metaphysics but also for our understanding of science, religion, and psychological health.

Scientific paradigms in quantum physics, neuroscience, and information theory increasingly suggest that materialism is insufficient to account for the profundity of consciousness and the structure of the universe. Concepts such as the observer effect, panpsychism, and the simulation hypothesis echo the metaphysical vision of *Wahdat-al-Khayāl*, suggesting that reality is fundamentally mental, informational, or ideational. From the epistemic ambiguity of particles in quantum mechanics to the insolubility of subjective qualia in neuroscience, empirical science has begun to reflect the metaphysical intuition that thought is not emergent from matter—it precedes it.

Religious traditions across the globe—such as Advaita Vedānta, Buddhist Madhyamaka, Christian Neoplatonism, Kabbalistic Judaism, and Islamic mysticism—further support the unity of existence as an emanation of the Divine. In particular, the Qur'anic emphasis on divine command ("*kun fa-yakūn*"), the illusory nature of worldly life, and creation as a network of *āyāt* (signs) offers scriptural endorsement of an imaginal ontology. Within this sacred cosmology, human cognition, emotion, and action are not autonomous expressions but divine orchestrations within the theatre of thought. *Wahdat-al-Khayāl* therefore, restores a theocentric continuity between cosmology and consciousness, anchoring both in the creative mind of God.

Philosophically, this framework not only unites the apparent plurality of beings within a single ontological field but also affirms multiplicity as meaningful and real within thought. Each self, object, or experience is a differentiated modulation within the infinite mental continuum. Thus, existence is not flattened into a monistic uniformity but elevated into a living plurality within unity—a chorus of divine thoughts reverberating in the infinite mind. Unity is not achieved by negating difference but by comprehending it as a rhythmic elaboration of the One. In this view, reality is neither brute matter nor abstract being, but an active becoming—an imaginal unfolding of divine will.

Psychologically, *Wahdat-al-Khayāl* opens radical possibilities. The self is reinterpreted not as a fixed identity or socially constructed ego, but as a layered manifestation of divine thought. The progression through the Outer Self, Inner Self, Ideal Self, and Real Self is not merely developmental but ontological, representing a movement from illusion to illumination, from fragmentation to unity. The ethical task of life becomes a process of alignment, transcending false identifications and rediscovering the self as a conduit for divine imagination. Pathology is reframed as

imaginal disconnection.

In this metaphysical psychology, healing is not merely the regulation of symptoms or behavior modification, but the restoration of imaginal coherence, recognizing the sacredness of thought and re-situating the self within divine intentionality. The human being is not a moral agent in isolation, but a site of divine disclosure—a theater in which the *Infinite* becomes self-aware through progressive manifestations of consciousness. By offering a unified vision of ontology, psychology, and spirituality, *Wahdat-al-Khayāl* situates mental health as the harmonization of personal consciousness with the flow of divine ideation.

Ultimately, *Wahdat-al-Khayāl* affirms that reality is neither inert matter nor a subjective illusion, but a participatory cosmos—alive, sentient, and unfolding in thought. It calls scholars, theologians, clinicians, and seekers alike to reimagine the human condition, not as isolated from the transcendent, but as integrally embedded in it. In an age marked by existential fragmentation, technological alienation, and spiritual amnesia, this metaphysical vision offers a framework of coherence, healing, and transcendence. It invites us to dwell not merely in thoughts of the self, but in the Self of thought—the *Infinite Thinker*, in whom all things live, move, and have their being.

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